

2021

The Basic Principles And Methods Of A New Music Syllabus For General Education Schools

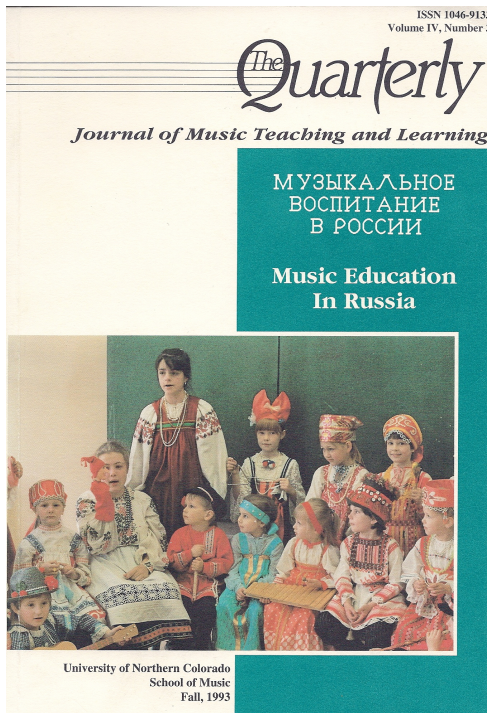
Dmitry Kabalevsky

Follow this and additional works at: <https://opencommons.uconn.edu/vrme>

Recommended Citation

Kabalevsky, Dmitry (2021) "The Basic Principles And Methods Of A New Music Syllabus For General Education Schools," *Visions of Research in Music Education*: Vol. 16 , Article 26.

Available at: <https://opencommons.uconn.edu/vrme/vol16/iss4/26>



Title: The Basic Principles and Methods of a New Music Syllabus for General Education Schools

Author(s): Dmitry Kabalevsky

Source: Kabalevsky, D. (1993, Fall). The basic principles and methods of a new music syllabus for general education schools. *The Quarterly*, 4(3), pp. 10-22. (Reprinted with permission in *Visions of Research in Music Education*, 16(4), Autumn, 2010). Retrieved from <http://www-usr.rider.edu/~vrme/>

It is with pleasure that we inaugurate the reprint of the entire seven volumes of The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning. The journal began in 1990 as The Quarterly. In 1992, with volume 3, the name changed to The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning and continued until 1997. The journal contained articles on issues that were timely when they appeared and are now important for their historical relevance. For many authors, it was their first major publication. Visions of Research in Music Education will publish facsimiles of each issue as it originally appeared. Each article will be a separate pdf file. Jason D. Vodicka has accepted my invitation to serve as guest editor for the reprint project and will compose a new editorial to introduce each volume. Chad Keilman is the production manager. I express deepest thanks to Richard Colwell for granting VRME permission to re-publish The Quarterly in online format. He has graciously prepared an introduction to the reprint series.

ГОЛОСА ИЗНУТРИ Voices from the Inside



Volume IV, Number 3

9

The Basic Principles And Methods Of A New Music Syllabus For General Education Schools

By Dmitry Kabalevsky

I have devoted many years of my life to teaching music to school children of all ages. Throughout, I sought a pedagogical concept that was derived from music and deeply rooted in music, one that links music as an art to music as an educational discipline, and music studies at school to life in general. I strove to find principles, methods, and teaching devices that would arouse children's interest in music and fascinate them. I tried to bring to children the wonderful art of music with its boundless possibilities for spiritually enriching each of their lives. I endeavored to teach children and teenagers to realize clearly that music, like other arts, is not merely entertainment, nor just an addition or a "garnish" to life which one can take or leave at will. Instead, music is an important component of life itself. By this, I mean it is important in the lives of all individuals, including school children.

The principles, methods, and devices that I developed have stood the test of time and won approval of many music teachers, and, if I may say, have been accepted by school children as well. These were used for my radio talks on music, which were later recorded under the title *What Music Tells Us* and presented in my book *About The Three Whales and Many Other Things*. Gradually, I came to the conclusion that these same principles could become the basis for a new music syllabus for the general educational schools.

In search of my own methods for teaching music education, I followed first the views of Asafiev, who said, "If one looks at music as a school subject, then, first of all, one must decidedly put aside problems of musicology and say: Music is an art; that is, a certain phenomenon in the world created by man. It is not a branch of science to be learned and studied."

Dmitry Kabalevsky (1904-1987) attended the Moscow Conservatory and studied composition. Kabalevsky earned the Doctor of Arts and was a member of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of the USSR. In addition, he established *Art at School*, the leading music education journal in the former Soviet Union. The state recognized Kabalevsky's musical achievements by awarding him the Medal of Honour in 1941.

