

THE DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION
OF A BLACK MUSIC COURSE OF STUDY DESIGNED FOR
JUNIOR HIGH STUDENTS

by

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Submitted to the Temple University Graduate Board in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor
of Musical Arts.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Public school teachers, college professors, musicologists, conductors, music librarians, theoreticians, performers and music educators know comparatively little about black musical styles, performance practices and music history. Folk and minstrel songs, spirituals, gospel, blues, jazz styles and black composers contributions are commonly neglected in the study of music history. In music history classes the music of Chevalier de Saint-Georges (1739-1799), born on the island of Guadeloupe in 1739 of African and French ancestry, is not commonly studied. A contemporary of Bach, Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, Chevalier de Saint-Georges influenced the development of the violin sonata of the eighteenth century.¹ Other black European composers were George Bridgetower, for whom Beethoven wrote the Kreutzer sonatas; Jose White (1836-1920), born in Cuba and trained in Paris; Nunes-Garcia (1767-1830), a composer for the Portuguese monarchy in the early eighteen-hundreds; Ignacio Parreira (1730-1792); Ignatius Sancho (1729-1780); and Samuel Coleridge Taylor (1875-1912), one of England's most popular composers. Prominent American black composers

¹Dominique-Rene De Lerma, "The Chevalier De Saint-Georges" Black Perspective in Music, Vol. 3, (1976), pp. 3-19.

commonly overlooked are Harry T. Burleigh (1866-1949), Louis Moreau Gottschalk, R. Nathaniel Dett (1882-1943), William Grant Still (1895-) and William Dawson (1899-).² A list of black composers, pianists, instrumentalists and conductors who are commonly excluded in the study of music history are listed in Appendixes B & C.

Scholarly research in black music is very limited; the Journal of the Black Perspective in Music, edited by Dr. Eileen Southern of Harvard, is the only one with articles dealing exclusively with black music. Research studies specifically comparing black and white achievement in instrumental and general music are also rare. Two studies by Edwin Gordon are exceptional.³ One study involved a comparison of the performance of culturally disadvantaged students with that of culturally heterogeneous students on the Musical Aptitude Profile. The differences in score distributions on the Musical Aptitude Profile were negligible. The results of the study also indicated that many culturally disadvantaged black students who scored high on the Musical Aptitude Profile were not involved in musical

²Eileen Southern, "Americas Black Composers of Classical Music" Music Educators Journal, Vol. 62, November (1975), pp. 46-59.

³Edwin Gordon, "A Comparison of the Performance of Culturally Disadvantaged Students With That of Culturally Heterogeneous Students on the Musical Aptitude Profile" Psychology in the Schools, Vol. 15, (1967), pp. 260-268.

_____, "Fourth and Fifth-Year Results of a Study of the Musical Achievements of Culturally Disadvantaged Students" Research in the Psychology of Music, Vol. 10, (1975), pp. 24-52.

activities in school. The other study is a longitudinal one which spans a five-year period. The results revealed that if given similar educational opportunities, students who attend culturally disadvantaged schools achieve in music at levels comparable to that of students who possess corresponding musical aptitudes but attend culturally heterogeneous schools. Further, if given appropriate compensatory instruction over a period of years, exceptional music students who attend culturally disadvantaged schools can surpass exceptional music students who attend culturally heterogeneous schools in musical achievement, performance and cognitive skills. Of particular significance is that overall, the potential for musical achievement is similar in all groups regardless of cultural or socio-economic background.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

In order to properly include black music in music curriculums, it would seem important that educators obtain objective information on the effects of black music courses on black and white students who possess different levels of musical aptitude. For example, music educators should know if a black general music course of study developed in terms of the social and cultural backgrounds of black students is likely to demonstrate a greater proficiency in music on the part of black students. It is also necessary for music educators to be able to identify minority students

that perform well on music aptitude tests for the purpose of participation in private instruction. If music educators are to remain unbiased in their assessment of black students' aptitude and achievement, objective measures, procedures and guidelines should be established for the inclusion of black music as part of the total curriculum. In essence, it is important that Americans recognize all aspects of black music as worthy of serious study, thus arousing national awareness of a significant but previously overlooked contribution to the cultural heritage of the country.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The specific problems of the study relate to the following questions.

