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Music and Mass Education: Cultivation or Control?

Rosemary Golding

Published in 1960, a Ministry of Education pamphlet on 'Music in Schools' put forward the idea that 'What saved music for the schools was the recognition of its educative values by the great educational reformers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries'.¹ The author noted that 'the value of song not merely as a recreation but also as a humanising and ennobling influence was accepted by leading thinkers in this country before the period of compulsory education'.²

Extending the musical franchise through the systematic inclusion of music in the school curriculum may have allowed the working classes to access formal music education, including music literacy, hitherto the preserve of the middle and upper classes. It may have introduced new experiences and developed the cognitive and emotional horizons of a class often held back by only the most basic schooling. But it also formed part of a system of education designed to counteract tensions in society, and the rhetoric surrounding the use of music demonstrates its function not only as an enjoyable pastime and humanising agent but a means of control and influence. Music's physical and moral advantages for the individual were tied in with benefits for society as a whole, the importance of 'civilising' the working classes became increasingly critical as patterns of living and working shifted. Published documents from the middle of the nineteenth century reveal a multitude of arguments behind the inclusion of music in elementary education for the masses, rooted in the apparent tension between liberal educational ideals and the conservative impulse towards control and systemisation.

The nineteenth century saw a steady move from an assortment of different educational systems supported by individuals and religious organisations, to a state-operated and –overseen matrix. Formal support for growth in elementary education was hampered by conflicting religious groups and a reluctance to impose centralised agendas. Educational opportunities were offered by the Anglican, Catholic and dissenting churches, and no single group wanted to support government interference at the expense of control, fearful it would reduce the religious content of teaching. Many were suspicious and concerned that the government would use education to extend its influence.³ Reform in general education was, as a result, slow. In addition to privately-funded charity schools operating on an individual basis, from the 1840s other educational establishments included workhouse schools, industrial schools also aimed at pauper children, and reformatory schools for young offenders. The 1870 Education Act was intended to

¹ Ministry of Education pamphlet no. 27 'Music in Schools' (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1960), 4.

² Ministry of Education, 'Music in Schools', 4.

³ John Lawson and Harold Silver, *A Social History of Education in England* (London: Methuen, 1973), 249-50.

fill in any gaps left by such provision, and gradually to draw schools into a common framework for curriculum and standards.

Utilitarianism provided an influential philosophy for much nineteenth-century reform, including a secular basis for mass education. Widespread changes to educational provision, including both elementary and secondary education, a new university in London and the mechanics' institute movement, followed the utilitarians' conviction that all people should be educated.⁴ While the root of utilitarian philosophy was centred on happiness (Jeremy Bentham's doctrine of 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number'⁵), in educational terms different social classes were to be educated in order to fulfil their social role—whether to work or to govern. This placed widespread education well within traditional and accepted social norms. Nevertheless, the Scottish philosopher, historian, and economist James Mill (an acquaintance of Bentham and father of John Stuart Mill) described education for the poor in terms that suggest going beyond the basics: 'a firm foundation may be laid for a life of mental action, a life of wisdom, and reflection, and ingenuity, even in those by whom the most ordinary labour will fall to be performed'.⁶ Education was a way not only of equipping people for their station in life, but giving them enjoyment and purpose beyond economic survival.

The philanthropic endeavours of the Victorian educated classes frequently brought music and other arts into the realm of the poor, and particularly the new urban working-class communities. Such activity can be either characterised as a means of social engineering and control, or dismissed as a naïve and patronising attempt to inflict elitist values on the new urban working class, having little practical effect on the problems of disease and malnourishment prevalent in the expanding city slums. Yet at the time schemes to introduce the arts as a form of improvement were taken seriously, both by the working classes, many of whom valued self-improvement, and by the authorities supporting such work. Writing on the late-Victorian period, Geoffrey Ginn contends that many such schemes were genuine attempts to improve lives via cultural experiences—'not necessarily regarded as an alien culture of the governing elite imposed for largely self-interested reasons.'⁷ Thus the apparent tensions between genuine liberal approaches to education and the arts, and the rhetoric of national interest, control and improvement, need careful contextualisation.

⁴ Lawson and Silver, *A Social History*, 231.

⁵ J.H. Burns and H.L.A. Hart (ed.), Jeremy Bentham, *A Comment on the Commentaries and A Fragment on Government* (London: Athlone Press, 1977 [1776]), 393.

⁶ James Mill, 'Education' in *Supplement to the Encyclopaedia Britannica* (London: 1819), 29.

⁷ Geoffrey A. C. Ginn, *Culture, Philanthropy and the Poor in Late-Victorian London* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 5.

Music and the Victorian Public Institution

The Victorian strategy of founding large public institutions, together with the trend for social philanthropy, saw music gain a place in several new locations, and these provide a context for some of the debates over music's place in elementary education. The popularity of mass singing classes, with tonic sol-fa at the centre of their success, epitomises the identity of music as a means of social control, education and recreation.⁸ The tonic sol-fa movement promoted by the Curwens was originally explicitly associated with a Dissenting ideology, linking evangelism with philanthropy. The musical movement was closely linked to an interest in the rights of the poor, but also concerned with a Christian vision of morality and refinement. Once established, John Curwen was keen to emphasise the universality of tonic sol-fa, yet it retained its paternalistic associations through its role within 'rational recreation'.