Kabalevsky became concerned with music education as a young man. At age 21, he was teaching piano to young children in a government school and was struck by the complete lack of very easy, enjoyable piano pieces that would help children conquer technical difficulties. He set out to fill the gap himself, and even wrote many essays on the special problems of teaching children. His cre-

ative writings and criticism included *B. V. Asafiev, The Beautiful Inspires the Good, A Story of Three Whales and Many Other Things, The Music Syllabus for General Schools*, and more than 500 articles, many of which were published abroad.

References

- Abraham, B. (1970) *Eight Soviet composers*. West Point, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Kabalevsky, D. (1988) *Music and education: A composer writes about musical education*. London: Jessica Kingsley, in association with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
- Rodolfo, C. (1980) "Kabalevsky, Dmitry Borisovich" in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. by Stanley Sadie. London: Macmillan Publishers Limited.



Dmitry Kabalevsky, with a young student, photographed in Magnitogorsk, 1986. *Photo courtesy of Art at School, Moscow.*

The Three Whales of Music

An ancient Russian legend says the Earth rests upon the backs of three huge whales. Music also rests on three “whales:” song, dance and march, the three main spheres of music. Each sphere may be defined as a field, form, genre, or type, and every music syllabus, textbook, and method contains them. In most, however, the three musical whales are treated as examples of the simplest music forms, easily comprehensible to children at the very first stages of musical development but gradually replaced by more complicated musical forms when their purely didactic function is outgrown.

The incorrect approach to the three whales can clearly be seen in many songs, dances, and marches that are rich in content and presented as highly developed forms, placing them in the category of highly sophisticated music works. It is enough to recall Moussorgsky’s *Songs and Dances of Death*, Mahler’s *Songs of the Dead Children*, Rachmaninoff’s *Symphonic Dances*, Ravel’s *La Valse*, the funeral marches from Beethoven’s *Third Symphony* or Chopin’s

Second Sonata for Piano, and a great number of other compositions of equal artistic value and complexity.

And that is not all. Songs, dances, and marches are the most democratic, popular genres of music. Millions of people in the world have never heard professional music and know nothing of musical notation or music as a profession. Yet one will hardly find a single person who has never sung a song, never danced, or never marched in a procession to music or to the roll of a drum. Just as the foundation attaches a house to the ground, so song, dance, and march attach the highly developed edifice of music to the masses of people—the soil from which music springs.

A child’s first steps to music—at home or at a kindergarten—may be compared to laying the first stones in a foundation. The child’s lessons in first grade may be compared to constructing not only a good foundation but also the ground floor of the building. In these early music lessons, the child gets to know the three whales of music consciously, and this is an important step toward constructing the next floors.

[F]irst-graders learn during their first music lessons the most important thing that school can teach them: They must not only observe phenomena and perceive them with their senses, but also think about them. That is, the children learn not only to listen to music and hear it, but also to think about it.

As the house goes up story by story, it becomes clear that the building rests on its foundation, but the whole building does not consist solely of its foundation; so music, while it grows out of songs, dances, and marches, does not consist only of them. Yet, regardless of what development and enrichment the three whales may undergo—becoming, perhaps, “songness,” “danceness,” and “marchness”—no matter how many new shadings may be introduced into music through expressiveness, descriptiveness, and speech intonations, the three whales will continue as a constant presence from the earliest music lessons through the highest stages of musical development.

This is to say nothing of opera, oratorio, and cantata, which originate in songs and “songness,” just as ballet originates in dances and “danceness.” The three whales support on their backs all classical and modern music, whether symphonic, chamber, vocal, or instrumental. Numerous dance pieces occur in the music of Bach and Schubert, Chopin and Grieg, and Tchaikovsky and Prokofiev. Dances and marches are heard in almost all classical symphonies from Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven to Shostakovich and Myaskovsky. One hears a dancing character in many pieces by Ravel, Bartok, and Khachaturian. Even such composers as Wagner and Scriabin, who usually avoided folk genres, could not avoid the influence of the three whales. For instance, there are numerous marches and march-like music in almost all operas written by Wagner, and dance rhythms such as mazurka, waltz, and polonaise in numerous pieces by Scriabin. It is difficult to find many pieces without song-like melodies in the entire world of music.

Thus, the three genres of music are not only the simplest and the most easily comprehensible to children, but they also form the basis of all music. Song, dance, and

march make it possible to establish a connection between the great art of music and music lessons at school, while at the same time ensuring close connections between these lessons and life.

Introducing Children to the Three Whales

The use of the three whales proves advantageous in the music classroom, beginning with the child's very first lessons in first grade. Before going to school, all children, whether in the kindergarten, at home, or in the streets of town or country, have repeatedly heard songs and sung them; heard dance music, observed people dancing, and danced themselves. The children have seen soldiers and sportsmen march to music, and have themselves marched to such music. As a rule, children absorb these universal real experiences quite unconsciously. When the teacher plays simple songs, dances, and marches on the piano or some other instrument, the children are pleasantly surprised. They already know the foundations of music.

