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Historical Foundations of Music Education

Early American Music Education

Life was difficult for the first permanent English settlers in the New World. Having rebelled against political and church authority in England, the Pilgrims and Puritans had to find a new home where they could escape religious persecution and worship according to their beliefs. After the Pilgrims arrived in America in 1620, and the Puritans in 1630, they finally possessed the religious freedom they craved. They had brought with them their treasured musical traditions, especially the psalm singing that was central to their church service, but the challenges they had to overcome to create a new society in the wilderness prevented them from maintaining their musical skills. There was too much to do to create shelter and to feed and clothe themselves, and after the first generation, there were too few musically educated people. Succeeding generations may have had somewhat easier circumstances, but they, too, had to endure harsh realities. It was all but inevitable that musical standards declined in this atmosphere, and with lack of music instruction, each new generation was less musically skilled than the one before it.

Despite the harshness of the environment, the colonists recognized the importance of education to their future. The Massachusetts Bay Colony passed school laws early in its history. The first, the Massachusetts School Law of 1642, required town officials to compel parents to provide their children with elementary education. The law did not establish schools; it merely set up minimum essentials of education and allowed each town to comply in the best way possible. The second law, the Massachusetts School Law of 1647, required that every township of at least fifty families appoint a teacher for the children, and that reading and writing be taught. Towns of 100 or more families were
required to "set up a grammar school, the master thereof being able to instruct youth so far as they may be fit for the university" (sic) (Harvard College was founded in 1636). Under this law, taxation for the purpose of paying a teacher was made legally permissible. The Massachusetts School Law of 1648 was more specific about what should be taught, and why:

Forasmuch as the good education of children is of singular benefit and is beneficial to any Common-wealth, and whereas many parents and masters are too indulgent and negligent of their duty in that kind, it is therefore ordered that the first men of every town, in the several parishes and districts where they dwell, shall have a vigilant eye over their brethren and neighbours to see that none of them suffer so much barbatism in any of their families as not to endeavor to teach by themselves or others their children and apprentices so much learning as may enable them perfectly to read the English tongue, and knowledge of the Capital laws; upon penalty of twentie shilling for each neglect therein. Also that all masters of families do once a week (at the least) catechize their children and servants in the grounds and principles of Religion. ... and further that all parents and masters do breed and bring up their children and apprentices in some honest lawfull calling, labour or employment, either in husbandry, or some other trade profitable for themselves, and the Common-wealth, if they will not or cannot teach them up in learning to fit them for higher employments.

The legislatures of Connecticut, Plymouth, and New Hampshire enacted similar legislation within a few decades. Music was not considered a proper subject for study in the tax-supported schools at that time. That would not happen until the first half of the nineteenth century.

Musical traditions were transmitted orally in the New England colonies because most people were unable to read music. Having no music education system, succeeding generations could neither read notation nor sing with good tone quality, diction, and musicality. By the turn of the eighteenth century, many people, especially ministers, had expressed concern and alarm for the quality of congregational singing. Alice Morse Earle wrote: "Of all the dismal accompaniments of public worship in the early days of New England the music was the most hopelessly forlorn—not only from the confused versifications of the Psalms which were used, but from the mournful monotony of the few known tunes and the horrible manner in which these tunes were sung." In 1721, Reverend Thomas Walter complained:

The tunes are now miserably tortured and twisted and quavered in our churches, into a horrid medley of confused and disorderly voces. Our tunes are left to the mercy of every unskilled throat to chop

and alter, to twist and change, according to their infinitely diverse and no less odd harmonies and fancies. I have myself paused twice in one note to take a breath. No two men in the congregation quaver alike or together. It sounds in the ears of a good judge like feet hundreded times trod out at the same time, with perpetual interferrings with each other.

The Development of Singing Schools

The response to the agitation caused by the critics of musical quality was seminal to the introduction of public music education. It was in the form of the "singing school," a movement in which itinerant singing masters provided their services to cities, towns, and villages for a fee. Classes were held for both children and adults in schools, churches, taverns, homes, or any other place where space was available. The singing masters taught the rudiments of music, and their pupils learned to read music from notation. Singing schools lasted from a couple of weeks to several months; after which the singing master traveled to the location of his next singing school. Entire families sometimes attended every time a singing school was held in their community. The singing master charged a fee for each student and earned additional income by selling tune books, most of which were compiled by himself or other singing masters.

Singing schools were highly regarded because they satisfied both musical and social purposes. People enjoyed singing and appreciated the pleasant social atmosphere in which they learned music reading and sang together. The singing schools and other kinds of "night schools," including those for language, navigation, surveying, sewing, and cooking, fulfilled the need for practical education not yet met by the public schools. They probably came closer to true accountability than any public school system in the second half of the eighteenth century. The eighteenth-century night schools existed because people needed them, and teachers were able to earn their livelihoods (at least in part) because their students considered them necessary and effective. If the need for a particular subject did not exist, or if a teacher had not been successful in the past, then economic support was not forthcoming. No tax money was spent for these schools.

Singing schools did indeed help to improve the quality of singing in the churches. The movement lasted from the 1720s to the second half of the nineteenth century, and some singing schools still existed in isolated rural areas well into the twentieth century. The singing-school movement serves as an important example for contemporary educators in that it served a practical purpose, and they existed to meet a popular demand: It was a self-perpetuating movement: as people found more enjoyment in music, the demand for singing schools increased.

