

## MUSICAL CHILD ABUSE

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Master Teacher Address  
Approximate Transcription  
March 11, 1987

Thank you, Professor Bayfield, President Trachtenburg, Vice-president Lawson, Ed Friedman, and honored guests. This evening and the next three days on the University of Hartford campus certainly mark an important occasion in my life. I would like to thank everyone who made it a reality. I must thank Bill Willett because he obviously believed that I deserved the nomination, and I suspect that he got the faculty senate committee to believe him. I am grateful for that, because I am so honored by it all. There is also Jim Jordan, who has done so much in bringing all of you together. I must say, I am overwhelmed to see all of my friends here from across the country. I should also thank Gordon Ramsey for all that he has done, and certainly everyone who helped behind the scenes. I am aware of all that has been done, and I thank you very, very much for such a splendid evening.

I should also acknowledge a person who arduously reads and listens to everything I say, and criticizes it with a great deal of astuteness, my wife Carol. Before I go on, I would like to mention that we are all keenly aware of Frank Grella's absence tonight, and I just want to say that we share your loss. When I say we, I mean Carol and I definitely share your loss.

Ed Friedman asked me last November, I believe, to please tell you a little bit about my background when I spoke to you tonight. I really want to talk to you more about child abuse, but I can't resist the opportunity to tell you about my background. I'll try to make that brief so I can get on to the more important business at hand. I was born in Stamford, as you know, and when I was in fourth grade, I had a significant happening in my life. For the first time, I received music lessons from a general music teacher. I would mention her name,

but on the advise of my lawyer, I had better not. Nonetheless, I had music for the first time. Actually, I do remember her name. I think it was Miss Lord. She is the reason that I am here today. Let me tell you why. In fourth grade, after never before having participated in music, all of us had to march up to the front of the room and sing "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" in solo. She played it in a key that was fit only for castrati. Mind you, I could not sing. There were six of us in the class who were called blackbirds, and the rest were called bluebirds. So I, with five of my friends, whom I have since forgotten, were relegated to the back of the room. From grades four through eight in Rogers School, we were to sit and watch, while the others received music lessons. I was told to be quiet. When there was a program, I was told to move my lips, but not to make any noise. So my career in music ed., I must say, is predicated on that fact that I have been getting even with Elvira Lord ever since.

I grew up, surviving that experience, and was drafted upon graduation from high school. I spent about two years in the army. It was at that time that I decided that maybe I should go on to college, because I had the GI bill. I went to the Eastman School of Music. My GI bill ran out after two years, and I had very little money, so I had to go to work. That was the first time in my life, I would say, in which I had to come to a realization that one couldn't be a student all of his life.

I went to New York, auditioned, and got a job with Gene Krupa. Working with him, I must say, was certainly another significant aspect of my life. He taught me a great deal. He taught me more than I ever learned in school, and have learned ever since about rhythm. As a matter of fact, we were rather close. We roomed together for a while and he asked me to teach him how to read music. He was musically illiterate in terms of reading and writing. So, because he was teaching me other things, I started to teach him how to read music. To the musicians in the group, I can just simply say that I started to explain to him the difference between three quarter and six eight. I gave the classical definition that I was taught at the

Eastman School of Music, and he referred to me as "the professor." So the professor gave lessons, and Krupa sat and listened in a hotel room. I started. I told him the difference between three quarter and six eight, and in his bleary-eyed way he said, "Sing it." So, I started singing the difference between three quarter and six eight, and he said, "There ain't no difference." So I said, "Yes, there is!" and he said, "No, there ain't! Sing it again." That went on for about five minutes, I suspect, although it seemed like an eternity to me. Finally he said, "I don't want to learn how to read music." It was at that time that he decided he was going to teach me the things that I needed to know about rhythm. He felt that I was so contaminated with music theory that I had to learn the facts of life and the facts of music, if not the facts of rhythm. So, in the rest of my time with him, he taught me about rhythm, and I would say that much of my research basis comes from Krupa and his understanding of rhythm.

