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THE ROLE OF EVALUATIVE DEVICES IN MUSIC PROGRAMS

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In a typical school, in every grade, approximately two-thirds of the students have average musical talent. About 30 percent more students are unusual; that is, 15 percent of the students have above-average musical aptitude and 15 percent have below-average musical aptitude. The remaining four percent of the students are truly exceptional. Half of these exceptional students are above the 98th percentile and the other half are at the 2nd percentile, and below, in musical aptitude.

Now, for a moment, cast your mind back to your own school system. Think of a particular school building, let's say an elementary school and choose a fourth grade for example. How many students does that include - 30, 35, or 60, or maybe one hundred or more, depending on the number of fourth grade sections. May I ask how well you know these students if you are a general music specialist teaching in that school? If you work in a typical school where mostly classroom teachers are teaching general music, you may know these students even less well. And, except for maybe occasional social contacts or an academic achievement or intelligence test score, if you are an instrumental or choral director you possess only very, very little objective knowledge about these students' musical aptitudes. Stop and think: Could you now, at this time, identify the musically exceptional students in that fourth grade - the above and below average musically talented students - or most difficult of all, could you identify those fourth-grade students who have just average musical aptitude?

Maybe you would prefer not to answer the question and respond instead, "Who cares anyway". You know, your school administrators provide fourth-grade classroom teachers with students' results on "academic tests". Evidently the administrator and the classroom teacher care about knowing how students compare to each other in regard to academic intelligence. They care because they know that this information can be used to help provide better instruction for students. This does not mean that lower-scoring students will be expelled from the class; to the contrary, what it does mean is that objective test scores will supplement teachers' subjective judgments for identifying, and teaching to, the individual needs and abilities of all students. Stated another way, they use test results in a positive manner (to help provide better instruction for all students no matter where they score) and test scores are not used in a negative manner for excluding low-scoring students regardless of their interest or motivation. Would objective results on a musical aptitude test help you in appraising the musicality of your very young elementary school students up through high school students for purposes of improving musical instruction? Maybe so; let's discuss this intriguing notion!

Through research, over the past eight years, bearing on the standardization of the Musical Aptitude Profile, two particularly interesting facts have been established. First, we have found that in a typical elementary, junior high, and senior high school, about 25 percent of the students who score above the 80th percentile on the Musical Aptitude Profile have never had any special instruction in music; nor do these talented students belong to a school musical performance organization. I repeat - today, about 25 percent of the most musically talented students in our public schools have not had any special instruction in music and they do not participate in school music activities. The second fact is - that

about 40 percent of the least musically talented students (those who score below the 20th percentile on the Musical Aptitude Profile) have indeed had special music instruction and they are members of school performance organizations.

This second fact represents, of course, more cheerful news than the first. That is, we, as music educators, are truly practicing our professional objective of providing all interested students, regardless of their degree of musical talent, with special training in music. However proud we may be of the second fact, the tragedy of the first fact remains in that a good proportion of exceptionally talented students (those who could profit most from, and those who could contribute most to, school music activities) are, for all intents and purposes, going unnoticed. Aside from the damaging ethical implications regarding the personal development of these students, remember that these students will most likely not enter our profession, a profession in dire need of competent personnel.

"Who cares anyway?" I care and you, I trust, do care. The administration of a musical aptitude test - one which has been experimentally demonstrated to possess predictive validity - can help you better cope with these relevant problems in your school. I know that some of you do select students for special music instruction according to IQ; however, may I remind students of the Psychology of Music that there is only about 10 percent in common in the variation of students' IQ scores and musical aptitude test scores. Maybe this is a partial reason why many students who were selected to begin instrumental music according to IQ, and not their musical aptitude, drop out of performance groups before they graduate.

If you will allow me, I would like to pose another question germane to our discussion at this point. The question is - what is musical aptitude? Does it comprise only one trait, more than one, or many traits? I suspect there are as many answers to this question as there are people, but I feel certain that we all

have known many students who do not excel equally in both rhythmic and tonal abilities. Therefore, we at least agree that musical aptitude is comprised of not less than two dimensions. Actually, we at the University of Iowa have identified at least seven relatively mutually exclusive dimensions of musical aptitude which deal with melody, harmony, tempo, meter, and three dimensions which are generally subsumed under the expressive-creative area.

Now, think once again of your fourth grade students. In addition to just identifying these students according to overall musical aptitude, can you also evaluate them on, say, at least two dimensions of musical aptitude? We music teachers must do this for reasons similar to that of the fourth-grade classroom teacher who first, learns the overall intelligence of each of her students and then, in order to teach more directly to individual differences, she evaluates students on specific dimensions of intelligence, such as verbal and quantitative reasoning. The composite score on a musical aptitude test tells us about a student's overall musical aptitude, and the individual subtest scores tell us about the separate dimensions of a student's musical aptitude. In reality, to the extent that each test is carefully constructed and therefore demonstrates high reliability, subtest results are most important to the music teacher because of their practical application to the instructional program. That is, once we use the composite score to identify a student who should be encouraged to receive special music instruction, the separate subtest scores are then used to help teach to that student's individual musical strengths and musical weaknesses. By enhancing students' musical strengths and compensating for their musical weaknesses in the instructional program, we make the most of every student's musical aptitude by helping him learn that which he is actually capable of achieving.

One of the best ways of adapting instruction to individual musical differences is through the use of a plotted profile chart such as the one contained in the Musical Aptitude Profile Cumulative Record Folder distributed at the beginning of this session. I hope, that after this session, you will study Adam Smith's Profile and pretend that he is your student. I am sure that you will become intrigued with the thought of developing and using various teaching techniques and materials for making the most of Adam's musical aptitudes. I might mention that in the Musical Aptitude Profile Manual, there is a complete Part devoted to the Interpretation Of Test Results. Included also are teaching suggestions for adapting instruction to both higher and lower scoring students on the seven different subtests constituting the aptitude battery.

In closing, let me quickly suggest three more ways in which a good musical aptitude test can be used. First, test results can be used by you and the school guidance director and counsellor for helping students formulate their educational and professional music plans. Second, a supplemental report, such as the Musical Talent Profile provided with the Musical Aptitude Profile (which can be found in the folder that you have) can be used for educating parents about their children's musical aptitudes. Finally, musical aptitude scores can be used for comparing the collective musical aptitudes of groups of students in the same school, in the same school system, and in different school systems.

Undoubtedly, through wise use of musical aptitude test results, musically talented students will be more efficiently taught and more fully encouraged to study music, and less talented students will enjoy the opportunity of learning more in less time. To the extent that music teachers will utilize objective test results to supplement their own subjective judgments about students, music education can be considered a profession.