There was no formal methodology of teaching, but apparently the singing masters found a balance between pedagogy and performance that satisfied the public. During that period, the composers were also the
teachers, and the earliest American school of composers, the "Yankee tunemasters" (William Billings, Daniel Read, Oliver Holden, among others), were singing masters as well. The composers and their music were close to the people and were appreciated by them. Later generations of Americans became very much separated from composers, who were often put on a pedestal, revered, and known only to the part of the public that attended concerts. The Contemporary Music Project (see chapter 2) of the 1960s provided a historic service by placing composers and performers in public schools to make contemporary music a part of children's lives.

**Music Instruction in Public Schools**

Music was taught in schools in various parts of the country starting at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The principal reason for this was the belief that it was something children needed for both church and recreation. In 1838 Lowell Mason persuaded the Boston School Committee (board of education) to include music in the curriculum of the public schools as a regular subject. It was a major step forward because, for the first time, music instruction was to be supported by public taxes. In this way, it would be categorized with other curricular subjects. The School Committee report that recommended the addition of music to the curriculum of the schools stressed the action with three reasons: music, like other school subjects, had to meet the criteria of being intellectually, morally, and physically beneficial to children. The report explained at length how music was beneficial for children in the three realms. It also offered improved recreation, worship, and discipline as reasons for including music in the curriculum. The conclusion describe the effects that the study of music was expected to produce:

In the language of an illusory writer of the eighteenth century, "Music is a thing that delighteth all ages and beethem tele all ages, a thing as seasonal in grief as joy, as delectable and addable to actions of greatest solemnity, as being used when men sequer themselves from action." If such be the natural effects of Music, if it enliveth prosperity or soothe the sorrow, it quicken the pulse of social happiness, if it can fill the vacancy of an hour that would otherwise be listlessly or unprofitably spent, if it gild with a mild light the chequered scenes of daily existence, why then list its benign and blessed influence? Let it, with healing on its wings, enter through ten thousand avenues the paternal dwelling. Let it mingle with religion, with labor, with the homestead amusements and innocent and innocent amusements. Let its enjoyments be such as it is the ornament of life. Let it no longer be regarded merely as the ornament of the rich. Still let it continue to adorn the abodes of wealth, but let it also light up with gladness, the homestead homes of poverty. Once introduce music into the common schools and you

**Historical Foundations of Music Education**

make it what it should be made, the property of the whole people. And so as time passes away, and one race succeeds to another, the true object of our system of public education may be realized, and we may, year after year, raise up good citizens to the Commonwealth, by sending forth from our schools, happy, useful, well instructed, contented members of society. Music education has developed, matured, and flourished since 1838. The performance program has produced excellent choruses, bands, orchestras, small ensembles, and soloists; many teachers have been very successful with general music classes. However, music education, as a formal discipline within the public education structure, has not produced an adult population that is musically literate, appreciative, and participatory. The principal reasons are the lack of a continual music education, and restrictive conditions that often impose limits on music programs. Music teachers, like all other teachers, must conform to the rules, regulations, traditions, and practices of the school systems that employ them. There have been notable exceptions, of course, and the fact that some regions of the United States have strong musical cultures is due, to some extent, to excellent school music programs.

Around the end of the nineteenth century a pedagogical battle took place between music teachers who believed that the teaching of music should be a process and those who advocated a pure reading approach. The battle was beneficial to the profession because it forced teachers to think about method. But before coming to grips with this method, however, teachers had to reflect on the most basic consideration: Why should the subject be taught at all? When the smoke of battle cleared around the turn of the twentieth century, some music educators began to realize that the "why" had never received proper consideration before teaching methods were developed. They had assumed that teaching children to read music to enable them to sing the great choral literature which was a major goal at that time. The model justification for music in public education. At the beginning of the twentieth century, when the child-centered movement in American education was taking hold, music educators finally began to understand that music education could be justified not only in terms of helping children to enjoy music so it could become an important part of their lives. Samuel Cole said at a 1905 meeting of the National Education Association:

The real purpose of teaching music in the public schools is not to make expert sight singers nor individual solos. I speak from experience. I have done all these things and I can do them again; but I have learned that, if they become an end in itself and not a means they hinder rather than help, because they represent only the abilities of the few. A much nobler, grander, more inspiring privilege is yours and mine; to get the great mass to singing and to make them love it.
The time was right because the new child-centered approach valued the arts in education. The work of Friedrich Froebel, John Dewey, and Maria Montessori affected education in ways favorable to music and the other arts. Music appreciation was introduced into the curricula, as were music literature, history, and theory. Instrumental music assumed an increasingly important place in the schools.

Although the American public is quite musical, its taste is decided by popular music. Both popular music and art music are important components of our society, and both enrich us in many ways. Many musically educated people enjoy both, although most musically uneducated people do not enjoy art music. For this reason, most symphony orchestras, opera companies, and other producers of art music lack adequate financial support. This implies that not enough of the public values art music sufficiently to assure its well being. Why is this so when music education has been offered for so long and to so many people?

**Historic Problems of American Music Education**

**Methodology**

Methodology continued to be a problem even after the child-centered curriculum was implemented in the early part of this century. Music teachers had to conform to a broader school philosophy and curriculum. Silverman states:

> The normal school movement viewed teachers as technicians rather than as autonomous professionals, and trained them accordingly. This view solidified in the first few decades of this century, when superintendents of schools were caught up in the national fervor for "Scientific Management." Swiftly utilizing the way they (sometimes mistakenly) thought corporate executives operated, superintendents tried to control the most minute details of school operation.

