TEACHING PIANO
TO THE VISUALLY-HANDICAPPED

A Thesis Presented for the Degree of
Master of Arts
by
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Approved by:

[Signature]
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Appreciation is also given to the teachers who so kindly answered the questionnaire, the data of which forms a part of this study.
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INTRODUCTION.

A. THE PROBLEM

The problem for this thesis is to submit a study of the teaching of piano to the visually-handicapped child, and to discover procedures and material which are practical in teaching the blind. This subject was chosen in the belief that many of the present procedures are out of date and inadequate to meet present needs of the small child who is beginning to learn to play the piano.

B. IMPORTANCE.

Few studies have appeared for publication concerning the method of teaching piano to the visually-handicapped, how the blind learn music and the conditions under which learning takes place. Of these articles published many diverse procedures are advocated. An attempt is made by the writer to show that teaching the blind to play, with the exception of braille music, is essentially the same as teaching the sighted child.

Two years ago questionnaires were sent to former students of the Ohio State School for the Blind, who are deriving part or all of their income from teaching music or playing. It was found that many of these people were in the field of popular music, and felt their training inadequate to meet present needs. Popular music has been frowned upon more or less in educational circles. However, it is a growing condition that must be met. Included in this study is a short section on the place of popular music in piano study for the blind.

C. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS.

Most of the material in this study was obtained by visits to three state schools for the blind for the purpose of observation and obtaining information
in the form of a questionnaire. Two additional schools were studied through the questionnaire. For the past four years, the writer has been a teacher in the music department at the Ohio State School for the Blind. This experience offered an opportunity for experimentation and observation of the visually-handicapped child in the process of learning to play the piano.

This problem is limited in that it was impossible to visit all eighty-eight schools for the blind. Both progressive and traditional schools were selected for study, and are representative of schools of this type.

METHOD OF STUDY:

First step:
The selection of the problem to be studied.

Second Step:
Making out of a questionnaire in order to secure the necessary information.

Third Step:
Visits to the Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan Schools for the Blind to secure the necessary information. Questionnaires sent to New York State School, and the Pennsylvania Institution for the Blind.

Fourth Step:
Evaluation and presentation in thesis form of the data which was secured through the visitations and use of the questionnaire.
CHAPTER I.

A. The Philosophy of the New Education.

A new education is upon us, reflecting the constantly changing world in which we live, differing from the old in its philosophy and its practices. The learning process is no longer confined to subject matter and the unreal situation of the classroom, but it is related to life itself.

In the past, emphasis has been placed on preparing the child for adulthood. The function of the new school is to enrich his life as he lives it day by day. "Good living at the time one is actually living is the best possible guarantee for improving subsequent living." Problems of the past are not the same as problems of today; in turn, problems of the present will not be the same as those of the future.

"The social aim is the only proper aim of education in a democracy." The new school contributes daily to the social development of its pupils. "Democracy must be practices in everyday affairs of the school, not only in conforming to its requirements but it must be clearly conscious of its guiding principle." In the socialization program, the development of individual personalities is promoted, and intelligence has free play. There is a more responsible, active, and intelligent participation by the students as a cooperative group. "The primary source of social control resides in the nature of the work done as a social enterprise in which all feel a responsibility."

The teacher is no longer considered an autocratic ruler, but rather, as a guide in directing and promoting worthwhile activities in furthering the social development of the students. The children share with each other, and with the teacher, in finding a common satisfaction in their achievements. "The key to the adjustment of the social and the individual aspects of democratic life lies in the voluntary sharing of common interests that result in the assumption of responsibility by the individual for social ends."

"Experience is the best teacher." In this old adage lies one of the fundamental principles of the new education. The education of the child should start with experiences that are meaningful to him, activities which represent real life situations and problems. in turn, these experiences provide the starting point for further desirable experiences. Dewey says, "It becomes the office of the educator to select those things within the range of the existing experience that have the promise and potentiality of presenting new problems which by stimulating new ways of observation and judgment will expand the area of further experience. He must constantly regard what is already won not as a fixed possession but an agency and instrumentality for opening new fields which make new demands upon existing powers of observation and intelligent use of memory. Every experience is a moving force. Its value can be judged only on the ground of what it moves toward and into."

In the past, skills were taught, or rather, forced upon the child to be used as tools, if and when he needed them. In the new education skills grow out of an active desire on the part of the child, motivated through his natural interests and activities. Skills which are not motivated,

1. Ibid. p. 270
and do not proceed from the material at hand, are meaningless.

Education in the new school is an integrated program, emphasizing large activities. This type of curriculum is one that is organized around central themes, one that crosses departmental lines, correlating and integrating the entire educational program. The determining factors of this curriculum lie in the present needs and interests of the children.