Music was also to be found on occasion in less salubrious surroundings. At Beaminster workhouse in Dorset, for example, music was part of a series of charitable acts which saw the inmates enjoy schooling, plum pudding and beer at Christmas and, for the old and infirm, tea with their evening meal.⁹ Music was introduced in the late 1860s under the schoolmaster Thomas Beale, who was employed between 1868 and 1872. The children of the Workhouse established a Union Fife and Drum Band, which would provide music for a Church Sunday School treat in the summer, as well as occasional parades. For young people in public institutions, music training was a valuable option due to the common destination of the armed forces. Young men trained as bandsmen or band leaders might go on to a place at Kneller Hall, founded in 1857 as the training establishment for military musicians. The Bridewell Hospital, which took in homeless pauper children as apprentices, offered a basic education to boys as well as training in a number of trades. From its foundation in the sixteenth century, Bridewell had combined a prison with accommodation for the pauper children. In 1830, the children were moved to a separate establishment known as the 'House of Occupations', which became focussed on education, and in 1860 the institution became known as the King Edward's Schools.¹⁰ The new schools employed professional musicians, including an organist and bandmaster, and provided substantial instrumental tuition to selected pupils with the intention of securing them posts as military musicians.

⁸ See Charles Edward McGuire, *Music and Victorian Philanthropy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), particularly Chapter 2, 'Dissenters, Philanthropists, and the World of Tonic Sol-fa'.

⁹ Peter Higginbotham, 'Beaminster, Dorset', *The Workhouse: The Story of an Institution* (<http://www.workhouses.org.uk/Beaminster/>, 2016) accessed 22 September 2017

¹⁰ See Tim Hitchcock, Sharon Howard and Robert Shoemaker, 'Bridewell Prison and Hospital', *London Lives, 1690-1800* (www.londonlives.org, version, 1.1 17 June 2012). [accessed 22 September 2017](http://www.londonlives.org), and Peter Higginbotham, 'House of Occupations/ King Edward's School, Southwark, London', *Children's Homes* (<http://www.childrenshomes.org.uk/SouthwarkKE/>, 2016) accessed 22 September 2017.

An equally surprising location is Yarmouth Gaol, where singing formed a part of prison discipline as well as a site of deviant behaviour.¹¹ Two main systems were used for prison discipline, but both prohibited communication between prisoners. As with all Victorian institutions, religion played an important part in prison life and chapel attendance, with the opportunity for hymn singing, was often the only opportunity for prisoners to join together in communal activity. Some institutions, such as Parkhurst juvenile reformatory, saw singing and formal choirs used as part of a programme of character improvement.¹² In other locations singing with too much enthusiasm was viewed with suspicion.¹³ Under the cover of singing and music inmates might have the opportunity to converse, or to subvert the religious tenor by adding their own less acceptable texts. At Yarmouth the emphasis was usually towards rehabilitation and Sarah Martin (1791-1843), a volunteer visitor, used employment and Christian teaching to influence her charges during her visits between 1818 and 1843.

Describing a drawing of Sarah Martin conducting the service at Yarmouth gaol, Helen Rogers suggests that, through their singing, the prisoners ‘find liberation as well as redemption [...] This is a community, not just a prison.’¹⁴ The stories of reform linked to Sarah Martin’s work point to the specific influence of music, and hymn-singing in particular, in providing a new direction for prisoners. Music was used to aid literacy: inmates were expected to memorise bible verses as part of their reform and many did so with the aid of hymns. Within the restrictive religious context this use of music was also a form of discipline. Martin’s work provided liberation indeed, but the accounts of her methods reveal music as part of a didactic approach to education via rote learning and strict memorisation of hymns and scriptural verses. Singing, Rogers notes, was also not confined to the beneficial activities of religion, with inmates using songs and their voices to challenge regulations and authority.¹⁵ Singing allowed prisoners to maintain something of their cultural identity in the face of strict regulations, and to attract the attention of others. Martin’s musical activities also allowed prisoners a degree of freedom otherwise not permitted, with a small number taking advantage of the opportunities to converse or otherwise communicate freely. While music became more commonly used at American penal institutions, attitudes in the UK were not swayed and it did not become part of British correctional practice until the twentieth century.

¹¹ See Helen Rogers, ‘Singing at Yarmouth Gaol: Christian Instruction and Inmate Culture in the Nineteenth Century’, *Prison Service Journal*, 199 (January 2012): 35-43.

¹² Rogers, ‘Singing at Yarmouth Gaol’, 36.

¹³ Rogers gives the example of a former burglar who recalled hymns being banned in favour of the more puritanical ‘psalms and paraphrases’ (Rogers, ‘Singing at Yarmouth Gaol’, 36).

¹⁴ Rogers, ‘Singing at Yarmouth Gaol’, 35.

¹⁵ Rogers, ‘Singing at Yarmouth Gaol’, 35.

A final example is drawn from changing attitudes towards mental health care and treatment in the first half of the nineteenth century. Until the late 1700s, there was no regulated provision for those suffering from mental health problems. The rich could be kept away from society in small, private ‘madhouses’ sometimes run by retired medical professionals, but as often by untrained individuals. For the poor, there existed a few charitable institutions, including the notorious ‘Bedlam’, Bethlem Hospital in central London. Most pauper lunatics whose families were unable to support them were kept in workhouses. Towards the end of the eighteenth century outcry and the poor conditions suffered in these institutions led to a reforming mindset, most notably led by the Tuke family of Quakers, responsible for setting up the York Retreat.¹⁶ Physical restraint was discouraged, replaced instead by ‘moral management’, a system intended to rehabilitate the patient via careful control of all aspects of their surroundings. This system dominated the approach taken by new state-sponsored pauper asylums set up under the terms of the 1808 Act; by 1846 it was mandatory for every County to provide for pauper lunatics in this way. Patient employment in dedicated farms, gardens and workshops became an important feature, but recreational activities also took on a central role, and music became a regular feature at most asylums through the foundation of asylum bands, choirs and theatrical groups, and the purchase of pianos, organs and other instruments.¹⁷