Teachers who had so little freedom to operate independently were often unable to implement a successful child-centered aesthetic approach to music education. Despite having to use materials that were not especially conducive to true musical learning, music educators did help many children develop a true love of music. Their elementary graded music series, music appreciation books, and instrumental method books stressed cognitive learning and psychomotor development. The music in them, however, was not usually of high quality. Much of it was what we refer to as "educational music," derived from European musical traditions and arranged in nonauthentic fashion at a level of difficulty suitable for children. It did not necessarily engage the students' interest. Throughout most of this century the authors of educational music materials have, for the most part, failed to take advantage of the extensive body of excellent music that represents the classical and folk traditions.

**Lack of Appreciation for Diversity**

The population of the United States is extremely diversified, comprising people from virtually every national and ethnic background. Most of the early immigrants came from Western Europe, and Africans were brought to America as slaves soon after Europeans started to arrive. Latinos, Asians, Eastern and Central Europeans, and Hispanics began to immigrate, and by the end of the nineteenth century huge waves of immigrants from all parts of the world had poured into the United States. Despite the heterogeneity of the population is served, music education of the nineteenth century, and even much of the twentieth century, was based especially on Western art music. Until the 1960s, music teachers attempted to "teach up" to what was considered a "cultured" level, meaning the music of the upper economic class. Western classical music was viewed as the best music, and teachers thought it proper to encourage students to aspire to it.

Beginning around the turn of the century, music education became a tool of the "melting pot." The phrase "melting pot" is derived from the famous line in Israel Zangwill's 1908 play, *The Melting Pot*: "America is God's Crucible, the great Melting-Pot where all the races of Europe are melting and re-forming." The melting pot concept appealed both to Americans who had been here for a long time and to many new Americans who were eager to assimilate so they could share in the wealth of their new country. Well-meaning societal leaders attempted to realize their ideal through many of America's institutions, including the workplace, the military, the streets, the media, and especially the schools. Music education played an important role in trying to homogenize a highly diverse population, and first- and second-generation Americans accepted the belief that it could help to elevate their children socially. It is not surprising that the national and ethnic musics of the more recent immigrants were not the stuff of school music programs. Most music educators, and probably most Americans whose families had arrived from Europe generations earlier, did not respect the music of the newcomers. Perhaps they were not even aware of it.

At that time, the music education profession did not attempt to find a reasonable balance between what was most meaningful musically to students and the "cultured" music derived from the European classical music heritage. This unbalanced approach probably failed to interest many pupils in art music, which requires knowledge, experience, and sophistication for most people to appreciate. Music educators were not to blame, though. They were helping to implement a massive social movement to assimilate immigrants and their children.
It has only been since the 1960s that the American education establishment has come genuinely to respect the heritage of every student. Social movements, legislation, and court decisions have finally persuaded us of the value and significance of social, ethnic, and cultural diversity in American society. Since the 1960s, American schools have attempted to teach about diversity, and the curriculum now is structured to reflect various cultural values and traditions.

**Passive Listening**

Much earlier than the melting pot phenomenon, many Americans had become interested in listening to art music. In fact, we began to become a nation of listeners long before school music programs were plentiful enough to influence great numbers of people. Earlier, when people wanted music, they had to make it themselves because there were few places where they could hear it. In the first half of the nineteenth century, however, European concert artists discovered America and American audiences. They came here and toured, and Americans loved them. European recitals, opera companies, and orchestras introduced millions of Americans to the best European art music. Americans idolized performers like Jenny Lind and Ole Bull. Their examples inspired American professional musicians, and eventually audiences had the opportunity to be captivated and enthralled by many excellent American touring organizations like the Theodore Thomas Orchestra and the Patrick Gilmore and John Philip Sousa bands.

Not surprisingly, the richness of American concert life led to passive participation. Music became a commonplace heard in concert halls, rather than an integral part of everyday life in which great numbers of people participated. School bands, orchestras, and choruses changed this somewhat throughout the twentieth century. Even so, despite their wealth of performing experiences as students, most of the children who participated did not continue to do so after completing their schooling. Some joined community bands, choruses, and orchestras, and for a time (until the 1950s) it was common for industry to sponsor choruses, bands, and orchestras comprised of its own employees; some industrial music ensembles still exist, but not to the extent of earlier years. This was a generous and humanistic aspect of some American industrial corporations, but most of these organizations have been replaced by piped-in "canned" music, selected for its ability to create an environment conducive to greater productivity.

The loss of so many of these participative activities is a loss to American society.

**Live public concerts have been an important part of American musical life from the colonial period to the present, and throughout**

**Historical Foundations of Music Education**

Most of the twentieth century, music has been increasingly more accessible to all Americans, even in the most remote areas, through radio, television, and recordings. What we have come to call the "popular culture" arose with the advent of broadcast media and recording, and much of the music that Americans have listened to from the early part of the twentieth century has been popular music. Considering that American preference for the most part, the kinds of music that have not traditionally been emphasized in school music programs, music educators need to question seriously how much they have actually affected the adult musical life of the nation. School music has endeavored to align itself more closely with the various musical tastes of the public since the late 1960s. Perhaps this practice will allow it to have more influence on the musical life of the nation in the future.

**Emphasis on Performance**

There has been great emphasis on performance in school music throughout most of this century, and student performance is often considered the educational product. Despite the emphasis on performance to the present, however, most music students do not continue to perform after graduating from school, nor do they develop enthusiasm for classical music in adulthood.