During the first lessons, the teacher must not use the words song, dance, and march. The children will do it themselves. They become interested and derive satisfaction from the procedure because it seems like a game. Most importantly, the activity fills the children with confidence in their own abilities (“It turns out we know something already”), with self-respect (“We are not so little, after all”) and with trust in the teacher (“All of this is so clear, and how interesting it is to study with this teacher”). These successes are very important. All this helps to engage the students with music lessons; to make the lessons efficient, logical, and highly emotional; and to create an atmosphere of creativity and personal interest.

The use of the three whales introduces first graders to the principal components of music from the start. The students' musical horizon

expands immediately, because they are learning about all songs, all dances, and all marches. This type of music teaching is much broader than more traditional approaches to early music teaching, in which the students' musical development proceeds from one children's song or simple instrumental piece to the next without generalization. By using the three whales, any particular song, dance, or march grows quite naturally into the universal, including all songs, all dances, and all marches.

Music perception immediately becomes an active and creative process for the first graders, because the teacher invites them to listen not to a song, a dance, or a march, but to music in general. The children are expected to identify the kind of music played and to determine to which of the three main music fields it belongs. And they do it!

The process of music perception becomes especially interesting when the teacher offers the students a marching song, a song dance, or a dance march without telling the children beforehand that such combinations exist, thus allowing the students to make the discovery for themselves. Typically, when a marching song is played, half the class will state definitely that it is a song, while the other half will assert that it is a march. The clash of opinions leads to the discovery of a new truth, or rather to the realization that there may be two or even three whales in one piece of music.

(Continued on p. 14)

Music Education According to Kabalevsky

- Children should have no rules or exercises aside from involvement with music. Nothing should be memorized or repeated endlessly; instead, the fascinating art of music should reign over the entire lesson.
- Students can, of course, memorize practically anything in any school subject, but what has been memorized is easily forgotten, as a rule, and leaves no traces in the minds and hearts of the students. One remembers only what has been truly understood. Music and the other arts require even more: One can remember only what has been both understood *and felt* deeply.
- A danger accompanies school music lessons in improvisation. It is very easy to develop in children habits of dilettantism, passive reproduction of simple musical clichés, and the imitation of music banalities that youngsters so often hear in their environment and remember. To safeguard children against such problems, teachers need highly developed music tastes, much experience, and the ability to approach music consciously and critically.
- Teachers must always “run a few steps forward” and then “go back to the material previously learned.” For the teachers, “running forward” reveals the children’s readiness to assimilate new material. To the children, the teacher’s action looks like a preliminary “loosening of the soil” or a “widening of the field of vision;” students become aware of the direction of the lessons. “Going back” by the teachers should never be a mere recapitulation; instead, it can be compared with a look one casts back as one climbs a mountain and reaches a new height. From there, one can see what could not be seen earlier.
- By using the three whales, any particular song, dance, or march grows quite naturally into the universal, including all songs, all dances, and all marches.
- When a marching song is played, half the class will state definitely that it is a song, while the other half will assert that it is a march. The clash of opinions leads to the discovery of a new truth, or rather to the realization that there may be two or even three whales in one piece of music.

In this way, first-graders learn during their first music lessons the most important thing that school can teach them: They must not only observe phenomena and perceive them with their senses, but also think about them. That is, the children learn not only to listen to music and hear it, but also to think about it.

By proceeding from the three whales, even the youngest school children can, without great effort, comprehend any form of music, including complicated works such as an opera, ballet, symphony, or cantata. When the children hear, for example, a song from a cantata, a dance from a symphony, or a march from an opera or a ballet, they will meet an old friend—one of the three whales—without stopping to think (at least at this time) about what genre of music they are perceiving.

In elementary school lessons, of course, one can use only fragments from large works. This is nothing to fear. Adults, even professional musicians, often extract their favorite melodies from larger musical forms. Why should we deprive children of this right? The teacher needs only to expand from such fragments to entire large and more complex music forms. In this way, children become accustomed to such terms as opera, symphony, concerto, cantata, and ballet. They will not be intimidated by such forms, unlike many adults who are afraid now because of insufficient music culture. They will also know from experience that the music of large compositions is perceptible and closely connected with the three whales, as are many smaller pieces.

Song, dance, and march serve as a reliable bridges by which school children may enter any aspect of the musical art. The children spontaneously succeed by relying on aural perception and music making, without going into theory and speculation. On the way, the children discover that the song turns into “songness,” the dance into “danceness,” and the march into “marchness.”

The use of the song, dance, and march opens up wide perspectives for establishing connections between music and all aspects of history studied at school. For instance, folk songs and dances may be compared to an encyclopedia of the life of the peoples of the world. This rich possibility can be multi-

plied many times in the works of our own and foreign composers, past and present. With the help of music, any fact, including historical fact, can be transformed into an emotional experience capable of exciting people and leaving a deep impression.