The medical reports from pauper lunatic asylums reveal that music was often considered an important part of the therapeutic activity, particularly in the first half of the nineteenth century, before moves towards medicalisation of mental health treatment. Whether in the ballroom or the chapel, music was reported to aid patients in regaining self-control; indeed, in many cases, the promise of entertainment was used as an incentive for patients struggling to conform to behavioural expectations. In 1856, for example, Superintendent Dr James Sherlock at the Worcester County Pauper Lunatic Asylum suggested that ‘The amount of discipline and self-control which these reunions exercise on the Patients is productive of the happiest effects’¹⁸ Music and related activities helped the asylums in their aim of re-creating a ‘homely’ atmosphere, allowing patients to participate in social activities as a means of rehabilitation. Yet these were also a location for asserting social order, for while patients took back control of their mental faculties they did so within strict behavioural norms.

¹⁶ For an overview of the York Retreat see Anne Digby, *Madness, Morality and Medicine: A Study of the York Retreat 1796-1914* (Cambridge, 1985).

¹⁷ An overview of the early-nineteenth-century development of asylums in England is to be found in Leonard Smith, *Cure, Comfort and Safe Custody: Public Lunatic Asylums in Early Nineteenth Century England* (Leicester UP, New York, 1999)

¹⁸ *Third Annual Report of the County and City of Worcester Pauper Lunatic Asylum*, Medical Superintendent’s Report (Worcester: Chalk and Holl, 1856), 34.

It is clear from these examples that music played an important part in key reforming initiatives relating to the lower classes in Victorian public institutions. Musical activity was often the site for rehabilitation, education and communication; it was used to offer a 'way out' of poverty or a release from mental illness. At the King Edward's Schools, musical tuition was undoubtedly a way out of abject poverty, but also a form of rigid training within a demarcated career route. Many such public institutions were witness to the conflict inherent in much liberal reform. Thanks to the zeal of early nineteenth century reformers workhouses, prisons and asylums moved from sites of punishment and correction towards an emphasis on restoration, rehabilitation and cure. Yet within this new approach there was little room for individuality or diversion from social norms. Conformity was the route to freedom, and this was as true for the use of music as with other elements of conduct.

Changes in society, most notably industrialisation and urbanisation, drove the reconsideration of political and educational agendas. Liberalism, despite its new prominence in the political landscape, was challenged by the threat of unrest and disorder. Matthew Arnold's concept of 'culture', at the heart of the liberal ideal, was bound up with class equality and widespread opportunity, together with the intellectual values of critical thought, reason and debate.¹⁹ The widespread opportunities to engage with music were certainly part of a move to open up cultural experiences, but the examples examined briefly here demonstrate a clear strain on purely liberal values. This characteristic is no more clearly to be found than in the case of elementary education and the context of educational reform in the mid-nineteenth century.

Music in 1840s Educational Reform

Reform in education first took on a new direction in 1840, under the direction of the politician and reformer Dr James Kay (1804-1877, later Sir James Kay Shuttleworth). Kay's Bill established state-appointed inspectors to visit schools, thus developing a measure of standardisation for the first time. Drawing on reports prepared during 1839 and 1840, Kay noted the poor state of music education among elementary schools. His *Minute on the Constructive Method of Teaching Reading, Writing, and Vocal Music* of 1840 demonstrates the importance of music in Kay's scheme.²⁰ The chief driver was to emulate the successful continental systems of elementary education by recommending key textbooks for use, with the result that Pestalozzian methods of knowledge construction came to the fore, encouraging understanding rather than simply memorisation of facts. Kay emphasised the 'moral sense' of education, the conjunction

¹⁹ Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy* [1869] ed. J. Dover Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932), 6, 70.

²⁰ Committee of Council on Education, *Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education, with appendices. 1840-41*; Parliamentary Papers 1841 Session 1 no. 317, 18-23.

of pleasure with instruction, and a child's natural earnestness, all of which were encouraged by the gradual building of understanding and 'truth'.

In reviewing the reports, Kay reveals that taste and skill in vocal music are his top priorities for elementary education in music. He regrets that few schools teach music, and where it is taught (primarily in Sunday schools) the tuition is often of poor quality and by unskilled teachers. In infant schools, where singing was more common, songs were 'unsuitable', being 'rather foolish than simple, and fantastic than sprightly'.²¹ Among adults Kay recommended both social and religious benefits to an improvement in singing. Music was, he argued, a part of national sentiment; alongside the 'great works of Handel and Haydn' he cited 'the part-music of the old English school, and those admirable old English songs' as desirable repertoire. Song would affirm the established order by communicating 'the comforts and contentment of household life', and was particularly effective at reassuring the 'peasant' of his country's 'greatness and strength'. For the working classes music formed characters that were 'industrious, brave, loyal, and religious'. Music was also a sign of the upward mobility of the top of the working classes and lower middle class, particularly 'apprentices, foremen, and attendants in shops' who were to be found in the expanding choral and harmonic societies. For such classes music provided an innocent amusement, contributing to 'domestic comfort' and 'contentment'. Finally, he identified unity through psalm singing as 'One of the chief characteristics of public worship'.²² The schoolmaster's efforts in instructing children in vocal music were to be crowned by his establishing a choir for the village church; such a task would further contribute to 'weaning the population from debasing pleasures' by increasing attendance at church services.

The announcement of John Pyke Hullah's Singing School for Schoolmasters and Schoolmistresses, to be located in Exeter Hall, similarly cited music's influence. Following successful continental models, lessons would be 'calculated to make a deep impression on the character of the children, and to influence their future conduct', while singing also meant 'the religious duties of the school are rendered much more impressive.'²³ Again, vocal music was credited with influence on 'the manners and habits of individuals, and on the character of communities'; in Germany, widespread cultivation of vocal music had markedly reduced the problem of 'intoxication' among the poorer classes.