The children's needs and interests are many and varied; his experience is increasing in every move he makes. These needs and interests must be directed toward those ends which are most worthwhile for each student. The program in the new education hopes to fit these needs in helping him to grow into a well-adjusted, intelligent, and responsible citizen.

Teachers of the blind need the same philosophy as do teachers of sighted children. "Between the aims of educating the blind and the seeing there is indeed no essential difference . . . . To know, to desire, and actively pursue the things of greatest worth in the spheres of social and personal values are the marks of a good character, to the making of which all educational efforts should be directed."

In light of the philosophy of the new education, the following are characteristics one should find in schools for the blind:

1. Social growth of each child through a democratic education.
2. Enrichment of the child's life as he lives it day by day.
3. Active participation in a growing experience curriculum.
4. Skills growing out of an active desire on the part of the child.
5. An integrated program, emphasizing large activities, and organized through present needs and interests of the child.

1. Report of the Joint Committee of the College of Teachers of the Blind and the National Institute for the Blind, p. 43.
B. Music Education for the Visually Handicapped Children.

Educators have agreed that the responsibility of the new education of today is the forming of the child's entire personality and character. Music is recognized as one of the fields which contributes much to this broader interpretation of education. "The music program should be of such a nature and the school as a whole of such a nature that music is capable of becoming a distinctively essential element of education in helping to create a richer and freer life for all." Music in the new education, therefore, should be valued not only for the cultural enrichment it provides, but also for its contribution to general learning and for its power to improve human relationships.

Music has long held a prominent place in the education of visually-handicapped children. "The child who is without sight reacts to sound with peculiar sensitivity, and in this world of sounds music makes a particular appeal to him." Being deprived of sight there is a wide gap left in the artistic education of the blind. These children find in music a leisure time activity, a recreation which is invaluable to them, and a means of self-expression enabling the blind child, and later, the adult to live more fully and happily in his own environment. Merle Frampton of the New York Institute for the Blind and Columbia University says, "Of all the subjects which the blind may study, music ranks very near the top - if not actually at the top - in importance and inspiration. For its value in mental training, for its refining influence and character building, for its value in developing in the student the capacity to perform or appreciate music, all which things become his priceless possessions throughout life, music would seem to stand alone." 3

The importance of the socializing value of music for the blind cannot be over-emphasized. The visually-handicapped child is frequently anti-social and draws into a world of his own because of his handicap. "Music can be immeasurably helpful in building constructive social attitudes. Being one of the most deeply rooted forms of human expression, the use of music as a means of communication is as social a trait as speech. The language of music has always so flexibly accommodated its services to the emotional needs of people that it can be and is used to great advantage in seeking to develop finer social insights . . . . Music contributes to educating for democratic unity because relations between people become meaningful in the universal language of feeling." The new education requires that music be available to all children, and that musical wealth be shared by the masses.

For the blind child music contributes greatly in providing an outlet for emotional experiences. "When the emotional needs of blind children are met, the result is control, stimulation, and stabilization. These results are developed in three ways:

1. Ability to express emotion by personal performance of music (solo or in a group), by pleasure gained from the performance of others, and through the subtle language of music providing an outlet for emotional experiences.

2. Ability to experience emotion aroused by intelligent appreciation of moods suggested by music.

3. Ability to recognize aesthetic values as intensified by expression, with music as a medium, or due to acquaintance with such values as a result of familiarity with a great art."

Music, to have meaning to the visually-handicapped child, should be related to present experiences in his life and in the school. "A music curriculum that moves from the inside out begins with learners and their


potential capacities, then endeavors to organize a line of progression
that will develop each, in accord with his talents, into a creative,
happy, and useful member of society."  

To become a vital learning experience the music curriculum must be based on the child, his background,
his interests and needs, and organized for musical growth by integrated
experiences which are lifelike and real to him. "Music involves a great
deal more than even the most intelligently directed learning in an iso-
lated setting. It essentially includes an increasing awareness of the
vital relationship of music to the entire ambit of life activities, and
an increasing wish and ability to use in all life relationships . . . .
Music education is not merely the teaching of music. It is also the
relating of music to human life, and the promoting of its use and enjoy-
ment."

"The music program must be concerned with the development of favor-
able attitudes and growing attitudes. These come about when children
have an opportunity to participate in all kinds of pleasurable musical
experiences."  

A true appreciation is an outgrowth of vital first hand experiences, an active participation by each child at the level of his
own interest in all kinds of musical experiences.

