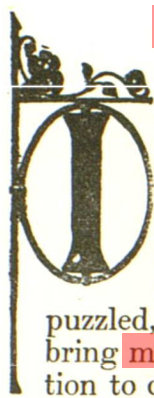


MUSIC AND CHILDREN: BY DAVID MANNES



I HAVE spent about forty years of my life at music, most of that time trying to find out what music can do for children; puzzling through the years; realizing what music has done for me; seeing how many people, equipped technically, having every opportunity, still come very far from reaching the true import of the whole matter! You are puzzled, just as I am. We are trying to find the best way to bring music to the children, just as we are trying to bring education to children with joy.

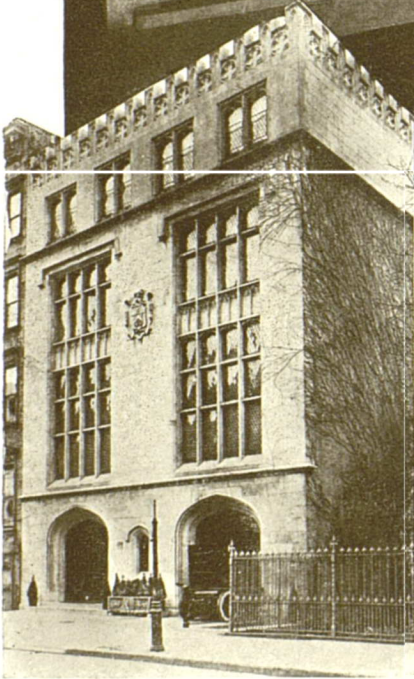
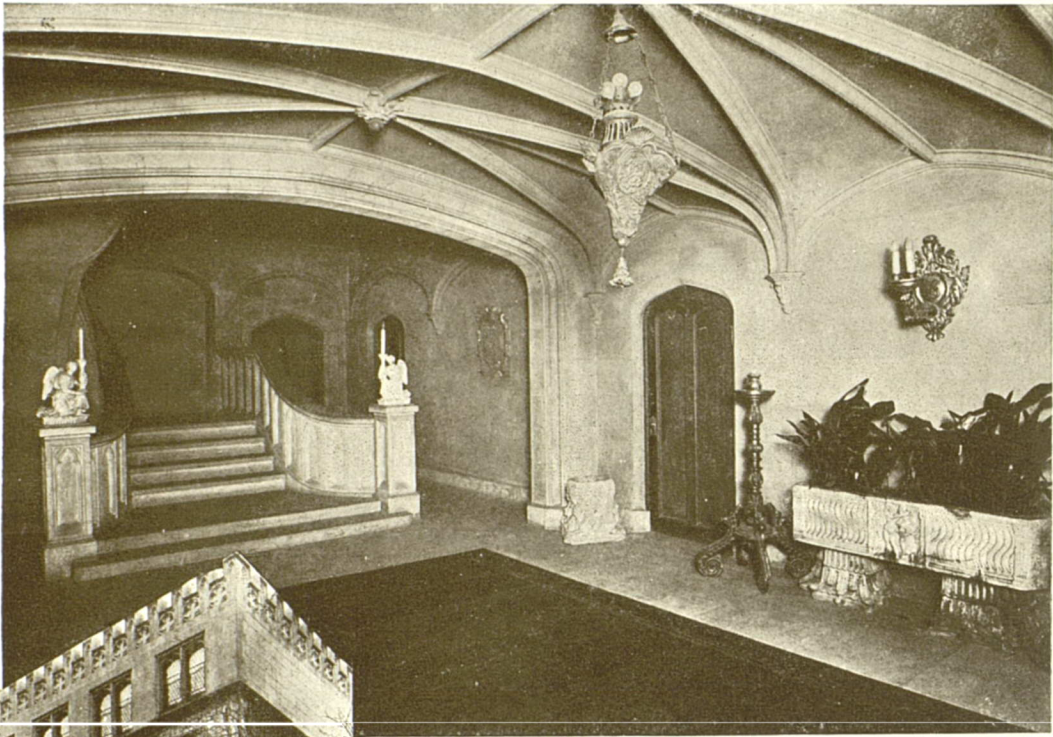
In the ordinary education people receive fact after fact, but the spirit is not stirred. What one feels in playing music and what one can make others feel in listening to music is its whole *raison d'être*. Otherwise the best of music would be finished when it is written and the last dot made. It is not the definite thing that counts in the world but the intangible thing, and it is only the intangible thing that can touch the spirit. In educating people for music, as for many of the arts in this country, we experiment too much with the ideal and not enough with the medium. We teach people to practice a technique rather than to feel tremendously the great beauty of life through art.