²¹ 'Prefatory Minute of the Committee of Council on Education Relating to a Manual of Vocal Music', Parliamentary Papers 1841 Session 1 no. 317, 23.

²² 'Prefatory Minute', 24.

²³ 'Singing School for Schoolmasters and Schoolmistresses in Exeter Hall, on the Method Approved by the Committee of Council on Education', Parliamentary Papers 1841 Session 1 no. 317, 26.

Kay and Hullah (1812-1884) adapted G. L. Bocquillon Wilhem's method of teaching vocal music in such a way as to enhance Kay's claims for the place of music in education.²⁴ The songs collected for use of children were titled simply 'School Songs', but the more advanced collection was given texts which 'chiefly be such as may inspire cheerful views of industry, and will be entitled "*Labour Songs*".²⁵ A deliberate attempt was made to introduce a 'national character' to both melodies and texts, 'intended to associate it with the customs of the people, and with healthy moral and religious sentiments.'²⁶ Religious texts were also to be added to the second collection. Throughout, Kay emphasises the democratic nature of music, and singing in particular. 'Frequent and well-directed practice will mend the least tuneful voice', he says, and 'attention to the correct intonation of others will improve the most obstinate ear'.²⁷

As with other subjects included under Kay's new plans for elementary education, music was to be taught and inspected according to a series of standard questions, setting out the expectations and bounds of singing as part of the curriculum. In assessing the monitors or pupil-teachers, entrusted with much of the day-to-day progress of pupils, the levels of attainment in Singing were structured around both practice and theory: 'Having by ear an acquaintance with psalmody and labour songs; acquainted with the elements of the notation of music; able to sing common psalm tunes and labour songs, from notes, at sight; able to sing chants, anthems, and more difficult sacred music, from notes.'²⁸ Five questions were used as a further basis for the Inspectors' reports:

- On what method are the children taught to sing?
- Do they learn the signs of musical sounds to any extent?
- Can they copy the notes of music with chalk on the wall?
- Can they sing many marching or other school songs?
- Can they sing any hymns?²⁹

The Inspectors' remit reflected the joint role given to music: both national sentiment and religious conviction. Music also featured as part of the 'Religious and Moral Discipline' element of the assessment, with Inspectors required to ask 'Are the children assembled and dismissed every day with a psalm or hymn, and with prayer'.³⁰

²⁴ Wilhem, a French teacher, had adapted music instruction to the requirements of the monitorial system in use in Paris in the 1840s. See Bernarr Rainbow, *The Choral Revival in the Anglican Church (1839-1872)* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2001), 46.

²⁵ 'Prefatory Minute', 25.

²⁶ 'Prefatory Minute', 27.

²⁷ 'Prefatory Minute', 27.

²⁸ 'Instructions to Inspectors of Schools, August 1840', Parliamentary Papers 1841 Session 1 no. 317, 5.

²⁹ 'Instructions to Inspectors', 11.

³⁰ 'Instructions to Inspectors', 7.

Music education in elementary schools formed only a small topic in the newly fledged musical press.³¹ Discussion likewise focussed largely on utilitarian benefits. In November 1845, for example, *The Musical Times* carried a note from a Dr. Rush linking the exercise of singing with defence against consumption, particularly notable in Germany where singing formed a core part of education.³² *The Musical World* carried a different view in the letters of the German historian Frederick Von Raumer (1781-1873), printed in 1836 and including the suggestion that drunkenness would decline, if music, dancing, and all the less sensual and animal recreations were allowed. These necessarily impart higher pleasures and more refined conceptions; or, at least, tend to generate a taste and an aptitude for them. A man who enjoys singing, dancing, or the drama, cannot possibly be very drunk; nor is brutal grossness of behaviour compatible with social recreation. The utter want of all musical education for the people is doubtless another effect of this way of observing the Sunday; and where this broad foundation for the culture of any art is wanting, individuals seldom rise above mediocrity.³³

Discussing knowledge of music theory, on the other hand, Henry C. Lunn (1817-94), author of *Musings of a Musician* (1874) who was later to become the editor of the *Musical Times*, referred to intellectual engagement, a love for the art, understanding and appreciation as key features of the new place for music in England.³⁴ The anonymous correspondent 'Willesdon' wrote in a similar vein in March 1847, describing the way in which a school choral society had induced 'a love of music': the 'young scholars had not only acquired the rudiments, but evinced a fondness for the art'.³⁵ The 'good fruit' Willesdon claimed would follow from musical instruction seems to have been couched entirely in musical terms, the 'pleasure beaming' in the faces of his young charges evidence enough of its worthy inclusion in the school's offering. The report is of an Evening Class, and one might wonder whether Willesdon might have felt obliged to link his musical training more directly to moral or social gain had it featured as part of the school day. A more subtle approach to utilitarian uses of music was denounced by *The Musical World's* author in 1837 when commenting on a lecture given by a Mr. Hickson at the Mechanics' Institution in Newcastle-on-Tyne.³⁶ While Hickson insisted that 'cheerfulness of disposition' should be encouraged, arguing 'none but songs of the most cheerful character should be sung to, and learnt

³¹ The education of aspiring music professionals had been a more important topic for some decades, with the foundation of the Royal Academy of Music in 1822 offering a new point of focus for the profession.

³² Dr. Rush, 'Value of Singing' *The Musical Times*, 1 (1845), 134.

³³ 'Frederick Von Raumer's Letters on England' *The Musical World* 1.7 (1836), 108-110: 108.