In addition, the three whales make it easier and more natural to expand the content of musical studies to include a number of topics that gradually widen and deepen the musical culture of students. Such topics might include musical and colloquial speech; intonation in music; development in music; forms of music; and music of the people inhabiting our country.

A close connection is established between music and all other arts, beginning with literature. The purpose of aesthetic education is combined with humanitarian and historical education. A more detailed treatment of the topics concerning the multiple connections between music and life will take place in the intermediate and upper grades, but the teacher should not be afraid of extra-musical comparisons beginning in the early grades. For instance, timbres of sounds may be compared to different colors on an artist's palette; major keys may be compared to light, bright colors and minor keys to darker ones. Some notation marks may be compared to punctuation marks such as periods, commas, exclamation, and question marks. Development in music can be juxtaposed with development of the words of a song or a story in a programmed composition. Almost every composition—with or without words—gives the teacher the opportunity to link it briefly with a human feeling or thought, or with a fact of life, past or present. The more connections are made between music and reality at the lesson, the more clearly the idea of music as a part of life—as life itself—will be brought home to the pupils.

From the first lesson, first graders discriminate one whale from the others, judge the differences among them, and recognize several varieties of the same “whale.” From the very beginning, then, the students learn the important principle of “difference and similarity.” This principle will play a decisive role in all the children's learning activities, beginning with perceiving “constructive” ele-

[A] person unable to hear and respond to music will never be able to sing, play, or conduct well. Everything such a person learns regarding the history and theory of music will remain a collection of hollow, formal facts that cannot lead to an understanding of the genuine art of music.

ments of music on up to discerning similarities and differences in the creative styles of different composers. This principle is equally important in composing and performing music and in music appreciation, and it permeates all spheres of the musical art, including school music lessons. Practically speaking, the teacher cannot unfold the contents of any lesson topic without it. The “different/same” principle should be emphasized as the most important concept for the development of the music culture of school children and, moreover, of their abilities to perceive life and give meaning to their experiences both in school and out of it.

The general theme and goal of my syllabus is “music and life.” This theme cannot be singled out as an independent, more-or-less separate unit of the course. The theme must pervade all lessons at all levels of school, from the first grade to the last one, shaping the students’ world outlook and their standards of morality and nobility of character, like the ideas of patriotism and respect for other people. Music played at the lesson, the teacher’s comments, the children’s observations and thought—all must help to gradually achieve this goal. Year by year, teachers must set this task before the students, ever more widely and boldly.

In the music classroom, teachers should allow no empty rhetoric, no standard phrasing, no “words in general” that are devoid of concrete meaning and emotion. I do not deny the great role played by the teacher’s speech in instructional and educational work. As Sukhomlinsky noted, the speech of teachers “is an irreplaceable means of pedagogical influence over the students’ feelings and thoughts. The art of educating children requires first of all the skill of appealing to the human heart.”

One or two concise and figurative phrases said by the teacher in connection with a

piece of music will be imprinted in the students’ minds more deeply, and give rise to more noble thoughts and emotions, than any general statements the teacher might prepare. The words of the song, the music itself, the history of the piece, and perhaps some facts about the lives of the composer and the poet can inspire the teacher to the needed phrases. In this way, while studying music, children in the first grade will realize they are studying life, and that music is life itself.

Four Themes

The arrangement by topics of the new syllabus should be emphasized. Each quarter of the school year is assigned a specific topic or general theme. For example, first graders study the following four themes:

1. song, dance and march, the three whales on which music rests;
2. the content of music;
3. where song, dance, and march lead us; and
4. musical idiom.

Lesson by lesson, the topics unfold, becoming deeper and more complicated gradually and consistently. There is internal continuity in topics between consecutive quarters and school years. All minor themes are studied in connection with one or more of the main topics and with the goal of its realization.

Such an arrangement makes assimilation of learning material more effective. The teacher and the students easily discern main ideas and secondary ones, general points and specific points. The number of pieces, their titles, the names of their composers, and other facts usually memorized by students become relatively unimportant. What becomes essential is understanding the general theme and the individual student’s feelings about it. Arranging by these broad themes also leads to the integration of many components into the whole of the music lesson. This new syllabus proceeds from the study of diverse facets of music to an understanding

of the whole, and it is contrary to our traditional approach of developing separate components of students' learning behavior, such as singing, reading and writing music.

The subordination of instructional material to the general theme of the lesson makes it possible for the teacher to replace one piece of music with another without changing artistic and pedagogical tasks. It should be emphasized, however, that the selection of music for school practice requires great accuracy. Every piece that is to be played in the classroom should, as closely as possible, meet the following requirements:

- it must have artistic merit and fascinate children;
- it must be pedagogically expedient, capable of teaching students something necessary and useful; and
- it must be educational, positively influencing children on an ideological level while meeting their ethnic and aesthetic tastes.