Well, after I earned enough money, I returned to Eastman, and guess what? I got a scholarship, so I went back with a little extra money. I finished my degree, and when I graduated, I decided that I did not want to play in a symphony orchestra. I found it extremely boring at the time, after having so much experience with jazz, and I must say that I didn't like the dictatorial powers of conductors. So, I learned at a very early age not to like conductors, and I guess I haven't changed very much. However, I do a great deal of playing of jazz. So, I decided not to take a job that I was offered in an orchestra, and I went back to New York, because I realized how little I had learned about playing the bass while going to school. We had never really made friends, that is, the bass and I. I just didn't know how to handle it.

So, I went to New York, and I started jobbing around New York City. I was playing one night, I think it was down in Greenwich Village with Eddie Condon's group, when a man who was sitting in the audience spoke to me. He told me that with a little instruction, I could become a good bass player. One thing

led to another, and I found out it was Philip Sklar, who was then first bass with the NBC Orchestra under Toscanini. So, I studied with Philip Sklar for about three years, and he was grooming me to become the first bass player in a fine orchestra. I felt that if I could become a first bass player, maybe I would consider going back into that kind of work and getting out of jazz. The life was getting to me, and I knew that I had to become something. Well, Philip Sklar taught me for about three years. I would take the subway over to Queens and have my lesson, and one night when I went for my lesson, he said that he was ill and couldn't teach me. He asked me to go out with him to have a drink or some food, which I did. During the course of the conversation, he told me that after working with me for three years, he was convinced that while I was a good bass player, I lacked all that it took to become a very fine bass player and to be a principal bass player in a major orchestra. Of course, as you can imagine, I was devastated, because he had convinced me that is what I ought to do, and then when the time came and I was willing to do it, he told me that I was not competent. As I look back on it, I realize that he was probably one of the finest friends I ever had, because he had the courage to face me and tell me the truth. He felt my pitch was not as accurate as it should be. I remember sitting across the table at the Chinese restaurant and saying to myself, "What will I do at this point?" Obviously, he was reading what I was thinking. He said, "Don't worry about it. I've got it all taken care of. You will go to the University of Ohio at Athens and teach bass for two years, and you will get certified as a music educator." You see, at Eastman, I just took a straight degree in string bass and music literature, so I had no certification. He arranged for me to go to the University of Ohio at Athens and teach bass, and with that I got certified and got a second masters degree.

After one year of public school teaching, I went on to the University of Iowa to study and get a doctorate. There I got involved with the psychology of music because of the work of Carl E. Seashore, who was, you might say, the first music psychologist

in this country. At the University of Iowa, I took over Seashore's work in the lab and did much work in music aptitude. I subsequently found, much to my chagrin, that after writing all those tests of music aptitude and giving teachers what I thought was very valuable information about students' potential to learn music, that many of the teachers to whom I gave the scores did not know how to use them, because they really did not know how to teach music. They were ignorant about how children learn when they learn music.

So then I had to put music aptitude aside and do research in how we learn when we learn music, which is really what I call music learning theory. In 1970, the book from Prentice-Hall was probably the first book that I am aware of that was published in music education that dealt with how we learn when we learn, rather than with the traditional way of trying to teach students. I was more interested in learning than in teaching. So, I started doing research in music learning theory to help persons use the results of my tests. One thing led to another, and I got very interested in both learning theory and in music aptitude. That's where the bulk of my research has come from, and that's why I am where I am today, and doing what I do.

So, Ed, I hope that suffices for my background. I took ten minutes, which leaves me approximately twenty minutes to talk about musical child abuse, and I am sure that you can understand what I am alluding to, because I consider myself a musically abused child. I take it very, very seriously, and much of my work is done to try to see to it that many children are not abused musically. Let me tell you more.

I would like to, at this point, be as serious as I can. Much of what I say is based upon my own research, and so I certainly believe it. I should say that you will hear more about this as I give my lectures throughout the next two days, but let me give you some highlights on what the research is that relates to musical child abuse.