³⁴ Henry C. Lunn, 'Musical Grammarians' taken from a series of papers in *The Musical World*, *The Musical Times* 1 (1846), 159.

³⁵ Willesdon, 'National School Choral Societies' in *The Musical Times* 2 (1847), 74.

³⁶ 'Musical Lectures' *The Musical World* 4.44 (1837), 60.

by, young minds’, the *Musical World*’s critic wondered whether the lecturer had ‘ever been a child himself; or, rather, whether he had not sprung into manhood, invested with all the panoply of utilitarian philosophy.’³⁷

Prior to specific government support for music in schools and Hullah’s efforts with teacher training, a ‘Society for the Encouragement of Vocal Music Among all Classes’ was founded in 1838, ‘as a means of Softening the Manners, Refining the Taste, and Raising the Character of the great Body of the People’.³⁸ A Mr Hickson was to be found among the organisers alongside professional musicians such as W. Lindley and J. Turle.³⁹ The published object of the society was to support the introduction of music as a school subject by publishing teaching materials, training and in some cases financially supporting specialist music teachers, organising choral societies, and offering prizes in order to stimulate both new and existing music teachers. Finally, it promised to ‘seek to raise the character of Vocal Music, when not of a religious nature, by adapting it to the expression of kindly feelings, generous emotions, and just sentiments.’⁴⁰ A separate notice advertised the first of the prizes and awards available for pupils and classes, suggesting that ‘the competition for the prizes will cause large bodies of children to be taught at once the rudiments of the art of vocal music, and establish a precedent, which, from the high moral and social benefits resulting from it, will soon be generally followed throughout the country.’⁴¹ Singing was to have been introduced as a core part of the ‘moral discipline’ of the relevant school, promoting good conduct and in support of religious instruction.⁴²

The music journals also reported on the general benefits of music and musical education to the public. *The Musical Times*, again, reported in 1848 on ‘the improved intelligence on the part of the audience at the better class of musical performances in this country’.⁴³ The following year an extract from an article in *Sharpe’s London Magazine* referred to a musical evening as ‘being regarded as a means of educating, or rather of *cultivating*, the working classes’: in this case it was ‘casual intercourse with persons of education and refinement’ that took effect.⁴⁴ The same article, however, described a children’s music class as acting ‘to preserve them from less

³⁷ ‘Musical Lectures’, 60.

³⁸ ‘Society for the Encouragement of Vocal Music among all Classes’ *The Musical World* 9.35 (1838), 301.

³⁹ There were, in fact, two Hicksons: S. Hickson was on the Committee of Management, while W.E. Hickson acted as Honorary Secretary. William Edward Hickson (1803-1870) published several volumes of music for use in schools under the title ‘The Singing Master’, and also wrote on population, reform, and the poor. It is most likely to have been W.E. Hickson that was lecturing in Newcastle.

⁴⁰ ‘Society for the Encouragement of Vocal Music among all Classes’, 301.

⁴¹ ‘To Teachers of Singing, Schoolmasters, &c.’ *The Musical World* 9.35 (1838), 303-4: 303.

⁴² The examination would be undertaken by a single pupil and would consist of psalm-singing, sight singing of parts from a glee, and knowledge of musical signs and notation. The competition was restricted to the London area and excluded schools supported by significant fees.

⁴³ *The Musical Times* 3 (1848), 79.

⁴⁴ *The Musical Times* 3 (1849), 241.

innocent amusements’ and ‘an instrument of good’. The important role of music as part of self-improvement or ‘rational recreation’ initiatives also helped move music from the realm of the privileged to part of mainstream culture for all classes. *The Musical World*’s report on Hullah’s new Music Hall similarly reported Viscount Morpeth’s view of ‘the vast utility of music as an art, its legitimate influence on the social feelings, &c. [...] the furtherance of social good-will and moral harmony’.⁴⁵ At the same event the Bishop of Norwich further detailed ‘the valuable influence of music upon our soldiers and sailors, in stimulating them to discharge their duty’ and ‘enlarged upon its humanizing effects upon society at large [...] besides promoting loyalty and courage, it had a still more valuable effect in aiding the diffusion of religious truth.’⁴⁶

Views on Music Education from the Mid-Nineteenth Century

Joseph Mainzer (1801-1851), a German music teacher active in Britain during the second quarter of the nineteenth century, was perhaps the musician with the most influence on the form and shape of elementary music education during this period. In advocating a central position for music in education, Mainzer focussed on its moral influence rather than intellectual elements. He considered music valuable in physical, religious, moral and patriotic terms, drawing heavily on ideals of unity and liberty to argue to music’s place in education. Mainzer introduced his principles in the 1848 volume *Music and Education*, suggesting that ‘in united zeal and activity, they can be realized for a country’s welfare, and a nation’s glory’.⁴⁷ He repeatedly emphasised the natural powers of music, and the connection between developed musical taste, moral excellence and advanced civilisation.⁴⁸ Music in education was, therefore, part of the development of every human being: ‘He who is inaccessible to music, is defective in the harmony of his senses, is deprived of the noble faculties which elevate man above the brute.’⁴⁹ Mainzer advocated singing as the most appropriate medium for teaching music in schools, rejecting the mechanical work of learning the piano. Singing, on the other hand, allowed for the simplest music, most effective on the emotional state of the child. It also allowed for the uniting of music and poetry in order to carry a specific moral message.⁵⁰

Mainzer went as far as to identify a specific genre of music best suited for his purposes, known as ‘Domestic or Family Music’. Rather than focussing on dramatic or concert music, he suggested a ‘modest’ kind of music characterised by ‘simplicity, purity, and grandeur’ which ‘enlivens the school and the cottage, and helps to instruct the people, to embellish the hour of

⁴⁵ ‘Hullah’s New Music Hall’, *The Musical Times* 2 (1847), 113-4: 113.