The traditional school says the foundation of musical development
is the acquirement of certain skills and habits and items of knowledge.
The new school believes that when the child feels music as something he
enjoys and likes, then he will find the place for technique as an oppor-
tunity to go further into the world of music. "There is no keenest motive
for reading music than the desire to learn it because it is enjoyed.

2. James L. Mursell, Music in American Schools, p. 66.
It has been the writer's experience that the reading of braille music is a lengthy and cumbersome process which is likely to kill the appreciation and love of music if presented to all children. Printed music is naturally pictured in the rise and fall of the melody, while music for the blind must remain pictureless. As a form of mental training braille music earns its place in the curriculum beside arithmetic and reading. To accommodate the individual child who desires these skills, it seems more practical to enroll them in piano classes or braille reading classes.
CHAPTER II.

A. Organization, Materials and Methods.

1. Pre-Piano Activities.

The first experiences with music for the blind or for the sighted child, cannot be over-emphasized, for it is here the foundation is being built on which later knowledges and appreciations rest. What is accomplished later is largely dependent upon what is accomplished in these first contacts with music. One of the best motivations in getting children to want to study an instrument is in giving them chances to take an active part in music under right conditions. Thus, the music program from the start must be a vital, and compelling experience, stimulating an active interest and desire for further experiences.

When the visually-handicapped child begins the study of piano, these experiences with music serve as a foundation of his study. Mursell says, in discussing the foundation of specialized activities: "One of the most serious weaknesses of the teaching of vocal and instrumental performance is the lack of just such a general background. Pupils become singers, or pianists, or violinists rather than musicians. All their activities and learnings are along one line only. They have meager contacts with musical literature; and the variety and range of their musical experiences and culture is very restricted. It is abundantly clear that such defects should be avoided in a properly planned program of music education in the schools."¹

Many activities contribute to a well-planned music program. In planning a program with the main objective being to build up appreciations, backgrounds, and musical contacts, the following should be considered.

1. First and foremost, it is desirable to use much rote singing during this first stage. The one thing needful is the quality and spirit of both songs themselves and of the singing of them, and the endeavor to achieve musical expressiveness, including of course beauty and vitality of vocal tone.

2. Experience in making music with simple instruments, as the rhythm band. The purpose is to render responses more precise.

3. Directed listening. Pupils should be encouraged and helped to attend to specific elements in mood, form, tone quality and instruments; noticing contrasts between high and low, fast and slow, loud and soft, etc.

4. Creative activities should be encouraged. The child should be encouraged in taking of musical and artistic initiatives in the singing of songs, in rhythm play, creating tunes, etc.

5. The development of "ear training", specific aural awareness and discrimination.

6. Rhythmic activities. The child should gain a definite impression of and power to respond to rhythm as beat and as onward flow.

No one of these activities should stand alone, but a combination of all should be woven together in a balanced sequence of meaningful experiences.

As a result of this basic orientation to music, the child entering the study of the piano will not only progress more rapidly, his study will be more meaningful in that it is a continuation of past experiences. These various musical activities should also become a part of the elementary piano program. "Another innovation in the piano class is the stress laid on correlation with the remainder of the school music program."

1. Ibid., pp. 133-136.

TABLE I.
EXPERIENCE WITH MUSIC BEFORE ENTERING THE STUDY OF PIANO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Number of schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Singing</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhythmic</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eurythmics</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhythm Band</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study of Braille notation</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above report of five schools, we find that one school, with the exception of the introduction of braille notation, includes all of the above activities. The program of the other four schools include singing, and braille notation, with the other activities sparsely divided among them.
2. **Class Piano Organization.**

In schools for the blind, the prevailing method for piano teaching has been that of individual instruction. Few have adopted the class method, and as a result there is little available material concerning such practice.

It is the opinion of the writer that particularly in the training of visually-handicapped children, class instruction, if carried on properly, is more profitable than private instruction.

The blind child is apt to be a solitary person, inclined toward living within himself. One of the fundamental objectives in all phases of his training, therefore, is to assist him in overcoming this tendency and enable him to live an active, social life, comparable to that of a normal individual.

The method of individual instruction is without any of the social element which is essential to the development of the child. He sits alone with his teacher for the lesson, and in solitude he practices. The outstanding argument in favor of class instruction for the blind, is the fostering of the social element. The piano lessons instead of being a tedious and solitary study become class projects in which the stimulus for cooperation and progress play a prominent role. "The class properly directed, can foster a sense of cooperative responsibility. The great weakness of education organized in terms of lesson-learning is that there is none of this feeling of a joint, shared responsibility."