Teachers may approach the syllabus creatively. Yet they must preserve the thematic arrangement of the syllabus, because the sequence of gradually unfolding themes is its very basis. For better treatment of a topic, teachers suggest to the students the most necessary learning activities and bind these activities into one thematic unit. In other words, everything that sounds and happens at the lesson (music pieces, teachers' remarks and questions, children's answers) is subordinate to the four main themes. In this way, the lesson ceases to break into several components that have little or nothing in common. Any division of the lesson should exist only in the mind of the teacher; the children should not know about it. For them, the lesson is to be organized around the single notion of music and the art of music.

Freedom from rigid schemes in combining elements of the lesson permits teachers to insert any components necessary for sustaining students' attention. According to the alertness and mood of class, and taking into consideration the many other factors that make one lesson unlike any other, the teacher may choose low, quiet, and mournful music, or something vivid, merry and energetic. Sometimes teachers may choose to omit some components of the lesson or some

pieces of music in order to be sure a particular topic is firmly impressed in the minds of the students, and use the omitted material for a later lesson. Teachers become free from any standard scheme of conducting lessons, but this does not negate the use of a system in teaching. Freedom in pedagogical creativity does not mean arbitrariness or chaos.

The task facing teachers is not easy. They must combine all components of the lesson, subordinate them to the general theme of the lesson, quarter, school year, and full school course of music while maintaining the logical development inherent to each component.

The topical arrangement of the syllabus is advantageous to teachers for two reasons. First, teachers may freely maneuver within the framework of the quarter and year syllabus and not exceed the limits of the main topics. Second, teachers receive a "topical compass" that assists in evaluating the year's work and makes it easier to solve one of the most difficult problems in arts education: establishing criteria for grading students.

According to the new syllabus, one should almost completely exclude from the initial stage of music teaching—first grade—what we once called the "grammar of music," a simplified course in elementary theory. Very often, teaching the grammar of music results in an elementary course in music notation. There is something much more important than music notation: understanding music, which should not be confused with understanding notation in music, as is often the case. Understanding music means possessing musical culture; the level of musical culture does not depend on mastering music notation, though it includes knowledge of it. Understanding music is

1. the ability to perceive music as a live, figurative art that has been born of life itself and is closely connected with it;
2. having a particular "feeling" for music, an emotional perception of pieces, and qualitative discrimination;
3. the ability to aurally comprehend the character of music and feel the connection between the character of music and the performance of it; and
4. the ability to identify by ear the composer of an unfamiliar composition if it is typical of his or her pieces.

Even when the music has stopped, students' hands ought not to be raised. The children must be allowed time to feel and to think the piece over; then the teacher can ask questions. In this way a concert hall atmosphere is set in the classroom...

These components form the delicate sphere of musical culture. It takes caution, consistency, and great precision in selecting composers and their compositions to bring children into this sphere.

Experience in listening, which children gain in first and second grades, makes it possible to teach an understanding of individual styles of particular composers and to develop students' abilities to identify a composer's unfamiliar as well as familiar work. Through the use of the new syllabus, Tchaikovsky, Beethoven, Chopin, Prokofiev, Dunajevsky, and Khachaturian become beloved and well understood to young children in primary grades. Brilliant features of these composers' works are stamped on students' memories. Of course, at the initial stage of developing musical culture in young children, composers should be represented only by works that possess the most essential, characteristic, and understandable features of their music. The representation cannot be, of course, exhaustive.

In the eyes of children, Tchaikovsky, first of all, is understood as a composer who loved Russian folk songs, nature, and people. He represented his native land in lyrical music full of poetic beauty and tender melodies. Beethoven will be represented as the composer of strong, heroic music that retains this character even in his most lyrical and sorrowful compositions. Marching music plays an important role in his works as well. Young children will remember Chopin as one who reflected the beauty of Polish folk songs and dances in his music, as well as the spirit of the struggle for freedom of the oppressed Polish people. Prokofiev will be perceived by the children first as a composer who reflected the world of childhood through such compositions as "Peter and the Wolf" and "A Chatterbox," and later as one who carried on the patriotic tradition of Glinka's "Ivan Susanin." They will think of his "musical tongue" as being particularly sharp, and

sometimes prickly. Students will see in Dunajevsky a composer whose joyous songs for young people are mostly in march style. Khachaturian composed music in which one can always hear something Oriental, with specific curves in melodic lines, an abundance of "decorations," temperament, and "danceness" piercing all pieces. In addition to the recommended compositions in the syllabus, teachers may use other pieces by the same composers, both in part or in full, and ask students to name the composer. Of course, the level of the students' musical development must be taken into consideration.