There was a time in the history of the psychology of music in which the issue was debated whether music aptitude is

innate or environmentally based. I mean by music aptitude, the potential to learn music. Aptitude is quite different from achievement. Aptitude is the potential to learn; achievement is what you have learned. I'm a devotee of aptitude, because I feel that there are so many persons, and I like to think of myself as being one of them, who have been overlooked or who are being overlooked in the public schools, because teachers examine achievement to assess aptitude rather than examining aptitude to assess achievement. Teachers think, for example, if a child can't sing or if he doesn't move, he has no aptitude. That happens all the time in the public and private schools. Children are ignored because they do not have a demonstrable way of showing what they are capable of doing, maybe because they haven't received lessons or maybe because they are coy enough not to show such achievement. Music aptitude, for example, is so important, because we know, and when I say we I am using the editorial we, from hard data that there are as many students with extremely high music aptitude, and I am talking about the upper twenty percent, those above the eightieth percentile, who never are recognized and receive no special instruction in music. Over 50 percent of the students with a music aptitude in the upper twenty percent are never identified by their teachers as having that high an aptitude, and they go untrained. Putting it another way to music teachers who are here this evening, there are many students with extremely high music aptitude who do not belong to any music program or to any musical ensemble in schools, colleges, and universities as there are persons that are enrolled in those programs. The reason for this is that most of us do not deal with music aptitude.

Well, getting back to the nature/nurture issue, is music aptitude environmentally based or is it innate? There was quite a debate about that, starting in the early 1900's. Carl Seashore was at the root of it. He made the point that musical aptitude is innate. As a matter of fact, he said that it was also inherited. There is a difference between something being innate and something being inherited. If it is innate, you are born with

it, but if it is inherited, it is predictable as to who will be born with it. Seashore liked to believe that musical aptitude was inherited. He took that position, and held it for twenty years and reigned supreme. Most persons accepted that point of view. The English, the Scandanavians, and some persons in this country, argued with it, particularly those in the progressive education movement with Dewey. They took the position that music aptitude is environmentally based, that what you get in the environment is far more important than what you are born with. As a matter of fact, we have educators today, like Suzuki, who espouses a very popular approach to playing the violin, who believes that we are all born with perfect aptitude, and that it's the teacher who makes differences among the students by poor teaching. Well, Seashore did not believe this, and it wasn't until the 1940's or 50's that persons came out with the point of view that music aptitude is environmentally based. That arguement went on for a long, long time. We have found recently, that neither side was entirely right, because musical aptitude is not only what you are born with, but it is also the type of environment that you are exposed to.

Let me explain that in more detail. For a child from five years old to nine years old, his potential or his music aptitude is dependent upon what he is born with as it interacts with his environment. The richer his environment, the more his music aptitude can rise. That happens at a decreasing rate. A child five years old can have his aptitude raised more than one of six years old, and one of six years old can have his aptitude raised more than one of seven. So, we know that music aptitude is a product of both innate and environmental influences up to age nine. At about age nine, music aptitude is no longer fluid or developmental, but it becomes stabilized. Where music aptitude is at age nine is where it stabilizes throughout the child's life. So, you can begin to see with musical child abuse that if a child does not receive proper education at a very early age, he really is at a loss throughout life. For example, I do think that Philip Sklar would have found me much more capable had

I received the type of instruction that I am advocating for all at an early age, because I dare say my aptitude, I think, was a lot higher when I was born and when I was five and six years old than where it stabilized when I was nine. Had I been identified at an early age, I might not be here. I might have been playing first bass in Boston. I'm sure, in many ways, that I am much happier it worked out this way, but the fact is, the option should have been mine and not left to circumstances.