The fact that music is a social activity is influencing many educators to advocate piano class instruction for beginners. "Nothing is more

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significant of the increasing socialization of education than the rapid extension of instrumental classes in connection with schools. The idea underlying this movement is that playing upon an instrument is not merely a personal accomplishment with individual benefits, but it is also a social power which effects many persons in addition to the performer.  

The size of the piano class for the visually-handicapped should be limited to five or six students. Such limitation is of advantage to both teachers and pupils. The class is small enough to assure adequate attention on the part of the teacher to each student. The pupils benefit by the teachers being able to note individual progress and the needs of pupils.

To accommodate a piano class of this size each child should be provided with an adequate dummy keyboard with movable keys, if possible. There should be one piano in the class, which could be used by each student in his turn. In this way, each child would be frequently afforded actual piano experience, and at the same time the students using the dummy keyboards would not be without the tactile experience of playing.

The satisfactory conduct of the class lies with the ability of the teacher. "The class can arouse momentum and enthusiasm, and it should be planned with this in mind . . . . The arousal of enthusiasm, and of a positive attitude toward music in general and towards the particular musical undertaking in hand, is of peculiar importance with young children."  

The teacher must be alert to good points as they occur, and capitalize on them. At the same time she should check constantly on the progress, or lack of progress of each student. In this way she may help the individual student when and where the need arises.

### TABLE II.

ORGANIZATION OF PIANO CLASSES FOR THE BEGINNER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Teachers reporting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Lessons</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual instruction</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination of class and individual instruction</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table II indicates that the most of the piano instruction is done by means of individual lessons. Of the seven teachers reporting only two teachers have adopted the class method, and state they are obtaining most satisfactory results in its use.

### TABLE III.

PLANNING OF THE LESSON

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of lessons per week</th>
<th>Teachers Reporting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One lesson</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two lessons</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every day</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of lessons</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forty-five minutes</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thirty minutes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twenty minutes</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ten minutes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time allowed for daily practice</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forty-five minutes</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifty minutes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We observe from Table III that the number of lessons vary from one lesson a week to a lesson each day. The length of lessons vary from ten minutes to forty-five minutes. Both indicate that for the most part lessons are too long, and too infrequent for the beginning piano student. Practice time is many times longer than the lesson time, with the exception of one case. A more satisfactory plan would be in limiting the class lessons to thirty minutes, thus affording more frequent class lessons and supplementing them with individual periods of the remaining fifteen minutes, for the purpose of meeting with specific needs of individual pupils.

"The ideal arrangement for the piano student is undoubtedly a combination of class lessons and individual lessons. However, it is the opinion of the writer that if it were a choice between giving class lessons only, or individual lessons only, there is no doubt that the student would get a far broader musical education through studying in a group rather than having solely 'private lessons in piano playing.' "

3. Introduction of Braille Notation.

The reading of the score for the blind opens up avenues that might otherwise be closed. Since the visually-handicapped cannot become a completely independent pianist, free to discover what others have written, the question of music reading must be considered.

Too often the study of notation is forced upon the child in settings that are meaningless to him. The writer feels that great care must be given in teaching the young visually-handicapped child to read, as there is always a danger of producing a negative attitude toward not only piano, but the entire subject of music.

"In the beginning the group should begin learning music they are to play by hearing it and singing it. Modern instrumental teaching strongly 1 emphasizes the so-called vocal-approach." Learning by rote is a stimulus for the beginner. From the very beginning he can play tunes he has learned through singing and takes pride in doing so, though the melodies may be elementary and consist of only a few tones. "The great thing in favor of the rote song approach to piano playing is the fact that the child is enabled to produce music at once, and it is his success in making music at the first lesson that stimulates him to come to class the next time and the next." 2 Careful development of habits in playing should be carried throughout the rote presentation, and will in turn aid in good reading habits later.

The blind child advances more slowly in his reading process than the sighted child, in that braille music is literal in every detail. The class situation is a more nearly ideal setting, as the child has an opportunity of participating in many varied musical activities. In concentrating on reading alone, the child may lose interest in the study of piano,


thus retarding his progress. Piano study must be a pleasurable experience for the student. The writer is of the opinion that if the child is afforded a broad musical background through participation of many activities, and a slow but firm reading process, the teacher may be assured of rapid progress later in the reading of braille notation.

"Singing, body activity, creating melodies, developing memorized repertory, and reading music are all part of the elementary piano work"

1. Singing. The singing of elementary tunes, preferably in the G position, to be played by the children.

2. Transportation. Transposing pieces from the beginning to easy keys.

3. Rhythmic activity. A beginning class in using bodily response to music develops a rhythmic sense.
   a. Large bodily motions give a feeling of the swing, or wholeness of a phrase or pattern.
   b. Distinguishing between $3/4$, $4/4$, $6/8$, by tapping, clapping, etc.
   c. Stepping the note values and establishing the relationship between bodily rhythms and the braille page.