Montessori—a wonderful woman—proclaims a new way of teaching, and immediately, all over the world, classes spring up. Yet, not all are successful, because the thing really depended so much on the spirit of Montessori herself. A few who have studied with her have been great enough to absorb something of her greatness, and so to carry on her work. We thought the Gary System might solve the problem of public school education, but it was not so much the system itself as the personality of Wirtz which made the Gary System really effective. And so it is that transmission of an idea or a method through other personalities than that with which it originated is so often fraught with disappointment and failure, and is so seldom successful.

I am so opposed to all the unnecessary rules that overlay the lives of little children. I believe that rules are only necessary when the children are not interested. All normal children begin life with fine gestures, rich vision, dancing feet. Then we start making rules for them, and we bind them up in clothes, clothes for their bodies, for their minds and for their souls. As a child grows up, if his art is great enough he illumines these clothes, but if his gift is small, one of medium size, he may not cut through and break away from them and get beauty by our rules. The weaker people accept rules and give up the battle to express their own original purpose.



DAVID AND CLARA MANNES,
FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY
ARNOLD GENTHE.



ABOVE IS THE DIGNIFIED AND BEAUTIFUL ENTRANCE HALL FROM WHICH YOU GO UP A WINDING STAIRWAY TO THE RECEPTION ROOM AND THE CLASS ROOMS OF THE DAVID MANNES MUSIC SCHOOL. THIS OLD NEW YORK HOUSE IS BUILT WITH QUITE A RARE SENSE OF BEAUTY AND IS FITTED UP WITH RICH OLD ITALIAN FURNITURE GIVING THE EFFECT AS YOU PASS FROM ONE CLASS ROOM TO ANOTHER OF A MUSIC SCHOOL IN AN OLD ITALIAN PALACE.

THE PICTURE AT THE LEFT SHOWS THE FRONT ELEVATION AND ENTRANCES TO THE DAVID MANNES MUSIC SCHOOL. IT IS AN UNUSUAL AND INTERESTING THING IN NEW YORK FOR THE EXTERIOR OF A HOUSE TO SUGGEST ARTISTIC PURPOSES AND YET THIS FINE OLD BUILDING STANDS QUITE ALONE IN BEAUTY AND EFFECTIVENESS AND AT ONCE AWAKENS CURIOSITY AND PLEASURE.

For years we have been searching, believing that some cultural idea would make us fine men and women. We try this religion and then that; we are attached to this and that cult; and with every departure from the ideal reason for existence we falter until there **is** no strength in our thinking. And with the acquisition of these various systems and ideas we are apt to lose sight of the fact that, nevertheless, education may fail to bring about the great understanding, and **music** may fail also. If ever there was a time when we needed sound thinking and adequate reflection it **is** now, in this troubled epoch when the world **is** employed in destroying itself. The point **is**, we really have no deep underlying **faith**. It **is** so rare to find a man or woman really anchored. When once that **is** true any system may prove of great influence. Our children grow down instead of up, because though they came into the world with a simple **faith**, we "educate" it out of them. **My** fifteen years in the **Music** School Settlement was not so much a sociological experiment as an experiment in bringing a new **faith** into those lives through the medium of **music**. I wish I could tell you how successful it was in hundreds of cases. And such improvement as it brought **is** not confined to one generation, but **is** bound to go on and grow.