The elements of music theory should be included in music lessons with great care, particularly in primary school. The study of theory is unwise if approached before children are interested in music like it, before they gain skill in aural perception and performance of music, and before they acquire some experience in listening.

Children should have no rules or exercises aside from involvement with music. Nothing should be memorized or repeated endlessly; instead, the fascinating art of music should reign over the entire lesson. Students can, of course, memorize practically anything in any school subject, but what has been memorized is easily forgotten, as a rule, and leaves no traces in the minds and hearts of the students. One remembers only what has been truly understood. Music and the other arts require even more: One can remember only what has been both understood *and felt* deeply. This applies equally to music as well as to music description, performance, and perception.

Perception

Music perception is the basis of music education. Only when students hear music in the right way and contemplate it can they come to understand music's aesthetic, cognitive, and educational functions. More than that, a person unable to hear and respond to

music will never be able to sing, play, or conduct well. Everything such a person learns regarding the history and theory of music will remain a collection of hollow, formal facts that cannot lead to an understanding of the genuine art of music.

When one perceives music correctly, feels it deeply and contemplates it, one learns music most effectively. There is no music as an art that exists outside a person's perception. Students must learn to hear music at every stage of the lesson—when they sing, play instruments, or listen to music—with concentration and effort. Any form of music behavior can teach students to hear music attentively and thoughtfully while perfecting their skills.

The ability or inability of a student to hear music properly becomes most obvious in group singing. One's ability to hear one's voice simultaneously with the voices of others and with the accompaniment, while responding to the style of the composer and the specific piece, should be fostered in students by practice in performance. This activity begins in the first grade.

There are two kinds of choral singing for children that differ greatly, although they often coincide:

1. group singing, an important form of activity during music lessons for all school children; and
2. voluntary participation in a choir outside of normal lesson times.

These two kinds of group singing correlate to school lessons in literature or drawing which are reinforced by children's participation in clubs, where they develop their creative abilities in literature and fine arts. Some artistic level of group singing can be achieved in a general music class if the children's performance skill improves from lesson to lesson and their music culture develops gradually. Every class should become a choir; this is the ideal to be realized.

Teachers must begin to shape the children's ability to hear and contemplate music from the first music classes. A strict rule must be established at the very first lesson of the first school year: When music is performed in the classroom, no student may raise a hand, even if the teacher is about to ask a question and the student feels ready to answer it. Exceptions are possible but only

occasionally and with specific purpose. For example, when the class is listening to a symphonic piece, the teacher may ask the children to raise their hands when they hear an instrument or group of instruments enter, or when they hear harmony replace melody. In such cases, the class should be asked to listen to the music with closed eyes, relying on their ears and not on seeing others around them raise their hands. The teacher should not resort to this technique very often; it is effective when used sparingly. The children must realize at once that this rule is not a matter of classroom discipline. They ought to obey the rule because music can be perceived and understood only if one is attentive.

Even when the music has stopped, students' hands ought not to be raised. The children must be allowed time to feel and to think the piece over; then the teacher can ask questions. In this way a concert-hall atmosphere is set in the classroom, and children begin to display habits of attentive listening and a love of music.

Teachers should let the children solve the problems that appear in the lesson instead of conveying ready-made knowledge for students to memorize. If teachers ask questions and immediately answer them as well, they follow the path of least resistance. This approach may seem to simplify the teaching task and save time, but it also reduces the effectiveness of teaching. In fact, such time-saving is a form of self-deception.

New problems in the lesson are better solved by short, stimulating discussions in which both teachers and students participate. These discussions should include three connected components:

1. the problem is articulated clearly by the teacher;
2. the gradual solution of the problem is developed by both teacher and students; and
3. the final conclusion is announced, if possible, by the students.

When the majority of the students are ready to answer the teacher's question, it is hardly necessary to single out one student to answer it individually. Rather, it is better to suggest that all the students answer the question together—in low voices!—at a sign from the teacher's hand. There are two positive

The music teacher must always remember that boredom cannot be allowed at any lesson; it would be a catastrophe in a lesson of arts. The teacher should be serious, but on no account boring. A smile, a joke, and a sense of humor will frequently produce better learning than the most serious reproof or the most thoughtful aphorism.

sides to gaining such collective answers: first, all children ready to answer can do so aloud and thus feel successful; and second, the students who were not apt to answer and have not raised their hands can take part in the collective answer silently. They will hence know the right answer without feeling shy because of their ignorance. In the middle and upper grades, of course, individual answers begin to become more appropriate.

The level of student learning serves as one of the most important indicators of the teacher's ability. Such learning, however, cannot be measured only by how often, how quickly, and how thoroughly the children answer the teacher's questions. All school music lessons should emphasize the development of each child's creative potential and cultivate independent thinking, initiative and self-confidence. An education in the arts should contribute greatly to the development of these abilities and positively influence children's other activities and their future work, regardless of the profession they choose after leaving school.