4. Rote Pieces. Rote teaching, as well as reading from notation, should continue even through high school. Many blind adults learn this way after leaving the supervision of the teacher.

5. Ear-training. Simple chord structure, to be used in harmonization of pieces. Playing tunes by ear. Creating tunes as a class project. Awareness of tone quality, melodic flow, rhythmic patterns, etc. Ear training should be a part of every activity.

6. Skills. Technical development should grow out of the music which the child is playing. The development of skills are more meaningful to the child if he discovers them as a need in improving his playing.

Notation should not be delayed too long, its presentation depending upon the class and its capabilities. Under the correct motivation of the teacher the children will eventually want to know what the music is like in a tune he is playing, or will later want to see if he can learn a new tune from the braille copy. Naturally, the teacher should guide and help carry the class over the rough places when help is needed. The reading from the braille copy should be coordinated with the rote work as far as possible. Thus, the teacher must develop a reading readiness.

Raymond Burrows, of Columbia University says, in reference to the attainment of reading facility: "A considerable number of pieces will be studied, including (1) material presented by rote as a background for good reading, (2) observation pieces which show the notation as the rote piece is being learned, (3) study pieces which are learned from the notation under the teacher's guidance, and (4) reading which is attempted independently by the pupil."  

**TABLE IV.**

**METHOD OF INTRODUCING NOTATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Number of teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rote</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table IV shows that the note approach is the most widely used method of teaching notation to the beginning piano student. Five

teachers recommended that braille notation be presented before the child begins the study of piano. Among the answers given were the following: "I prefer that all children know braille before they come to piano. They advance more rapidly." "Elements of music are taught before individual piano instruction."

All piano study should have ear training as its roots. Too often the study of piano for the blind starts and ends with the Braille page, when after all music is concerned with hearing and feeling. The importance of cultivating the ear from the start cannot be over-emphasized. "Hearing is the very center of musicianship . . . No one thing so surely favors the rapid progress of the beginner, or lays a better foundation for speedy and continuing development of musical and technical powers and control than training him in the ability to hear well."

The training of the ear must not be put aside as a specific drill. The writer has found that a better, surer way of increasing the child's ability to hear well is to put it into use in the materials and activities of the class. It is more meaningful to him in actual musical settings, and there is not the possibility of destroying its value.

In considering specifically how this can be done, the writer has found the following methods helpful:

1. The child must learn to think tonal quality in connection with his own performance at the piano. Class instruction is more nearly ideal in that the child has the opportunity of hearing others and by improving himself as to what he hears. The recording machine has also proved most helpful in that the child is able to hear his own performance.

2. There is always the danger of the child playing note-wise, rather than phrase-wise. The blind child learns his music note by note, and receives no impression of the melody from the Braille musical score. Stress must be made from the beginning on his awareness of the melodic flow. The rote approach is ideal, in laying a foundation for the feeling of wholeness in a phrase or composition. The teacher may also play for the child and draw his attention through discovery, of the melodic pattern, like phrases, tonal sequences, etc.

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3. Ear training is part of the creative phase in the teaching of piano. We may play or sing part of a phrase for the child and have him complete the tune. He may end a tune he already knows in a different way. The class may write a poem and set it to music, discussing and contributing their share. The children may make tunes of their own.

4. Chord structure and recognition of chords should be approached from as many angles as possible. The children may harmonize one of the tunes they have learned, or one which they have composed, using simple chord progressions, I, IV, V. They may listen for cadences and identify them in music. Later the analysis of chords helps toward better and quicker memorization.

5. Playing by ear can be developed to some extent. Children delight in picking out songs they know, and with a little help they can learn to harmonize them. This type of training has been more or less frowned upon by teachers of both sighted and blind. The writer feels that from a practical standpoint the ability to play by ear should be developed. The child not only enjoys playing the little tunes he learns by ear now, but later in adult life most of his learning is by ear rather than by note. It may be further substantiated by the fact that so little music is available in braille. "Supplementing the use, for reading of melodies that are at least partially familiar should be very definite development of playing by ear." ¹

"Ear training is not an isolated feature of school music, set off by itself, but rather a constant part of every moment of music experience. It must be clearly felt that all the items in the training of the ear are by-products of singing and playing and listening, and are only studied because they add to the enjoyment of these activities." ²


## TABLE V.
**EAR TRAINING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Number of Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formalized drill</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use in material</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowing the child to play by ear and developing this phase with the reading of braille music</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not allowing the child to play by ear</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is noticed in the above table that all teachers advocate ear-training. Only two use it in actual material. In turn these two teachers allow the child to play by ear and develop this phase with the reading of braille music.
5. **Materials.**

The choice of material should always be a matter of concern with the teacher, as the material in itself influences the child in producing a favorable attitude toward the piano. In that the material is a primary educational influence, the teacher should familiarize herself with a wide variety of literature, and from it select that which seems most applicable, and most worthwhile according to the needs and the abilities of students.