The technical quality of student performance is excellent, and it has set an example for much of the rest of the world. Large-ensemble performance, however, is somewhat restrictive for individual members, who learn to play second violin parts, third clarinet parts, tuba parts, and so forth, to the best of their abilities. The participants in the Yale Seminar (see chapter 2) pointed out that this does not really constitute music learning. The student musician who learns to play one particular part to a symphony or a Sousa march does not necessarily know anything else about the music, and has probably not developed much musical independence by playing that part in the ensemble. In that regard, performance in a chamber ensemble is usually more beneficial to students as they develop musically. Large-ensemble participation, on the other hand, is extremely grueling to students, especially when the group performs for an appreciative audience or receives a high festival rating. The individual students are happy, proud, and satisfied and have derived pleasure from the experience. Yet, they often do not learn much about music from it.

**Music Education as Entertainment**

Entertainment has often dominated the educational aspect of school music programs. This practice has been fueled by choice of music, musical compositions so intense that they rival athletic contests, and the flash and glitter of bright uniforms, colorful costumes, clever choreography, instrumentation in a variety of colors, all in a milieu that proclaims to the community, "We're here to entertain you and to show how well we can"
imitate professional entertainers." This view of student performance is so ingrained in some communities that willingness to fund their music programs often depends on the quality of entertainment and success in competitions. Entertainment and competition are satisfying, wholesome, and healthy outlets that most people enjoy, and they should be part of school music programs. If they are the fundamental rationale for school music performance, however, the purpose of music education is questionable. Even if hunting is based on these aspects of performance, ultimately such programs are endangered because boards of education can easily justify eliminating them in order to better support the more educational subjects. The arts education professional associations issued a joint statement on the subject in 1986:

While all art has elements of entertainment, all entertainment is not art. If we lose the concept of distinction between the two, we lose the basis for discrimination about the relative purposes and values of aesthetic materials. As it is here, such a condition creates an impossible context for providing rationales in support of serious arts education programs at the K-12 level.4

Jerrold Ross, Director of the National Arts Education Research Center, discusses the problem in pragmatic terms:

Music education, which has always been described as the "loud speaker" when it comes to improving school public relations, needs to grow beyond that characterization (which, by the way, has rarely saved music programs in the schools as the budget axe swings in times of trouble) to something more accepted and valued by communities as disparate as East Harlem and East Lansing. How to advocate music beyond its value as entertainment for the community and how to involve parents and significant adults in a constructive way that helps the school to promote human values are questions that require immediate and continuous attention. ... What needs to be understood... is that music education does not deserve recognition unless it is a principal source in connecting the aesthetic to other forms of human experience.5

Despite these problems, American music education has helped many millions of American children to learn about, participate in, and enjoy music. There are many other people, however, whose lives have not been touched by music even though they received music instruction in school. It is still the goal of American music education to educate all children in music, and to provide the widest possible variety of musical experiences. Many things rally against good education at this time—a weak economy, social problems, and so on—but the same

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has been true at other times as well. Now, as then, educators must find ways to continue providing the highest possible quality of education to their students.

Changing Attitudes Toward Education

The U.S. mass education system, designed in the early part of the century for a mass production economy, will not succeed unless it not only raises but redefines the essential standards of excellence and stresses to make quality and equality of opportunity compatible with each other.6

Dwight W. Allen, 1992

The 1960s

American education in the 1950s was characterized by turmoil. The United States assumed a new role as one of the global superpowers after World War II, and by the early 1950s it was again caught up in world events. The Cold War and the Korean conflict created not only tension in all aspects of American life, but also a divisiveness in American society that was reflected in the educational structure. We feel the results of that divisiveness even now. 

Fluctuating world and national conditions were so precarious in the 1950s that it was not possible to define the kind of world for which our schools were educating students. Sand and Miller stated:

1. Contemporary society is changing so fundamentally and rapidly that we have difficulty fitting ourselves in to the present and projecting ourselves into the future.
2. The almost incredible explosion of knowledge threatens to overwhelm unless we can find, and quickly, some intelligent solutions to problems created by the new and growing wealth of information.
3. Significant discoveries are being made about people and learning—discoveries that emphasize the range of differences among and within individuals and point to the great variety of ways in which people can learn. At a time when there is so much to be learned, and so urgent a need to learn it, we must create new teaching methods and adapt old ones to accelerate and enrich the teaching-learning process.

Throughout the 1950s the schools were attacked from both the right and the left, with each side charging the entire educational system with anti-intellectualism. As the decade progressed, industrial, military, and educational leaders became increasingly aware of the fact that education—change was necessary to meet societal demands. A climate of urgency developed and was greatly intensified when, in October 1957, the Soviet
Union launched the first space satellite, Sputnik 1. This shocked the American people, who were abruptly awoken to the fact that the Soviet Union had taken the lead in space technology, and by doing so had gained a military advantage that terrified the rest of the world. Thus, educational reform was needed not only for improved living standards, but to assure that we could remain technologically capable of defending ourselves from military attack.

Starting in 1958, the process of change in American education accelerated dramatically. An analysis of change in New York State public schools indicated that the rate of innovation more than doubled in the fifteen months following the launch of Sputnik 1. Change was spurred by vocal and provocative education critics like Vice Admiral Hyman G. Rickover, who directed the development of the United States Navy atomic submarine program. His was a strong voice in compelling American education to prepare students for the needs of a technological society. He wrote:

Russia has built an educational system in record time which produces exactly the sort of trained men and women her rulers need to achieve technical supremacy. . . . Russia has no substandard teachers. . . . Russian students are studious, polite, well-disciplined, and earnest. . . . Students have no competing attractions, no comfortable homes, no playrooms, no jokeboxes, no senior proms, no dating, hardly any radio or TV, and no hot rods. Soviet Union's triumph in space technology indicated weakness in our society. To correct that deficiency, it was necessary to accord the highest status in our society to scientists and engineers, and to reorganize American education to strengthen science education. Rickover compared American and European education and found the American system lacking. European education, as he perceived it, provided the essential intellectual, cultural, and physical requirements. Students who were unable to meet requirements were shifted to vocational training. To Rickover, the American system wasted precious resources by attempting to educate everyone equally, regardless of ability. Activities like field trips, assemblies, artistic endeavors, and extracurricular activities were further evidence of waste. He strongly recommended that more money be spent on education, that science and math offerings be strengthened, and that all frills be eliminated from the curriculum.