⁴⁶ ‘Hullah’s New Music Hall’, 113-4.

⁴⁷ Joseph Mainzer, *Music and Education* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1848), xv.

⁴⁸ Mainzer, *Music and Education*, 7, 19.

⁴⁹ Mainzer, *Music and Education*, 22.

⁵⁰ Mainzer, *Music and Education*, 63.

toil and that of rest.’⁵¹ Mainzer connected the domestic style with national music, but his writings in *Singing for the Million* suggest overtly nationalistic sentiments were not what he had in mind for school songs; rather he urges the selection of texts and tunes treating ‘such innocent subjects as are suited to their years and feelings’.⁵² Mainzer’s somewhat idealistic suggestions of subjects drawing on a child’s imagination and natural surroundings is not entirely reflected in his choice of texted exercises in the main part of the volume; largely religious and moralistic texts treat often somber subjects, as in the ditty ‘All soon must come / To the cold tomb / Only the actions of the just / Smell sweet and blossom in the dust’.⁵³

Mainzer added physical benefits to the moral and social effects of music, claiming the value to the child’s development of speech, hearing and general health.⁵⁴ In common with many writers in Britain, he turned to Germany as an example and source of studies showing the specific benefits to children’s health, particularly with regard to diseases of the lungs. Yet this returned him to general musical abilities and the question of morality. Mainzer used his argument that musical teaching should begin at a young age to advance the suggestion that Britain, too, could become a musical country; that there was no underlying difference that should prevent British senses being ‘cultivated, refined, and *educated*’.⁵⁵ Moreover, musical learning at an early age would mean ‘the influence of singing extended itself to their habits and dispositions, and consequently to their moral character.’⁵⁶ Once again the benefit for society as a whole, as well as the individual, comes to the fore.

A number of publications from the middle of the nineteenth century through to the passing of the 1872 *Revised Code of Regulations* argue for the importance of music in education. One musician, Frederick Pitman, published an anonymous tract on the benefits of musical education largely directed towards parents, together with comments on systems of musical education aimed at music teachers. In reviewing the tract, a critic writing for *The Musical Times*’s recommended that ‘young children should be taught to read music as they are taught to read a book; and that singing should be sought by them as a means of recreation and enjoyment, rather than as a task.’⁵⁷ In this case it was natural ability, rather than class, that might be considered an excluding factor, but the *Times*’s author was clear that ‘every child who can speak

⁵¹ Mainzer, *Music and Education*, 95-6.

⁵² Joseph Mainzer, *Singing for the Million: A Practical Course of Musical Instruction* (London, 1842), xvii.

⁵³ Mainzer, *Singing for the Million*, 46.

⁵⁴ Mainzer, *Music and Education*, 74.

⁵⁵ Mainzer, *Music and Education*, 78.

⁵⁶ Mainzer, *Music and Education*, 78.

⁵⁷ ‘Music: Its Value and Importance in Education; with Hints to Parents and Others Respecting Early Musical Training’, *The Musical Times* 14 (1870): 334-5: 334.

can sing'.⁵⁸ John Towers, in *Let Children Sing* (1870), agreed that 'it may, as a general rule, be taken for granted that every properly constituted human being endowed with a voice for speaking, possesses, in a greater or less degree, a voice for singing.'⁵⁹ Towers identifies improved health and strength of lungs as a further benefit of singing as part of mainstream education. *The Musical Times*, again reviewing this work, pointed out that 'Singing in this country is so frequently thought of as a mere means of individual display, that its true mission as an important agent in the physical and moral training of the young is almost lost sight of.'⁶⁰

The biologist and political theorist Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), writing in the late 1850s, linked the study of science and music closely in education. Spencer cited 'how to live' as the essential and most fundamental question pertaining to education.⁶¹ While the arts, such as architecture, music and poetry, could be seen as the pinnacle of civilisation, too often the fundamental knowledge which underpinned them was not firm: the education system 'neglects the plant for the sake of the flower'.⁶² Nevertheless, music's development as part of emotional language (according to Spencer) gave it a high-ranking position as an art which 'ministers to human welfare'.⁶³ Thus, while science was essential to the proper cultivation of music, music itself was core to human existence.

Music and the 1870s Reforms

A substantial set of changes to education came in a series of codes published between 1862 and 1872, each drawing educational establishments closer into a national network and asserting government authority over elementary education via the grants system. It was the 1862 code that took the 'payment by results' system previously used in the Science and Art Department and established it at the centre of educational reform. Grants were allocated subject to both attendance and examination in a narrow series of subjects, with reading, writing and arithmetic to be presented.⁶⁴ The code was revised in 1867 to include 'specific subjects' such as history of geography, which became part of the grant options. Music was one of these options, but was taken up by very few schools. 1867 also saw the Reform Act, which enfranchised many of the new urban working class. This has traditionally been linked to the further development of government policy and the 1870 Education Act via Robert Lowe's famous statement of the need to 'educate our masters'. In the 1870 Act the balance of control shifted finally to the

⁵⁸ 'Music: Its Value and Importance in Education', 339.

⁵⁹ John Towers, *Let Children Sing* (Manchester: John Heywood and London: Simpkin, Marshall and Co., 1870).

⁶⁰ 'Let Children Sing by John Towers', *The Musical Times* 14 (1870), 403.

⁶¹ Herbert Spencer, *Essays on Education and Kindred Subjects (1856-9)* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1963), 6.

⁶² Spencer, *Essays on Education and Kindred Subjects*, 31.