There is an abundance of interesting and truly musical literature which is not beyond the child's understanding or ability to perform. The choice of a method will depend upon the material musically, its interest to the child, and the educative steps through which it leads him.

**As a basis for selection the following questions may be asked:**

"1. Is the material musically significant?

2. Does the method forward the interest of the child?

3. Does it develop problems in logical order?

4. Is there an opportunity for developing some technical command?

5. Does it lay a foundation in technical skills which will guarantee a steady growth upon the part of the pupil?

6. Does it relate the instructional material to the music work taught in the grade-school classes, inspiring a continuous functioning unit of learning?

7. Does it provide the child's natural interest in music by furnishing him from the very beginning an abundance of fine melodies from which to draw technical studies as the need for them is felt by the student himself?"

---

It is the opinion of the writer that a variety of material is preferable to any single series or so-called method. The visually-handicapped child progresses rather slowly in his reading of the Braille score, and the majority of methods advance too rapidly. Supplementary material, appropriate to individual needs, may help to keep the student at his own rate and level of development.

SUGGESTED MATERIALS FOR THE BEGINNING PIANIST.

Rote approach:
- Singing and Playing - Oxford Piano Course
- Bauer, Diller-Quaile - First Book
- At the Piano, Book I - Bernice Frost
- The Melody Way - Miessner
- Playing the Piano - Maier - Corzilius

Note approach:
- Teaching Little Fingers to Play - John Thompson
- First Grade Book - John Thompson
- First Steps for the Young Pianist - Kinsella
- First Solo Book - Diller - Quaile

Supplementary Material:
- Off We Go - Diller - Quaile
- From Days of Old - Angela Diller
- First Dust Book - Diller - Quaile
- Five Pieces in the First Grade - Mana Zucca
- Concord Piano Book I - Katherine Davis
- Keyboard Secrets - Dorothy Blake
- World of Music Series - First Book
**TABLE VI.**

**MATERIALS FOR BEGINNING PIANO.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Number of Teachers using them</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diller Quaile - First Solo Book</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Thompson - Teaching Little Fingers to Play</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Williams - First Grade Book</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannon Studies</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meyers - First Etude</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louis E. Robyn - Technique Tales</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phrahl - First Piano Book</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diller - Quaile - Off We Go</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxford - Singing and Playing</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table VI shows that the material as a whole is fairly good. The Hannon Study is questionable in that it is purely a technical book of exercises. The scarcity of the use of material advocating the rote or G approach is noticeable. Of the seven teachers reporting, each teacher reports using at least two or more methods.
B. POPULAR MUSIC IN SCHOOLS FOR THE BLIND.

The writer was unable to obtain information as to the exact percent of the blind deriving part or all of their income from music. However, it was found that the majority of blind adults were securing their income from popular rather than classical music.

There is a general feeling against popular music in schools for the blind. If popular music is one of the means by which the visually-handicapped can earn money to keep themselves, the writer is of the opinion that we should answer this challenge in some way, rather than evading the issue by saying music of this type is no good. Competition is so keen that the blind should be equipped with the best musicianship possible, including both popular and classical music.

There have been many controversies over the so-called popular or swing music. Whatever one's belief, or taste may be, one must recognize the fact that popular music is part of our everyday living. Teachers should have a sympathetic understanding of music of the present as well as that of the past. Those with eyes fixed on the works of the masters only, cling to beliefs that apply rather to music of fifty years ago, than to that of our time. In accepting popular music, teachers will most likely create a favorable attitude for the acceptance and understanding of all music. In failing to sympathize, there is danger in promoting a measure of antagonism toward the music program. Teachers may err in using one type of music to the exclusion of the other. For all students, there should be experience with and understanding of both types.

The fact that popular music is a growing force that cannot be ignored has influenced modern music educators to make the following statements:
"Good music will come to be loved through the process of occasional substitution, rather than by the wholesale condemnation of popular music. So in the public schools with the masses of children, it may be wise to use some of the popular music of the day."