1. Will black students benefit more from a general black music course of study than white students?
2. Will musically select⁴ black and white students benefit more from a general black music course of study than musically unselect black and white students?
3. Will black and white students with high music aptitude benefit more from a general black music course of study than black and white students with low music aptitude?

⁴Musically select students are defined as those who are members of a school music performance group and/or those who have had or are now taking private or group lessons on a musical instrument.

CHAPTER TWO

RELATED RESEARCH

To the writer's knowledge, there is only one related research study in general music which is indirectly designed to compare the musical achievement of black and white students. The research that exists pertains primarily to instrumental performance. Because such research is most closely related to the present study, it will be reviewed in detail. The use of the terms culturally heterogeneous and culturally disadvantaged as well as culturally deprived and culturally advantaged in the related research studies denotes a comparison between black and white students who reside in a large metropolitan area. The writer prefers the designations of culturally different or black and white in comparing musical achievement by race.

I. A COMPARISON OF THE PERFORMANCE OF CULTURALLY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS WITH THAT OF CULTURALLY HETEROGENEOUS STUDENTS ON THE MUSICAL APTITUDE PROFILE

The purpose of the study was to investigate the distribution of scores of culturally disadvantaged students on the Musical Aptitude Profile.⁵ The Musical Aptitude Profile is used, among other purposes, to identify musically talented students who can benefit from participation in band, chorus

⁵Ibid., p. 2.

and other special music programs in the schools. It consists of three total tests: Tonal Imagery includes the subtests Melody and Harmony; Rhythm Imagery includes the subtests Tempo and Meter; and Musical Sensitivity includes the subtests Phrasing, Balance and Style. Administration time is approximately fifty minutes for each total test.

Two schools which met the provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965, Title I as "educationally deprived" were selected for the study. Ninety-eight percent of the students were black. Subjects were 685 seventh-grade students enrolled in the Milwaukee school district. The Musical Aptitude Profile was administered to the students by the regular teachers according to the directions given in the test manual. Standard score means, standard deviations, reliability coefficients and standard errors of measurements were computed. The mean score difference between the culturally disadvantaged group and the culturally heterogeneous groups which participated in the standardization program of Musical Aptitude Profile demonstrated that nine of the eleven subtest score differences were only one standard score point, or less. When comparisons were made between musically select students in the two groups, seven of the eleven differences were less than one standard score point. Musical Aptitude Profile composite mean standard score differences between the two cultural groups were .7 and .4 for all students and musically select students,

respectively. Results of the study not only indicate that the difference in score distributions on the Musical Aptitude Profile between the groups were negligible but in addition, the results indicate that many culturally disadvantaged black students who scored high on the Musical Aptitude Profile were not involved in musical activities in school even though they possessed the aptitude to profit from such training as indicated by their scores.

II. FIVE-YEAR RESULTS OF A LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF THE MUSICAL ACHIEVEMENTS OF CULTURALLY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS

The purpose of the longitudinal study was to investigate whether if given similar educational opportunity, culturally disadvantaged students would achieve at levels comparable to that of culturally heterogeneous students, and whether the potential (aptitude) for achievement is similar among groups of culturally heterogeneous and culturally disadvantaged students. In September 1968, the Musical Aptitude Profile was administered to all fifth grade students in four culturally disadvantaged schools⁶ and three culturally heterogeneous elementary schools in Des Moines, Iowa. Then all students, regardless of their Musical Aptitude Profile scores, who volunteered to take instrumental music lessons and to participate in band activities for a five-year period were lent a new musical instrument.