Creativity

A creative disposition can be seen in school children even in the first grade. It reveals itself

- in answers that are both right and original;
- in students' desire not only to answer the teacher's questions, but to ask questions;
- in each child's unique way of looking at problems of music interpretation; and
- in aural perception, which is observable in students' narrations about the music they hear outside the school.

The majority of children are drawn toward creative behavior from earliest childhood, even if they behave in a naive way. It is important for creative music activities to be developed at school both in and outside of class. The methods of teaching music creativity are now rather vague with us. This is why one

can only make generalizations about it here.

The lessons of improvisation may contribute to learning two connected tasks: first, ear training for melody and mode perception; and, second, developing creative imagination. At such lessons, students are asked to complete a melody begun by the teacher. They may also be asked to improvise a melody outside the traditional major-minor system and respond to various "interrogative" and "incomplete" intonations. In addition, students may improvise rhythm patterns, change the character of a performance, or change the tempo and intensity of the sound.

According to the syllabus, it is only in the second grade that children begin to improvise music consciously. Children at this level are generally aware of intonation in music and how a melody grows out of it. It is possible to stimulate children's creative fantasy and activity as long as the teacher is also ready for creative teaching; that is, success depends on the level of the teacher's creative development, music tastes, and theoretical knowledge. Thus, children's music improvisation cannot be regarded as a required part of the syllabus, and the absence of such music behavior on no account is a defect in the lesson. No one can blame teachers for this omission, because the present music teacher education programs ignore methods of teaching creativity.

A danger accompanies school music lessons in improvisation. It is very easy to develop in children habits of dilettantism, passive reproduction of simple musical clichés, and the imitation of music banalities that youngsters so often hear in their environment and remember. To safeguard children against such problems, teachers need highly developed music tastes, much experience, and the ability to approach music consciously and critically.

In professional music training, all components of the music curriculum form a number of more or less independent subjects: solfeggio, music theory, history, music literature, composition, playing instruments, and so on. For the student anticipating entry into the music profession, these subjects may be grouped into the performing, theoretical, historical, and compositional areas of study.

General music education in public schools is quite another matter. There can be neither areas of study nor independent subjects here. This is the most radical difference between the approaches to teaching music in general educational schools and in music schools. In general music education, the relative independence of the music components fades into the background. What children must perceive in school music lessons is the unity of these components, the internal connection among them that exists in the very art of music.

The method described here proves very effective for this purpose. Teachers must always “run a few steps forward” and then “go back to the material previously learned.” For the teachers, “running forward” reveals the children’s readiness to assimilate new material. To the children, the teacher’s action looks like a preliminary “loosening of the soil” or a “widening of the field of vision;” students become aware of the direction of the lessons. “Going back” by the teachers should never be a mere recapitulation; instead, it can be compared with a look one casts back as one climbs a mountain and reaches a new height. From there, one sees what could not be seen earlier.

The method is effective when new topics are to be presented at the lessons. Every new topic should be introduced by using music and composers already known to the children; new material may be used later. There seems to be at least three positive aspects of this method:

1. Children assimilate new knowledge more easily when using material already covered. They focus their attention on the topic, while new music would distract their attention.
2. Reviewing the familiar material in relation to the new topic puts the music on a higher intellectual level, so it becomes for the children more complicated and

more meaningful.

3. The combination of a new topic with some familiar music emphasizes the unity and continuity of the process of mastering music culture. In addition, the students come to know that new topics, as a rule, have already been touched upon earlier, although they have not been formulated the way they are now.

This method makes it possible, and even necessary, for children to listen to the same pieces of music repeatedly. The syllabus recommends for this purpose some of the most artistically important and educationally valuable compositions. By way of repeated listening and playing, children memorize pieces, perceive them more deeply and emotionally, discover new features of familiar compositions, ascertain new connections among these and other pieces by the same composer, and distinguish this music from the music of other composers. In short, children’s perceptions are enriched by this process. Repeated singing of familiar and favorite songs also will improve the children’s performing skills. Throughout the years of their schooling, playing and listening to music repeatedly should become as routine and obligatory for students as reading familiar books, seeing familiar works of fine arts, and viewing films and plays.

Children’s music culture and good music taste can be formed by means of first developing their ability to instantly catch the very essence of a large number of compositions after a single exposure (the accumulation of hearing experiences); and secondly, of developing their ability to understand deeply a few meaningful compositions through multiple hearings and analysis (refinement of musical culture). Thus, the method of “running ahead” and “going back” helps the teacher achieve each higher level of the students’ music culture by building upon the lower levels.