When we work with children who are very, very young, how do we not abuse them musically? Well, let me call your attention to this: ask yourself how you learned a language or how you learned English. How is it that you are all sitting here tonight and are all comprehending what I am saying? You learned this, because when you were very, very young, your parent or parents spoke to you. They might have even read aloud to you long before you understood what they were saying. You developed a vocabulary of words. You developed a listening vocabulary. Long before you knew what the words meant, you absorbed them.

Somewhere around six, eight, or nine months old up through about eighteen months, you started to speak those words, and then you started developing a speaking vocabulary. You developed that speaking vocabulary from about eighteen months to about five years old, and then you went to school. Somewhere at that time, somebody taught you how to read, and you began to learn how to read the words that you had listened to and spoken, and now you started developing a third vocabulary, a reading vocabulary. Ultimately, you developed a reading vocabulary. We have four vocabularies, the listening being the largest and the writing being the smallest.

Although music is not a language, we learn music like we learn a language. For example, we know that a child will spell very well in language if he is read to aloud. The more a child is read to, even in school, the better that child will be in communication skills when he gets older. So it goes with music.

In music, a child must be sung to. That doesn't mean that the child has to be asked to sing back, but he must be sung



to. A child must be moved to. He must see a parent moving, and the child should not be forced to do anything. Actually, to start working with a child at a very early age, such as one year old or six months old, and forcing the child to do something, is as much musical child abuse as doing nothing. What I'm saying is that we have to find a way, which I think we have found to some degree at this point, of working with a child so that we can guide him informally in music. In that way, he will begin to be exposed to music and develop a vocabulary of tonal and rhythm patterns in the same way that he develops a vocabulary of words. We do that informally, and then we start asking a child to start listening to us and doing what we do. If that is done, a child will have the readiness to start learning music.

Just think. All of us went through speech babble. There is not one of us here who did not go through speech babble. If we didn't go through our speech babble, we wouldn't be speaking today. Going through a babble stage with language is a necessary readiness for being out of the babble stage. Most adults are never guided through a music babble stage. Most adults remain in the music babble stage. Now that to me is abuse. Why are we left in the music babble stage? Because nobody really knows how to teach us correctly. Why don't they know how to teach us correctly? I don't know, because there have been persons around since two hundred years ago telling us how we learn when we learn music. They've been saying such things as "learn sound before sign." All of us learned sound before sign in language. We learned how to listen. We learned how to speak before we ever dealt with the sign or the symbol in reading and writing.

Most persons, however, who delve into music teaching start teaching sign before sound. They teach somebody how to read what they do not understand. Students are taught the theory of music before they comprehend music. That's like the child who utters his first word in the crib, "Mommy," and the mother says, "Wait. Please look at this. This says 'Mommy,' and it's a noun. Please read it." That would be absurd, yet it is done all the time in music. Take a beginning piano student. Is the child

asked to sing or to move, which is the speaking of music? No, the teacher opens the book and starts explaining the names of the lines and spaces, and I dare say it's happened to most of you. For those of you who were taught an instrument, were you asked to sing what you were going to play? Were you asked to dance to what you were going to play? If you weren't, that's musical child abuse, because the instrument is nothing more than an extension of the body. An instrument doesn't have good intonation. It doesn't have good rhythm. The rhythm and the intonation is transmitted from the person to the instrument, so how can anyone play with good rhythm and intonation if they don't have it? The instrument isn't by magic going to give rhythm and intonation to itself or to the person. That's musical child abuse.

Look at the musical child abuse that's been bestowed upon so many persons who consider themselves to be professional musicians. You would be amazed at how many professional musicians, those who play in orchestras, do not hear what the music is going to sound like before they execute it. You give them the piece of music, and they often have no idea what it sounds like, particularly if it's unfamiliar, until they play it, and then they begin to try to imitate it. That is musical child abuse. It happened to them when they were children, because they were taught incorrectly.