I BELIEVE the poorest and least developed people should have the most perfect inspiration of art. I would have the little children of the East Side hear piano playing by the most wonderful artists of our time; I should have them in fact get at the very source of beauty. Great artists always reach simple people easily, because the artists have found elemental beauty and the people are ready for it. Artists who have a vision of beauty are close to nature whether they have sought to **be** or not, and so they are very close to the simple people who have not been crushed by too many rules. The greater the artist, the easier it **is** for him to reach the humble people.

I am sure that I am right in saying that every teacher should **be** a dispenser of beauty. School children will not love mathematics unless the figures glow with life. They will not love **music** unless their hearts are breaking over its beauty. They will not love history unless the lives of the people shine through it. We must realize that we all owe it to future generations to educate the children of today so their spirits are alert. Too much paternalism leaves children impotent. You cannot do too much for people, young or old, without hurting them. If you take away responsibility you take away capacity for growth. The most noble thing education **is** capable of **is** to train children to want what **is** beautiful.

When I say beautiful I do not mean the conventional beauty;

I mean the beauty that expresses the great spirit, the Lincoln beauty. We cannot think of Lincoln without comfort, we cannot see any representation of his lean, lined, raw-boned face without a kind of saving grace entering our souls. And when we remember Lincoln, it is not the kind of clothes he wore, or the shape of his head, or even his wonderful, whimsical smile; what we remember is his great presence, a realization of Democracy. What opportunity did Lincoln have for what we call study, for what we call culture; and yet what man who has written for us in America has given freer, sweeter, purer English? He had this beauty in his spirit, he expressed it in words and deeds.

It is the Lincoln spirit in Democracy that makes it worth an unending struggle. The race is developing in its effort to attain its ideal; the ideal is not important except as it forces the race to develop. It is the dream of the present age which is going to be the world dream of the future. The concrete Democracy is no more significant than the paint on the canvas or the music notes on the paper. It is the dream of the artist and the musician and the humanitarian that is essential to the world.

And Democracies can destroy themselves or be destroyed from the outside without lessening the dream, without lessening the need of it for every human being. Children are true democrats. Watch them with each other—perhaps there are no others. I remember that the elder Dumas once said, “Why are children so beautiful and older folks so stupid?” It must be the fault of education. Children hope, people hope through Democracy, that is why Autocracy is coming to an end—it carries no hope for the people.

HERE at our New York School of Music we are trying, in a small way, to bring about sincerity and love of the subject, divorcing from the study of music all thought of personal ambition and pride in performance. For as soon as music is performed with a desire for applause and not simply with a reverent wish to understand and express the thought of the composer, so surely will it fail. There is too much to be thought, and so much to be said! But one thing is most significant, that if you really want to get Beethoven's messages, you must try to live in the line of his thought. I, as a musician, feel that Beethoven left but the merest indication of his great spirit in his symphonies and sonatas; so also with Brahms, and Bach, and César Franck, and with all the great philosophers, poets and prophets. Music is the result and not the means. If you want to approach the greatness of Beethoven's philosophy, or Brahms', or Emerson's, or Christ's, you must find where

you yourself are standing and **be** strong in your own **faith**, whether that **be** Jewish, Christian or Pagan. Education alone will not do it; **music** alone will not do it. All cultural movements are worthless unless their impelling motive **is** a deep, abiding **faith** in the ideal of which they are the expression. If we want our children to grow strong, we must gradually change our viewpoint so as to find out what "success" really means.

Instead of worshipping remote symbols I think the religion of the future will **be** the realization of our own ideals. And if you are teaching people your ideals and helping them to develop their own and opening up young minds so they are channels for beauty to flow through, you are giving the world the greater spirituality. I feel that I cannot reiterate enough the need of developing children by contact with great people. When Christ said, "Suffer little children to come unto me," it was his desire to teach them, the greatest teacher the world has ever known. I find in **my** contact with the world that it **is** always the great artist who bears the stamp of the amateur, a word which really means "a lover of art." I should like to see all professional people raised up to the standard of the amateur.

Who **is** worthy to continue this instruction to the young people of the world—unless it **is** done with great joy and love and understanding? As a matter of fact, we choose people to run our business far more carefully than we choose teachers for our children. We accept a diploma when we should seek for a man's soul. Human factors are tremendously important in the people we select to train our children.