Dr. James Bryant Conant, former president of Harvard University, was another influential education critic. Conant stressed the need for stronger math and science programs, but unlike Rickover, he recommended that students include music and art in their high school elective programs. Rickover, Conant, and other critics helped make Americans aware of the importance of what were considered to be the most basic subjects: reading, mathematics, science, and foreign languages.

A particularly misguided education objective that emerged in the 1950s, and which still exists, has colored every reform movement to the present. The basic skills—reading, writing, mathematics—were emphasized so heavily that they became the major focus of education policy development, assessment, and funding. Many leaders lost sight of the fact that these skills are simply tools that open the gate to education. They are not an education in themselves.

National attention to education was further magnified when the federal government became involved. In 1960 President Eisenhower appointed eleven distinguished Americans to the Commission on National Goals. Education was one of the areas addressed by the commission. The final report, "National Goals in Education," known as the Gardner Report (prepared by John W. Gardner, president of the Carnegie Corporation), was a strong statement of educational philosophy and goals that served as a basis for change in American education. In 1961 President Kennedy established the White House Panel on Educational Research and Development (an advisory board to the U.S. Office of Education, the National Science Foundation, and his own science adviser) to help improve American education. The panel adopted three goals. The immediate goal was to address the issue of urban education, which was failing miserably in preparing students for their future roles in American society. The second was to improve instruction through new and daring curricula, and to be paralleled by more effective recruiting and training of teachers. The third goal was to solve the problems caused by lack of understanding of the nature of learning.

An important event occurred in 1959, when the Woods Hole (Massachusetts) Conference took place. Its purpose was to identify the problems of science education and to recommend solutions. The conference was convened by the Education Committee of the National Academy of Sciences and was supported by the Academy, the U.S. Office of Education, the Air Force, and the Rand Corporation. Educators, historians, physicists, biologists, psychologists, and mathematicians attended the ten-day conference. This was the beginning of a new trend in educational planning; the united efforts of distinguished people in varied fields addressing themselves to the general improvement of education. The Woods Hole Conference generated many other curriculum studies in academic subjects; a 1962 review listed ten projects in science, eleven in mathematics, one in language arts, two in foreign languages, and four in social studies. In 1961 the National Education Association sponsored a large-scale "Project on Instruction," which involved scholars in all disciplines.

The federal government strongly supported change in education. The Cooperative Research Branch of the Office of Education disbursed approximately $10 million a year from 1956 to 1961 for 407 research projects. The National Science Foundation granted $159 million in
1960, $34 million of which went to teacher improvement institutes that served 31,000 teachers. In 1961 more than half of all funds granted by large foundations were for educational enterprises.\(^5\)

The vast resources that were poured into education in the late 1950s and early 1960s were mostly for the improvement of curricular areas directly related to the perceived needs of the postindustrial technological society. The arts were not excluded from the movement, but neither did they receive generous support from it. The nation had focused its attention on what were considered to be the basic subjects, and many people thought of the arts as an educational "frill" that contributed little to children's needs. Some school systems went to the extreme of creating a sharp dichotomy between "solid" and "extraneous" courses: "One school system labels as 'food for thought' content of mathematics, science, English, history, and foreign language courses. Electives are called.png
ders and are used mainly to tempt the appetites of students who are not college bound.\(^6\)

The implications of an unbalanced curriculum were clear to many educators. In 1959, the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) expressed support for a more complete curriculum:

We believe in a well balanced school curriculum in which music, drama, painting, poetry, sculpture, architecture, and the like are included side by side with other important subjects such as mathematics, history, and science. It is important that pupils, as a part of general education, learn to appreciate, to understand, to create, and to criticize with discrimination those products of the mind, the voice, the hand, and the body which give dignity to the person and exalt the spirit of man.\(^7\)

The National Education Association's Project on Instruction supported arts education. Its report stated that school priorities included skills in reading, writing, mathematics, and the sciences and the visual arts. But despite the support of NEA, the perception of music education as a nonacademic subject persisted. Music educators realized the importance of being included in education reform, and worked to change that perception. The theme of the 1962 Music Educators National Conference (MENC) biennial meeting was music as an academic subject; its title was "The Study of Music: An Academic Discipline."

Scientists, alarmed by the curricular imbalance, added their voices to the chorus of support for arts education. The White House Panel on Educational Research and Development stated:

Certain members of the Panel were convinced that there was a degree of correlation between excellence in scientific achievement and the breadth of an individual's human experience. The best scientists, it was thought, were not necessarily those who had devoted themselves singlemindedly to their own field; somehow, familiarity with the arts and humanities sharpened a good scientist's vision.\(^8\)

The 1960s

The 1960s were a time of economic growth for education because the "baby boom" that followed World War II generated high enrollments. The maturation of that generation, combined with the social reforms of the 1960s, changed the character of American education profoundly. The sudden growth of the school population created a shortage of qualified teachers, and teacher education standards were reduced to bring more people into the profession. Combined with traditionally low teacher salaries, this tended to discourage people of the highest ability from entering the teaching profession.\(^9\)

By the end of the 1960s portents of future problems were appearing. Like the period immediately preceding the Great Depression of 1929, it was a time of plenty for education, but educational quality continued to deteriorate. The gradual and insidious decline was augured by the downward trend of SAT scores. By the end of the 1960s, however, standards had not yet sunk to the point where educators and the public were overly alarmed. That was to happen in the next decade.