⁶³ Spencer, *Essays on Education and Kindred Subjects*, 'On the Origin and Function of Music', 330.

⁶⁴ Lawson and Silver, *Social History of Education*, 290.

government, with the creation of school boards, educational opportunities for all, and the future of free, compulsory elementary schooling.

Music remained on the edges of optional subjects for teaching grants. When the code was revised again in 1871 music was omitted. Part of the reason for the omission was the inability of schools' Inspectors to judge musical standards; many had not been taught music themselves and were uneasy about its contribution to financial matters. However, others in government were unhappy with music's removal and in 1872 it was reinstated.⁶⁵ Music received a further change in the 1874 code, when a grant of 1/- per scholar was introduced for satisfactory teaching of singing. From this time Music had its own inspector, though the role was focussed on the training colleges rather than directly on the outcomes of music teaching in schools. In 1882 the examination of singing by note, rather than by ear, was added and a further grant made available.

The Code for Education introduced in 1862 focussed government grants on children's abilities in reading, writing and arithmetic. It is clear from accounts that an increase in rote learning resulted from the change, together with emphasis on the three core subjects to the exclusion of others, even religious studies.⁶⁶ Parliamentary reports from the mid-1860s suggest that singing was found in many schools, but that teachers were not well-trained and the practice was not universally accepted. The reports drew on the experiences of inspectors, who travelled throughout the country visiting elementary schools and commenting on their organisation and standards. In Mr Capel's General Report on the church of England Schools in the Counties of Leicester and Warwick for 1864, for example, he noted 'Music is taught in many schools; but when I introduced a few easy questions on the theory of it into the examination papers for pupil teachers, they were attempted by very few, though I strictly confined myself to the requirements of the broad sheet.'⁶⁷ Mr Jack's General Report on Church of Scotland and other Schools demonstrates there was some way still to go north of the border:

I am anxious to press on the attention of schoolmasters and managers the importance of a little attention to *singing* [...] An hour or two half hours a week of systematic training is enough to enable school children to sing very fairly, and the introduction of an occasional hymn or song during work freshens the energies of every one [...] I have never found the other work of the school suffer in the least from the practice of singing. As long as it does

⁶⁵ Gordon Cox, *A History of Music Education in England 1872-1928* (Aldershot: Scolar, 1993), 20.

⁶⁶ Lawson and Silver, *Social History of Education*, 291.

⁶⁷ Committee of Council on Education: Report, 1864-5, Parliamentary Papers 1865 Session, no. 3533, 43.

not, it is reasonable to urge on schoolmasters the importance of bringing to bear on the masses of the people in early life the civilising and elevating influences of good music.⁶⁸

The following year Mr Binns reported that, in Church of England Schools ‘singing by ear is almost universal’, while Mr Kerr found in Church of Scotland Schools ‘Its importance as a recreation and civilizing agent is not so generally felt as I could wish.’⁶⁹ There were, however, success stories, not just within the schools but also in the newly-formed teacher training colleges. In the 1866-67 Report, for example, accounts from colleges refer to students attending music practice in the evenings, and free time being taken up with ‘drawing, music, recreation or private study’, or ‘garden work, music and drawing’.⁷⁰

The extra-musical benefits of singing continued to be cited by Inspectors during this period. Mr Bellair, for example, reported on Church of England Schools in 1869, noting that Music was

but very imperfectly taught in our schools [...] When the salutary influence of music upon man’s physical, mental, and moral nature is considered, and the sensual degraded character of some of our national recreations for the poor, is remembered, one cannot but regret that this charming, cheap, and ennobling science and art is so little taught and practised in our national schools.⁷¹

In 1866 Mr Capel referred to the great impact of the Birmingham Schools Choral Union, which gave concerts in aid of the children’s Hospital: ‘I believe that the improvement of the discipline, as well as the music of the schools which have taken part in this movement, has been very considerable. No schools seem to me to work so smoothly and harmoniously as those, where the master, or mistress, is a musician.’⁷² Music’s beneficial influence was to be found not only in character-building and discipline, but also in studies of other subjects. Mr Oakeley’s Report on the non-Church of England Schools in the North of England from 1869-70 suggested ‘Really good reading with emphasis and expression can only be looked for in schools where some attempt is made to cultivate taste, for example, by teaching such subjects as music, drawing, and composition’.⁷³

In other cases Music was considered as an art to be taught for its own sake, and as part of the curriculum of general culture being promoted among the working classes. Dr Woodford’s

⁶⁸ Committee of Council on Education: Report, 1864-5, 257-8.

⁶⁹ Committee of Council on Education: Report, 1865-6, Parliamentary Papers 1866 Session, no. 3666, 68, 299.

⁷⁰ Committee of Council on Education: Report, 1866-7, Parliamentary Papers 1867 Session, no. 3882, 432, 424, 421.

⁷¹ Committee of Council on Education: Report, 1868-9, Parliamentary Papers 1868-9 Session, no. 4139, 35

⁷² Report of the Committee of Council on Education, 1866-7, 57.

⁷³ Report of the Committee of Council on Education, 1869-70, Parliamentary Papers 1870 Session, no. C.165, 337.