"There is an excellence of jazz, and another excellence of light opera, and another excellence of symphonic literature; and we should be hospitable and sensitive to all of them."  

"Narrow, devitalized programs are likely to fare badly in these days of boogie-woogie and Toscanini, of Stokowski and the sound film, and of Walt Disney and the animated cartoon."

As a result of a questionnaire sent to professional blind musicians several years ago, teachers in the Ohio State School for the Blind were asked to consider the possibilities of including popular music in the course of study. Ruth Williams, vocal teacher, and the writer devised a plan for writing braille popular music, simplifying the score for the student and cutting the length in half (the usual chorus of popular music covers four or more braille pages). The single melody notes are written in the right hand. Instead of writing a full left hand, chord signs were devised to be placed after the single note, thus designating the chord to be used. Many sighted pianists play popular music this way, reading only the melody line and the chord sign written above, improvising as he sees fit. The following shows the various chords used in playing popular music, its braille sign, and the braille meaning of the sign:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chord</th>
<th>Sign</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major</td>
<td>Note only</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor</td>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Augmented</td>
<td></td>
<td>Plus or en</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diminished</td>
<td></td>
<td>Minus or in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh</td>
<td></td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major seventh</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor seventh</td>
<td></td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Added sixth</td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Many students were not familiar with the various chords. The first lessons were spent in left hand chord patterns in easy keys, applied to actual material. As the students progressed they were shown how to add full chords in the right hand. Later more complicated chords were added, and eventually improvisation was introduced. Styles of leading pianists were studied. The students were always encouraged to develop their own style of playing. It takes time to feel into the entertainment manner of playing popular music and the student should have opportunities in playing for group singing, soloist, dance bands, etc.

These students did not possess the background the younger piano students are receiving today. The foundation of popular music is being initiated, unknowingly to the child from his first piano lessons. The emphasis placed on ear training; use and recognition of chords, etc, is preparing the child so that if he feels a need to play popular music (most of them do), the transfer is an easy one to make. This, it seems to the writer, is more ideal than segregating pupils into popular music classes.

The writer does not believe that a distinct line should be drawn between the categories of popular and classical music. It is quite possible for the musician to play both well, as illustrated by Jose Iturbi, the well known pianist and conductor. The ability to play popular music should be developed under supervision, where it can be balanced and refined by equal participation in the purer forms of more reflective music.

**TABLE VII.**

**EXTENT OF TRAINING IN POPULAR MUSIC IN SCHOOLS FOR THE BLIND.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schools in which popular music is taught . . . . . . . 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools in which popular music is not taught . . . . . . 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table VII shows that one school includes popular music in the course of study. Four schools do not feel that provision should be made for this type of music in the school program. One of the four schools states the students have organized a dance band, and that the music faculty gives assistance when requested by members of the band.

**TABLE VIII.**

**METHOD OF LEARNING MUSIC AFTER THE VISUALLY-HANDICAPPED LEAVE SCHOOL.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Number of schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By ear</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dictated</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rote</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table VIII shows that the most popular method in learning music after the visually handicapped leave the supervision of the teacher, is by ear. This is interesting to note in comparison with Table IV, which shows that only two teachers out of seven recommend that the child be allowed to play by ear. Few students are reported to buy available Braille music and learn it after leaving school. Popular music is not available in braille.
CHAPTER III.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After studying the material presented in the preceding chapter, we get an idea of the conditions that exist in the five blind schools studied.

CONCLUSIONS.

It was found that four schools recommend the study of Braille notation and singing, as pre-piano activities. Other activities were sparsely scattered among them. The remaining school included in its pre-piano program the following: singing (rote), rhythmic and creative activities, listening, and rhythm band.

It was found in the organization of piano study that the class method has been adopted by two teachers. Five teachers prefer individual instruction.

Ear training is a part of the piano program in all of the schools. Two teachers out of seven recommend its use in all activities of the class.

In the introduction of braille notation, two teachers use the rote approach. Five teachers recommend the note approach, and four of these prefer the introduction of notation before the child enters the study of the piano.

It was found that a variety of piano material is used for beginners in the five schools. There is a lack of material advocating the rote approach. Teachers recommend the use of two or more methods.

It was found that music takes a prominent place in vocations for the blind. Of those students who pursue a musical career, a greater percent derive their income from popular music.
One school advocates the teaching of popular music as part of the music course of study. Four schools are of the opinion that music of this type should not be included in the school program.

Five of the teachers do not allow the students to play by ear. It was found that the most prominent method in learning music after the students leave school is by ear.
RECOMMENDATIONS.