The 1970s

Education in the 1970s was characterized by decline. During the early part of the decade, greatly increased oil prices severely affected world economic conditions. The ensuing inflation seriously hampered the ability of local school districts to maintain adequate funding levels. The states had similar problems and were unable to compensate for the shortages faced by local school districts. The federal government, faced with new crises in social policy, foreign affairs, and the economy, diversified its attention and support away from education. This shift effectively ended a period of educational research and development that had been sponsored by government agencies.

The government did not abandon education completely. It maintained research activities, but with very few funded projects and development activities. It did this in 1972 by replacing the Bureau of Research of the U.S. Office of Education with the National Institute of Education (NIE), which assumed responsibility for federal educational activities.

\(^{12}\)There is an irony in the contrasting methods of industry and education in attracting more workers when the labor supply is short. Industry raises salaries to make its jobs more attractive to workers. School systems, on the other hand, have traditionally dealt with teacher shortages by reducing professionals and educational requirements for new teachers.
research. The federal government maintained that it continued to lead in research efforts: "While the direction of the education system remains primarily the responsibility of State and local governments, the Federal Government has a clear responsibility to provide leadership in the conduct and support of scientific inquiry into the educational process." NIE was established to "advance the practice of education, as an art, science, and profession; strengthen the scientific and technological foundations of education; and build an effective educational research and development system." Probably the most important function of NIE was the dissemination of research findings through its Educational Resources Information Center (see chapter 4). As valuable as this role is, and despite the strong leadership statement (above) in the legislation that created NIE, it actually allowed the federal government to reduce its direct involvement in education.

School enrollments declined to earlier levels because the children of the baby boom generation had completed their schooling. Fewer teachers were needed, and the number of music teaching positions declined significantly, as did positions in art and other subjects. One of the ways in which boards of education cut costs was to reduce the number of periods in the school day, thus decreasing the availability of electives. This compounded the problem because fewer students could take music in school. In addition, the student bodies of under-enrolled schools were often consolidated, thus further reducing the need for music teaching positions.

During this period of enrollment decline, educational quality continued to decrease as well. By the end of the decade, it was at such a low level that the nation realized that it had to deal with the problem quickly and effectively. In 1980 the average math SAT score had plunged to an all-time low of 466. Juvenile crime, drugs, and other social problems had created even more problems for the schools. Conditions were worse than they had been a decade earlier, and they had been extremely serious at that time. Equally important, public confidence in the nation’s schools had dropped precipitously.

Earlier in the 1970s, as public awareness of the situation was beginning to grow, an accountability movement developed. Various accountability devices were implemented in schools as a panacea for declining performance. Although it did not prove to be a cure, the accountability movement helped clarify educational goals and objectives. It also provided a means of measuring the educational progress of individuals and the effectiveness of the educational system. Later in the decade, as the public became increasingly aware of the continuing decline of its educational system, calls for reform began to be heard from educators and from business, industry, the military, and the general public. The desire for reform developed into a "back-to-basics" movement, which, like earlier efforts, turned out to be an attempt to identify basic subjects, emphasize them, eliminate frills, and produce reasonably high learning and teaching standards.

The 1980s

In the early 1980s a series of studies and reports on the plight of American education echoed the public alarm that was raised after the launch of Sputnik in 1957. By 1980 everybody recognized that something had to be done to improve American education. Although it was a national issue, the federal government did not have authority over education. In addition, most educational funding comes from the states and localities. With approximately 10,000 school districts in the United States, it is virtually impossible to achieve uniformity of quality on a national scale. The federal government can only identify problems, recommend solutions, offer some (but never enough) funding, and encourage the states and localities to find the will and resources to effect reform.

Later, the federal government would find a way to become more directly involved in reform (see chapter 4).

Other factors contributed to the problems in American schools as well. The fifty years leading to the 1980s saw a drop in the number of school districts from 130,000 to 16,000. The percentage of classroom teachers in the total school staff declined from 85 percent to 86 percent, and the amount of school support from local governments declined from 83 percent to 43 percent. During the same period, the population almost doubled, and the per-student cost increased almost 500 percent. 34

National Reports on American Education

In 1988, following years of increasingly harsh rhetoric about poor educational quality, several national reports informed the public about various studies that had been completed and their recommendations for proposed solutions to the problems.

The National Commission on Excellence in Education

The National Commission on Excellence in Education, a presidential commission, released a report titled A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform in April 1983. It echoed the calls for reform heard in 1957:

"If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war. As it stands, we have allowed this to happen to ourselves. We have even squandered the gains in student achievement made in the wake of the Sputnik challenge."

The report listed numerous defects in the educational system, making the point that, by any of a number of measures, the quality of American education had declined significantly. The current level of mediocrity was unlikely to produce an educated adult population capable of living productive and satisfying lives in the increasingly technological world.
community. As other nations overtook us in educational mastery, the United States could be expected to fall behind economically and the result would be a lower quality of life. (The findings of several sociological and economic studies have indeed shown that the quality of life in several other nations has surpassed that of the United States.) It recommended that elementary and secondary school curricula should include subjects such as "advance students' personal, educational, and occupational goals, such as the fine and performing arts and vocational education."