⁶These four schools were technically classified as culturally disadvantaged under the provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965, Title I.

The instruments were divided equally between the culturally disadvantaged and culturally heterogeneous groups. The students received two half-hour instrumentally-homogeneous group lessons each week during the school year from four instrumental music teachers.

A summary of the first-year results of the study revealed that the prepared and sight-reading etudes and the Iowa Test of Musical Literacy Level I treatment means significantly favored students who attend culturally heterogeneous schools and the level means significantly favored students with high musical aptitude regardless of cultural background.⁷ The interaction effects were found to be non-significant for the achievement criteria. The observed means favored the culturally heterogeneous group over the culturally disadvantaged group. After two years of instruction, the differences between the etude treatment means for the two groups were not significant although the observed means continued to favor the culturally heterogeneous group.⁸ Interaction effects were not significant for any of the criteria in the second year of the study.

The results of the third year of the study were dif-

⁷Edwin Gordon, "First-Year Results of a Five-Year Longitudinal Study of the Musical Achievement of Culturally Disadvantaged Students" Journal of Research in Music Education, Vol. 18, (Fall 1970), pp. 195-213.

⁸Edwin Gordon, "Second-Year Results of a Five-Year Longitudinal Study of the Achievement of Culturally Disadvantaged Students" Experimental Research in the Psychology of Music, Vol. 7 (1971), pp. 131-143.

ferent from those of the first and second year. Unlike the first and second years, the third-year findings were not similar for all criteria. Like the second-year results, the mean differences between the culturally disadvantaged and culturally heterogeneous groups for the first and second prepared etudes were not significant. What was different from the two previous years findings was that the observed means favored the culturally disadvantaged high aptitude group.⁹ The corresponding observed means continued to favor the culturally heterogeneous low aptitude group. The interaction effect for each of the two prepared etudes was not significant; the level effects for all criteria were significant. However, regardless of cultural status, high aptitude students continued to demonstrate higher achievement than low aptitude students. Analyses of ratings of the recorded instrumental etude performance and scores on the Iowa Test of Musical Literacy shows that they were statistically significant. For these two etude criteria in contrast to the prepared etude criterion, the difference between the treatment for high aptitude culturally disadvantaged and culturally heterogeneous students as compared to the difference between the treatment means for low aptitude culturally disadvantaged and culturally heterogeneous students was significant. Following the trend in

⁹Edwin Gordon, "Third-Year Results of a Five-Year Longitudinal Study of the Musical Achievement of Culturally Disadvantaged Students" Experimental Research in the Psychology of Music, Vol. 8, (1972), pp. 45-64.

the first and second years of the study, the treatment means for the Iowa Test of Musical Literacy Tonal Concepts test, the Rhythmic Concepts test and the Composite test significantly favored the culturally heterogeneous students. The level effects for all Iowa Test of Musical Literacy criteria were significant and the interaction effects were not. In essence, the observed mean favored the combined etude performance of the high aptitude students who attend culturally disadvantaged schools. The combined etude mean favored the low aptitude students who attend heterogeneous schools. On the basis of the evidence presented in the third-year results, it was concluded that students with high musical aptitude who attend culturally disadvantaged schools are capable of achieving at levels comparable to those of high aptitude students who attend culturally heterogeneous schools.

Following the trend of the first three years of study, the reliabilities of the judges' ratings and reliabilities of the students' performance continued to remain very high in the fourth and fifth year of the study as well. In the fourth year of the study, the means for each of the three etudes and the three etudes combined were significantly higher for students who attend culturally disadvantaged schools than for students who attend culturally heterogeneous schools.¹⁰ The overall means for high aptitude

¹⁰Edwin Gordon, "Fourth and Fifth Year Results of a Longitudinal Study of the Musical Achievement of Culturally Disadvantaged Students" Experimental Research in the Psychology of Music, Vol. 10, (1975), pp. 24-52.