General Report in the Church of Scotland and other Schools, for example, recommends an increased focus on sight-singing and dictation, while Mr Gordon's Report on the Church of Scotland Normal School in Glasgow commends the inclusion of vocal music and drawing in the 'general culture' taught in the school, noting in particular the practice of choral music 'remarkable for correct intonation, light and shade, and true expression'.⁷⁴

One of the key debates characterising the introduction of music to schools focussed on the approach to teaching. While Hullah's method was based on the fixed-Doh system of Wilhem, the Tonic Sol-Fa method of movable-Doh gained great influence through the nineteenth century and was also found in many schools. The two systems existed side-by-side in the teacher training colleges, which came under Hullah's remit as Government Inspector of Music. Hullah's first report in 1873-4 criticised the students of John Curwen's Tonic Sol-fa system, leading to a spat played out in journals and pamphlets. In particular, Curwen's pamphlet 'The Present Crisis of Music in Schools' defended the system against Hullah's report; a review of this pamphlet in *The Literary World* situates the debate in political and philosophical terms. Hullah's system is described as having 'made little progress among the great masses of the people. The first ten years saw its rise, and then enthusiasm waned, and people grew tired of the clumsy machinery which required so many years of down-right hard working to produce any great results.'⁷⁵ In comparison, Curwen's system is associated closely with the free will of the masses and freedom from oppression:

The Tonic Sol-fa, on the contrary, sprang into life, and grew and flourished with an utter absence of patronage, or even recognition, from the upper and influential classes in society; but by it uneducated, or at best half-educated, people learned to sing in an incredibly short space of time. Teachers soon acquired sufficient knowledge, not alone to be able to communicate it to others, but gained a foundation on which they could go on building up self-improvement. In all parts of the kingdom classes sprang up... while the Hullah system seemed to be dead or asleep.⁷⁶

Whatever the musical merits of the two systems, this author clearly suggests a complex relationship between musical learning, government interference and individual liberty. Tonic Sol-fa is seen to subvert the educated classes' attempts at cultural philanthropy, giving the working classes new powers in forging their own path to an independent musical liberalism.

⁷⁴ Report of the Committee of Council on Education, 1865-6, 326, 469-70.

⁷⁵ 'New Music', *The Literary World: Choice Readings from the Best New Books, and Critical Reviews* 8.213 (1873), 348.

⁷⁶ 'New Music', 348.

With the appointment of specialist inspectors in 1872 the discourse naturally turned towards musical standards and attainment, and less emphasis appears to have been placed on what might today be called the ‘transferable’ benefits of music study to individual and society. Furthermore, the question of music education was discussed in the burgeoning musical journals and newly-formed specialist societies. Responses to the changes of the 1870s suggest that including music in the ‘payment by results’ scheme was as ineffective for overall musical development as the 1870 Act had proved for core subjects. The increase in the number of children experiencing music education, and the total grants paid, show that the change had a real effect on the availability of music education.⁷⁷ However, the approach taken by teachers was a continued source of criticism. Henry Heathcote Statham (1839-1924), an architect and music critic, reported to *The Musical Times* in 1878 on the ‘great impulse’ given to elementary music education under the new scheme. Statham considered music, particularly singing, a ‘social recreation’; music education was aimed at ‘developing the average of musical ability and the power of finding intellectual enjoyment in the art, and of rendering the English once more, in real truth, a musical people’.⁷⁸ The grants of the 1870s not only failed to deliver this objective, but produced ‘positive evil’. Both teachers and inspectors were frequently without musical training, and the main approach to tuition rested on rote learning of tunes and texts rather than development of ear or voice. Statham’s arguments for widespread musical education lie in the ability to listen with understanding, and to develop taste for high-quality music rather than fashions or novelties. These objectives were not assessed by the inspectors or encouraged by the regulations.

Conclusion

Throughout the nineteenth century music education was defended as part of moral development, the civilisation of the working classes and an opportunity to introduce a form of rational recreation. Earlier in the century discussions around national unity and moral alignment are perhaps understandable in the political context of enormous social change. Politicians, the recipients of the earlier reports, were (not surprisingly) more concerned with avoiding anarchy than promoting culture, to use Arnold’s phraseology. Music education was relatively new, and together with the new proposals for widespread education of the poorest classes needed careful introduction. Mainzer’s *Music and Education*, arguing the case for music within an amusical religious context, offers another example of the need to couch music within moral and social

⁷⁷ *The Musical Times* of July 1892 published figures showing the total grant payment in England and Wales increased from £114,068 in 1884 to £161,320 in 1891. See ‘Music in Schools’ in *The Musical Times* 33 (1892), 421.

⁷⁸ H. H. Statham, ‘National Musical Education’, *The Musical Times* 19 (1878), 257-260: 258.

mores. Music was also used as a channel for cultivating the cognitive development so important to the liberal mindset, its intellectual content standing alongside its moral influence.

It is perhaps not surprising that music education was couched in the language of utility. Elementary education for the poor was in itself a new and controversial move, particularly in the context of civil unrest. While music, and elementary education for the masses, were relatively new ideas, the emphasis was firmly on the benefits available to society as a whole. Later in the century, as widespread education was established and music more widely accepted as a subject for study, benefits to the individual became more widely discussed. Once musical societies, most notably the Royal Musical Association, took up elementary music education as a topic of interest, the role of educating the masses in relation to the musical health of the country became more widely discussed. Social mobility as well as changes in musical concert life meant the poorer sectors of society had become potential audiences, while concerns over Britain's abilities to produce its own musicians, particularly composers, meant spotting and nurturing musical talent were essential.

The role of music in education covered a range of aspects, including taste and enjoyment, development of individual skill, development of the intellect, physical discipline, national pride and feeling, religious understanding and practice, and moral or social development. Many of these ideas contributed towards the drive to equip individuals to become full, educated members of society, an essential development if any extension of the franchise as envisaged by the liberal group were to become a reality. It is also possible to connect musical education with more conservative concerns for order within new urban communities, for national allegiance and moral conformity. The arguments given for music education do not align it with a simple desire to improve the lives and cultural capital of the working classes, but situate it within a complex and shifting landscape of changing political, philosophical, and social pressures and beliefs.