MAKING THE GRADE: THE 20TH CENTURY FUND TASK FORCE ON FEDERAL ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION POLICY

The 20th Century Fund Task Force released its report in May 1983. The task force called on "the executive and legislative branches of the federal government to emphasize the need for better schools and a better education for all young Americans." It recommended that (1) a national master teacher program be established to recognize and reward excellent teachers; (2) "the federal government clearly state that the most important objective of elementary and secondary education in the United States is the development of literacy in the English language"; and (3) various actions be taken by the federal government to improve science, math, and foreign language education and special education programs; to fund education; and to utilize research to improve education. The report did not mention music education, although one could easily infer the need for it.

As we see it, the public schools, which constitute the nation's most important institution for the shaping of future citizens, must go farther. We think that they should insure the availability of large numbers of skilled and capable individuals without whom we cannot sustain a complex and competitive economy. They should foster understanding, discipline, and discernment, those qualities of mind and temperament that are the hallmarks of a civilized polity and that are essential for the maintenance of a domestic tranquility in a polyethnic constitutional democracy. And they should impart to present and future generations a desire to acquire knowledge, ranging from the principles of science to the accumulated wisdom and shared values that derive from the nation's rich and varied cultural heritage.

THE NATIONAL SCIENCE BOARD COMMISSION ON PRECOLLEGE EDUCATION IN MATHEMATICS, SCIENCE, AND TECHNOLOGY

The Commission, a panel of the National Science Foundation, published its report in September 1983. It was entitled "Educating Americans for the 21st Century: A plan for action for improving mathematics, science and technology education for all American elementary and secondary students so that their achievement is the best in the world by 1985." The report urged the federal government to take a leadership role in education, warning that the United States "must not become an industrial hasband," and stated: "The nation that led the world into the age of technology is failing to provide its own children with the intellectual tools needed for the 21st century." The report also recommended a longer school day, more required courses for high school graduation and admission to college, and higher teacher pay:

The Commission recognizes . . . the interrelationships among all areas of learning, and that there are also glaring deficiencies in the teaching and learning of English and foreign languages, history, political science, the classics, art, music and other areas of study important for life in the 21st century. Plans and programs to meet these problems are vital. The commission hopes such plans and programs will be developed with the same time schedule in mind.

THE COLLEGE BOARD STUDY

The document that offered the most support for arts education, and the most pragmatic of all the reports, was Academic Preparation for College: What Students Need to Know and Be Able to Do, published in 1983 by the College Board. The College Board publishes tests and provides other educational services for students, schools, and colleges. It is highly influential in such areas as college admissions and high school curriculum. The report is a part of the College Board Educational Quality Project, a long-term effort to improve the academic quality of secondary education and to assure that all students have equal opportunities for postsecondary education.

It identified English, the arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and foreign languages as the basic subjects.

WHY? The arts—visual arts, theater, music, and dance—challenge and extend human experience. They provide means of expression that go beyond ordinary speaking and writing. They can express intimate thoughts and feelings. They are a unique record of diverse cultures and how these cultures have developed over time. They provide distinctive ways of understanding human beings and nature.

The arts are creative modes by which all people can enrich their lives both by self-expression and response to the expressions of others. Works of art often involve subtle meanings and complex systems of expression. Fully appreciating such works requires the careful reasoning and sustained study that lead to informed insight. Moreover, just as thorough understanding of science requires laboratory or field work, so fully understanding the arts involves hands-on work in them.

Preparation in the arts will be valuable to college entrants whatever their intended field of study. The actual practice of the arts can engage the imagination, foster flexible ways of thinking,
develop disciplined effort, and build self-confidence. Appreciation of the arts is integral to the understanding of other cultures sought in the study of history, foreign language, and social sciences. Preparation in the arts will also enable college students to engage in and profit from advanced study, performance, and studio work in the arts. For some, such college-level work will lead to careers in the arts. For many others, it will permanently enhance the quality of their lives, whether they continue artistic activity as an avocation or appreciation of the arts as observers and members of audiences.

WHAT IF the preparation of college entrants is in music, they will need the following knowledge and skills.

- The ability to identify and describe—using the appropriate vocabulary—various musical forms from different historical periods.
- The ability to listen perceptively to music, distinguishing each element as pitch, rhythm, timbre, and dynamics.
- The ability to read music.
- The ability to evaluate a musical work or performance.
- To know how to express themselves by playing an instrument, singing in a group or individually, or composing music.25

THE POSTER PROPOSAL
The Poster Proposal was written by Mortimer Adler, who proposed that there be no electives in the curriculum, and that all students take the same three-part course of study. The three parts do not correspond to specific separate courses. The proposal recommended that organized knowledge be acquired in three broad areas: language, literature, and the fine arts; mathematics and natural science; and history, geography, and other social studies. He also recommended Socratic questioning to enlarge understanding of ideas and values, as well as discussion of books and other works of art, and involvement in music, drama, and visual arts.26

THE CARNegie FOUNDATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF TEACHING
The Foundation released its report, written by its president, former United States Commissioner of Education Ernest Boyer, in 1983. It was entitled High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America. Boyer recommended that the first two years of high school be dominated by a core curriculum of required courses, including the arts: "The arts are an essential part of the human experience. They are not a frill. We recommend that all students study the arts to discover how human beings use nonverbal symbols and communicate not only with words but through music, dance, and the visual arts."27

A PLACE CALLED SCHOOL
A Place Called School, by John Goodlad, strongly supported arts education. Goodlad proposed that from 10 to 15 percent of each student's program be in the arts. Another 10 to 20 percent should be reserved for the development of student interests and talents; much of this time would be used for arts activities. Goodlad refused the argument that there is not enough time in the school day for all of the subjects that need to be offered in a curriculum of high quality. He pointed out ways in which a great deal of time was wasted because of current practices, and recommended how subjects might be scheduled more efficiently and effectively.28