To improve the conditions that now exist in the teaching of piano in schools for the blind, it is necessary to start with the musical experiences of the child before he begins the study of piano. The children should have an opportunity of participating in a variety of activities: rote singing, listening, rhythmic and creative activities, rhythm band, and ear training as a part of all activities. In these first musical contacts the foundation is being built on which later knowledges and appreciations rest.

Many modern educators are advocating class piano instruction in preference to individual instruction. Class piano instruction is of particular importance; it fosters the social element, encourages cooperation, and a feeling of joint responsibility, and serves as a stimulus. The ideal arrangement is the combination of both individual instruction and class instruction. In this way the teacher may meet the individual needs and problems of each pupil.

All piano study should have ear training as a part of every activity, to be used in actual material. It is more meaningful to the child this way, and is not so apt to lose its value as in setting it aside as a specific drill. The awareness of tonal quality, melodic flow of the music, construction and use of chords, creating tunes, playing by ear, etc, are all important in the ear-training program.

The method of introducing notation is of special importance in teaching the blind child to read music. The rote approach is a stimulus to the child, and created interest in wanting to read the braille score. The child is able to play from his first lesson tunes he has learned through
singing, correlating the study of piano with pre-piano activities. In introducing notation by the vocal approach, the teacher is more likely to produce positive attitudes toward the study of piano.

Another factor in creating positive attitudes is the choice of material. The material must be musically significant, and must be of vital interest to the child. The use of a variety of materials is better than any one method. This enables the teacher to adapt that which is more applicable to the needs and abilities of the class.

Popular music should be included in the music course of study in schools for the blind, and taught in conjunction with other musical training. Educators must realize that popular music is a definite part of our American music today, and that children should not be kept living exclusively in the past. It is of great importance in schools for the blind, in view of the fact that a majority of the visually-handicapped musicians' only source of income is in the playing and singing of popular music.

In conclusion the following recommendations for improvement of the study of the piano in schools for the blind are made:

1. Richer and more varied offerings of music activities should be included in the music program before the child enters the study of piano.

2. A combination of class and private instruction for the beginning piano students.

3. Ear training as a part of every activity in the music class, to be used in actual material.

4. Playing by ear should be encouraged.

5. The rote approach in preference to the note approach is better in introducing braille notation to the blind child.
6. The material must be musically significant, interesting to the child, and adapted to needs and abilities of the class.

7. Popular music should be included in the music course of study.
QUESTIONNAIRE.
Questionnaire.

School - 

Teacher - 

1. What are the requirements for entrance to piano study in your school?

   

2. What experience with music have these children had before entering piano?

   

3. Planning of the Lesson.
   
   a. Number of lessons per week.
   
   b. Length of lesson.
   
   c. Time allowed for practice each day.

4. Introduction of Braille notation.
   
   a. Do you require a proficiency in reading Braille music before the child enters piano?
   
   b. Do you present Braille notation immediately to the student upon entering piano?
   
   c. If notation is not introduced immediately what other materials and activities do you present in your first lessons?

   

5. Method of introducing notation. Check.
   
   a. Rote
   
   b. Note
6. Materials for the beginner. Check the method you use.
   a. Diller-Quaille First Solo Book
   b. John Thompson - Teaching Little Fingers to Play
   c. John Williams - First Grade Book
   d. Other materials ________________________________

7. Is ear training a part of the program for the beginner? ________

8. Do you allow or help the child to play by ear and develop this phase
   with the reading of braille music? ________

9. Do you teach simple chord structure and progressions to your elementary
   students? ________

   What is your approach ________________________________

   ___________________________________________________

10. Tension and rigidity are characteristic of many visually-handicapped
    children. What methods do you use in helping the child relax at the
    piano.

    __________________________________________________

    __________________________________________________

11. Organization of piano classes in your school. Check.
    a. Individual instruction.
    b. Class lessons.
    c. Combination of class and private instruction.
12. Do you find class lessons as beneficial to the child as individual instructions? 
   
   a. Do you find more interest on the part of the children? 
   
   b. Over what period of time do the children participate as a class? 
   
   c. What materials and activities are used for class piano instruction? 
   
13. Do you require a foundation of piano for pupils studying orchestral instruments? 
   
14. Music as a vocation. 
   
   a. What percentage of the students leaving your school derive all or part of their income from music? 
   
   b. Classical ______ Popular ______
   
15. Do these students continue to learn new music by braille? 
   
   a. If not, how do they learn new music or music not available in braille? 
   
16. Do you think popular music should be taught in a school for the blind? 
   
17. Is there any provision for teaching popular music in your school, or in helping students who want it? 
   
   a. How is it taught? 
   
   ________________________________________________________
BIBLIOGRAPHY


