

Tempo

A QUARTERLY REVIEW OF MODERN MUSIC

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In two articles in the following pages Geoffrey Winters discusses some recent publications concerned with music teaching in schools. The methods and approaches expounded in them are very different in many respects, indeed diametrically opposed in some, although there are also some common features. Each method has a respectable following in this country, and worthwhile results to show, though none provides altogether satisfactory answers to questions as to the function of school music education for the average child. That function depends on the function and place of music in society generally, which have changed considerably since Kodály embarked on his educative mission half a century ago, and are still changing rapidly. It is no longer true, for instance, and has not been true for many years, that familiarity with music cannot be acquired (as Kodály said on numerous occasions) without the ability to read it. This is one of the reasons why modern educational theory (in other fields as well as music) has moved away from the stress on 'literacy' that Kodály set such store by.

It is probably true that of any class of, say, forty pupils that receives any sort of music teaching, only one, if that, will continue to occupy himself with music in any active sense; not more than one in ten, and probably less than that, will become occasional or regular concert-goers or radio listeners, while the rest will be indifferent to music, or prefer drivel. But modern music education, after giving it a trial some decades ago, has firmly rejected the role of trainer of possible one-in-ten as the audience of the future. Brian Dennis and Peter Aston have this in common with Kodály, although not sharing his concern with 'literacy', that they also believe in actively engaging their pupils in making music of some sort.

A worthwhile investigation might be made into the influence of either sort of teaching, or indeed any sort of music teaching at school, on musical experience in adult life. A sudden awakening of interest in music, or any art, in adolescence is a fairly common occurrence. Are there any clear indications that this is more likely to happen to adolescents who have had some stimulating encounter with music at school, or is there no significant link between the two? It is observable that natural musical aptitude and facility do not always go together with keen musical interest or discriminating sensibility, and that many a listener with a less quick or accurate ear is more passionately, sensitively and creatively involved with music. Such an investigation would perhaps suggest that music at school should be looked on rather as an intrinsically valuable, enjoyable and self-contained communal activity than as a preparation for future experience of music as art (as epitomised in, say, a Beethoven symphony).

Should a distinction be made between these two manifestations of musical interest—not implying any disparagement of either, but assuming no necessary connection, and no progression from activity to art? It is a possibility perhaps less disturbing to consider than the present signs (in *Setz die Segel zur Sonne*, for instance) of a movement in the opposite direction, from art to activity.