Summary of National Reports
Although each report emphasized a particular point of view, there were areas of commonality among them. In general, they agreed that the goals of education needed to be clarified. Those commissions interested in particular disciplines, such as math and science, tended to recommend goals that supported science and technology. Commissions that perceived education primarily as preparation for work tended to downplay the importance of education for personal fulfillment. There was agreement that schools must continue to develop academic competencies, foster vocational skills and awareness, contribute to personal fulfillment and cultivate civic responsibility. There was also general agreement that all students should be required to complete a core curriculum, but not on what should constitute the core.29

Arts educators were pleased to note that most of the reports that were based on research and informed reflection supported arts education. The greatest disappointment to arts educators was A Nation at Risk, in which the arts were minimally supported, being subordinated to what the National Commission on Excellence in Education identified as the basic subjects. Paul Lehman stated:

I wish that the press coverage and the public discussion of this document had reflected the emphasis it places on the arts. At the same time, I am deeply disappointed, that the Commission assigned the arts to a second tier of priorities, clearly subordinate to the highest ranked fields of study. In this respect, A Nation at Risk is sharply at odds with most other major reports, which have included the arts among the basics.30

Responses to National Reports and Critics
Responses to the flurry of reports on the state of American education and their recommendations were many and varied. Fred Hechinger
HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS OF MUSIC EDUCATION

The mass of proposals amid contradictory remedies could well neutralize each other. A confused public may grow impatient with all the talk and counter-talk and tune out again. Then, nothing would happen beyond some minor cosmetic readjustments.24 Diane Ravitch warned about the ineffectiveness and danger of paroasies meant to improve edu-
cation. In her history of American education from 1945 to 1980, she described the equal opportunity movement as the main focus for reform at all levels of education:

Probably no other idea has seemed more typically American than the belief that schooling could cure someone's ills. As a result, sometimes schools have been expected to take on responsibilities for which they were entirely unsuited. When they have failed, it was usually because their leaders and the public alike had forgotten their real limitations as well as their real strengths.25

Ravitch's warning is supported by many studies from the 1960s to the 1980s that indicate there is little relationship between the amount of money spent for education and improvement in the quality of education. John Mahlmann, Executive Director of the Music Educators National Conference, wrote:

We cannot allow the deafening roar of the educational critics to drown out the sounds of music in the schools. The report, A Nation at Risk, provides a balanced picture. However, in our haste to take remedial action to combat the "rising tide of mediocrity," which, the report charges, is eroding the allocational foundations of our society, it is possible that our good intentions can cause some serious over-
tights. So while we are "at risk" we will further exacerbate the situa-
tion, increase the risk, and stunt the chances for success if we are guilty of answering the call unaware of its emphasis on the important role of the arts in the education process. The real "risk" is not of fail-
ure to meet the challenges but in the dangers of overzealously attack-
ing the system's balance of skill, knowledge and appreciation in all areas of learning.23

The 1990s

The educational crisis of the previous forty years has continued into the 1990s. Now, as in the 1950s, excellence is more the exception than the rule. The dropout rate for high school students is above 50 percent. SAT scores have risen only slightly. American students have lower achieve-
ment levels than their counterparts in most other developed countries, and many are functionally unprepared to maintain and help move for-
ward a technological society. Unreformed education is even a more seri-
ous matter in the 1990s than it was in the 1950s because new generations of students have been certified by their schools as educated when they actually lack basic literacy and numeracy skills. They are less able to cope with life in an advanced society than were their 1950s counterparts because there are fewer jobs for poorly educated people. These problems persist despite the fact that in 1990 the nation spent $215.5 billion on education, more than twice the amount spent ten years earlier.34

Nevertheless, progress has been made in the 1990s. Despite the long-standing problems, there is finally hope that true reform will occur. Early in the 1990s, the federal government renewed its involvement in education reform, which led to the most significant development in edu-
cation reform since the 1950s: the enactment of federal legislation to adopt national educational standards. The national standards are expected to resolve a difficult issue that has always prevented national education reforms from succeeding. Diane Ravitch points out that, before the establishment of the standards, there had never been signifi-
cant agreement on what students should learn in the various subjects, and at different grade levels. Other industrialized countries have been able to depend on their educational systems to prepare students effec-
tively for adulthood. They can do this, in part, because they have decid-
ed what all of their students need to learn. The new national standards give us a way to decide what knowledge students in all states should have. Without this agreement, it is hardly possible even to agree on what problems need to be addressed.35 The national standards, and their implications for music education, are discussed in chapter 2.

Conclusion

Almost everything that has happened in music education from the 1950s to the 1990s has been the result of social issues that originated out-
side of the music education profession. The issues include national stan-
dards and goals, professional certification of music educators, multicul-
turnalism, children-at-risk, practical applicability of the subject in the real-life world of society, assessment, technology, and decentraliza-
tion and privatization of schools. All of these subjects are discussed in other parts of this book. Each is important, and if approached properly, will allow music educators to serve a greater variety of students in the future. Given the ever-increasing pace of change in our society, howev-
er, unpredictable political pressures, it is possible that many of the activities in which we invest our energies today will be set aside prema-
turely as new areas of concern emerge.

What can be done to strengthen music education in the context of troubled schools? Fortunately, much can be done. It is possible that music education can help rejuvenate American education through efforts like the adoption of national standards by states and local school districts. This story will be told in later chapters.
NOTES
18 Miles, Innovations in Education, 3.
19 Ibid., 3-4.
21 American Association for School Administrators, Official Report for the Year