What demands does the new syllabus place on teachers? Experience has proven that the syllabus can be covered by teachers who possess very different professional qualifications, those who have undergone formal music training to graduates of educational institutions and colleges. In schools having no music specialist—and such schools still exist—the syllabus can help classroom

teachers conduct music lessons. As a rule, however, the best results are obtained by teachers trained in schools of music education.

The range of knowledge and skills a qualified music teacher must possess is well-known. He or she must be a professionally trained teacher. Required skills include playing the piano or the accordion and a clear and expressive conducting technique and competence in singing. The teacher must have a good background in music theory and history and be able to transpose as well as produce a simple accompaniment to a melody. In short, a music teacher must be a musically educated pedagogue. Otherwise, the situation would be similar to that of a mathematics teacher who is unable to do a sum presented to the class.

Playing a musical instrument should be singled out among those skills the music teacher must possess. Of course, the teacher cannot do without tapes and records in the classroom, particularly when the sound of a choir, orchestra, or opera scene is needed. Tapes and records cannot substitute for live performance, however; they should only serve as complements to it. The ability to play an instrument is important for at least three reasons:

1. The live performance at the lesson creates a more emotional atmosphere in the classroom.
2. While playing, the teacher can stop at any moment if need be, repeat a passage or a single bar, or return to the beginning of the pieces, thus enhancing instruction.



Composers Dmitry Kabalevsky and Andrei Petrov during an interview, February 14, 1987.
Credit: Art at School, Moscow.

Kabalevsky's Final Interview

On February 14, 1987, during an international forum "For a Non-Nuclear World, For the Survival of Humanity," Dmitry Kabalevsky gave a brief, televised interview for "Moscow News." Returning home from the forum, the composer and teacher suddenly collapsed and died. Here is the text of Kabalevsky's final interview:

Correspondent: What is the use of exchanging opinions at this forum, and in your view, what can this exchange introduce into our shared peace movement?

Kabalevsky: From my point of view (very briefly), perhaps millions of people share the ideas of each artist. And if an artist, whether a writer, composer, or painter, expresses in creative work ideas to which this forum is devoted, then it means that the artist reflects the opinion of very many people. Here is, it seems to me, the strength of the forum which gathers together artists, and here is also a hope that we are going to get certain results, not only opportunities to speak. Let's remember the truth: an idea which has seized the masses becomes material power. I think that the idea to which we dedicate ourselves will become material power.

Kabalevsky: The Basic Principles


3. The teacher playing an instrument and/or singing sets a good example for the students and demonstrates how important and interesting it is to know how to make music.

Yet competence in various skills is not enough for the music teachers. They should bring to the classroom a love of music as a living art that brings happiness and excitement. We cannot inspire our children to love something we do not love ourselves, nor can we arouse their enthusiasm for something that leaves us unmoved.

The music teacher must always remember that boredom cannot be allowed at any lesson; it would be a catastrophe in a lesson of arts. The teacher should be serious, but on no account boring. A smile, a joke, and a sense of humor will frequently produce better learning than the most serious reproof or the most thoughtful aphorism.

"Music education does not mean educating a musician—it means educating a human being." This saying by Sukhomlinsky serves as an epigraph to the syllabus and defines its underlying theme. The syllabus also notes that the purpose of music lessons in a general educational school is "to raise the musical culture of school children as part of their

spiritual culture." These statements embrace the most essential components of the new concept of music education as reflected in the new syllabus. Thus, these main principles and methods are applicable to music education for all children in our multi-national state, for they allow individualization of the syllabus in different republics to conform with the history, cultural identity, and music of the various peoples. The syllabus meets all necessary prerequisites.

Ushinsky, a great Russian pedagogue, argued with conviction that pedagogy is not to be called simply a "science of teaching," but "an art proceeding from the science." He said: "Any activity with the aim of meeting the highest moral, and, on the whole, spiritual requirements of a person ... is an art already." How much more important these words become when applied to the pedagogy of the arts! 

The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning is grateful for permission to reprint this translated and abridged chapter from *Music and Education: A Composer Writes about Musical Education*, published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers. © UNESCO 1988.

JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN SINGING AND APPLIED VOCAL PEDAGOGY

JUNE 1993 • VOLUME XVI, NUMBER 2

Vowel Definition in a Performance of Jussi Bjoerling's *Vesti la guibba*

By Richard Miller and Juan Carlos Franco

Biologic Enemies of the Professional Voice

By Daniel R. Boone, PhD

Positioning the Velum

By Ann Alderson

Fêtes Galantes, Set I: Verlaine, Debussy, and the Fusion of the Arts

Daniel Taddie

Checklist of Recent Research

The Journal of Research in Singing and Applied Vocal Pedagogy is the official publication of the International Association for Research in Singing. For more information, contact the publication at Department of Music; POB 32887; Texas Christian University; Fort Worth, TX 76129 USA.