

DEVELOPMENT OF INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN THE SCHOOLS
AS REFLECTED BY THE MUSIC SUPERVISORS JOURNAL, 1914 - 1930

by 4589

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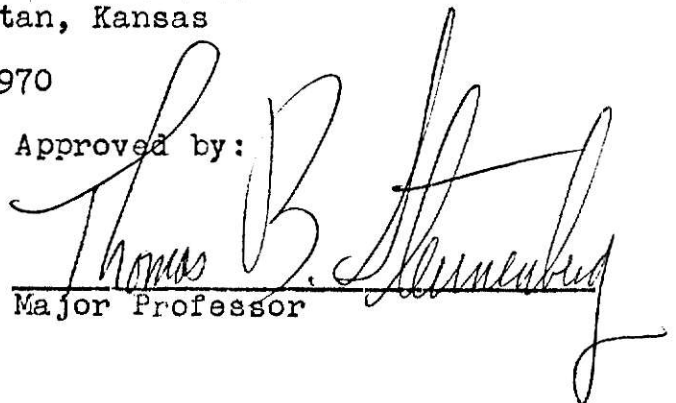
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INTRODUCTION

Instrumental music in the schools of the United States developed rapidly between 1914 and 1930. The philosophy of music education changed from "absolute music" teaching to that of "appreciation" during the early nineteen-twenties. Since 1930 instrumental music has changed very little so far as teaching methods and philosophies are concerned.

The purpose of this report is to trace the development of instrumental music in the public schools over these years as it is reflected in the consecutive issues of The Music Supervisors Journal. This development is shown in both the contributed articles, the advertisements of music publishers, and musical instrument manufacturers in these journals.

This report is meant only to follow the development of instrumental music; it will not set forth any philosophical discussions as such, but the major changes in philosophy are indicated as they took place. Also a detailed discussion of all the aspects of the development of instrumental music is not herein contained. This report is a general overview of the development of instrumental music in the schools.

The first mention of any kind of instrumental music in the Public School was cited in a report by George W. Stewart, of Boston, director of music, and J. B. Levison, of the committee on music of the National Conference of Music Supervisors. This report indicated that school bands and orchestras would be invited to show the results of their study at the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition. The report indicated that a great interest had been shown by boards of education and school officials, generally, in the instrumental phase of musical work, and the result was that quite a number of cities had fine instrumental groups in their schools.¹

In the year 1914--the starting point of this report--the emphasis was upon vocal music. Except for isolated instances, instrumental music was not present in the public schools, although interest in the instrumental area was beginning to grow. Any instrumental training given to children of a community was done as a community project in the form of a "Boys Band," or "Community Orchestra." William B. Kinnear, Larned, Kansas, stated in his article in the November issue of the National Conference of Music Supervisors Journal, 1914, that Larned had entered the "boy band" stage, but strings for orchestra were not available.²

¹George W. Stewart and J. B. Levison, "Music and Dancing by the Children at the Panama-Pacific Exposition," Music Supervisors Journal, Vol. I, No. 1, (September, 1914), p. 28.

²William B. Kinnear, "Contributed Article," Ibid., Vol. I, No. 2, (November, 1914), p. 5.

Instrumental programs that were developed within a number of schools throughout the country were generally unorganized and included wind and string instruments and piano. These programs were, for the most part, directed by a member of the community, rather than a music teacher per se. Examples of well organized groups were the orchestras of Aurora, Illinois, Wichita, Kansas, and the program developed by Will Earhart in Richmond, Indiana. Oakland, California, had an apparently well developed instrumental music program; however, the leaders were hired by the city rather than the school board.

By 1915, interest in promoting instrumental music in the public schools seems to have grown immensely. Bessie M. Whiteley, Kansas City, Missouri, sent out a questionnaire to educators of twenty-six of the largest cities in the United States, referring to the establishment of orchestral practice in the elementary schools. The following information was obtained through the questions--with their replies--listed below:

1. To the query, "Is orchestra practice established in your Elementary Schools?", eight answered in the negative, but in most cases with the assertion, "We hope soon to have it established." Four answered, "Just starting it." Eleven, answering as to the length of time such had been established, stated variously from two to twenty years--the city of Philadelphia having had such practice "outside of school hours" for fifteen years, and Cincinnati (in a few of its schools) for twenty years.

2. To the query, "In what per cent of your schools is orchestra practice established?" The answers varied from eight to one hundred per cent.

3. To the query, "Does a special Supervisor attend to this work?" The answers, in most cases, stated that the regular supervisor and assistants, with the help of gifted grade teachers, are conducting the work. In the St. Louis