So, what I am saying to you is that as parents, as grandparents, as teachers, if you would become more interested in how we learn when we learn music, rather than in trying to get a child to perform, and trying to get him to learn how to read music and learn the theory of music, you would be doing a lot to eliminate musical child abuse. When I was growing up, persons who faked music, in other words, they did not read, were considered inferior. As a matter of fact, I can remember my father speaking about a cousin who lived downstairs who was taking piano lessons and would improvise. My father referred to it as faking, and insisted that the teacher was an imposter because my cousin was not learning how to read. I am saying to

you as a parent, as a grandparent, as a teacher, understand that reading is not the important thing, nor should it come first. What is important is comprehension, because when we read music and if we read it correctly, we are able to bring meaning to what we see, not to try to take meaning from what we see. If I can comprehend and hear what it is I am going to play before I play it, I bring meaning to what I read.

So what does this all add up to? It adds up simply to the word audiation. It is a word that was coined by me ten years ago, and I'm very pleased to say that it's getting some notoriety. I hear it used all the time now. What does the word audiation mean; the noun audiation and the verb to audiate? It is the ability to hear music for which the sound is not physically present. Can you audiate "Happy Birthday?" Can you audiate the sound of a french horn? Can you audiate the sound of a trumpet? Can you audiate the sound of a flute playing three octaves above middle C? Audiation is the important thing, and all of us can learn it. You see, it's not restricted to just a certain few. Everybody is capable of learning to audiate, providing they are taught correctly. Just as there are no unintelligent persons, there are no unmusical persons. It is not a God given gift reserved for a few. It is there for all of us, providing that we are taught correctly, and if we know what somebody's aptitude is, we know just how much we can teach them.

Audiation provides the readiness for all future understanding of music. So I point your attention to audiation, the importance of it, and to the secondary importance of reading. There are so many of us today who are graduates of conservatories who cannot improvise because we cannot audiate. Once the music leaves the paper, we stop playing. We don't think for ourselves. All we can do is read what somebody else wrote. What a tragedy. Music should be there for us to experiment with and to express what we feel. It's just like me speaking here. Wouldn't it be terrible if I had to read what somebody else wrote for me? Right now, I'm improvising to you, and I think it's a joy that I can improvise. Why shouldn't all graduates of conservatories be able

to improvise musically and to say what they think in music? Everyone is capable of it. Why don't we do it? Because of musical child abuse. Some parents and some teachers, either knowingly or unknowingly, and I think that latter is mostly the case, insisted upon teaching the theory, the reading, and the technique of music before the audiation of music.

So, most of my lectures this week will deal with those topics: What is aptitude? How is it measured? Why should it be measured? Does measurement of music aptitude do psychological harm to children? Of course not! Music aptitude scores in the hands of a good teacher can do nothing but improve instruction. It doesn't make any difference what you put in the hands of a bad teacher. So I would simply say, music aptitude is here to stay. So is audiation. If we can, we come to terms with it and take tradition and turn it around. I can tell you, it's been a very long life for me trying to do that. As George Bernard Shaw, I believe, once said, "Trying to change the mind of a teacher is much more difficult than trying to move a cemetery." Nonetheless, we try. So, I talk to you to now and try to circumvent all those groups that block what I am saying, because that's what all the books are written about and that's how the money is to be made. You can't change all of this in a big hurry. We have a lot to do, and the fact that you're aware of this and will ask questions, pleases me very, very much. If you are interested in more of what I have to say about the subject, I would be delighted to see you at some of my lectures during the next two days.

I have just two minutes left and I would like to say that I can't tell you, President Trachtenburg, Vice-president Lawson and Ed, how much I admire your support of this teaching award. I take teaching very seriously. It's my life, and I find that teaching is not often honored or respected. The very fact that you, at the University of Hartford, give both time and money makes me hold all of you very, very high in admiration and respect. It was indeed an honor to be chosen by you. As I said at the beginning, it is a significant time in my life. I've

never before seen so many friends of mine gathered from different parts of the country. So, in all, I'm overwhelmed, not only by the guests, but at the honor itself, and by the fact that the University of Hartford holds teaching as being one of its highest priorities. So, I thank you all, and again, thank you for inviting me.