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CHAPTER

AN EXPLANATORY OVERVIEW OF “THE BARE NECESSITIES”

This first section of this text presents the music content necessary for guiding elementary school students in music-making experiences. Music content is comprised of two aspects: (1) concepts of the components of music and (2) skills in performance. As a teacher, you will need to be able to listen to music appropriate for children and identify its characteristics so that you can point them out to children. That’s the conceptual content. As a teacher, you will need to be able to demonstrate children’s performance skills. So, you need skill content. Therefore, this section is devoted to both the conceptual and skill content necessary for you to provide music experiences to elementary children.

The chapters of this section correspond to the primary components of music that form the conceptual content. Sometimes these are called the fundamentals or elements of music. The term “components” is used in this text because the word implies ingredients or parts. The broad categories of components are (1) rhythm, (2) tone color, (3) dynamics, (4) pitch and (5) form. These are the five basic components that exist in music of many eras and styles. These are the same five areas of music learning that typically form the conceptual curriculum for elementary children.

Rhythm gives music a sense of movement. It carries music through time. You will focus on only three aspects of rhythm: beat, melodic rhythm and meter. After you have developed concepts of these components and skills in performing them, you will see and read the traditional notation that represents those sounds and feelings.

Tone color is the characteristic quality of a sound. You can differentiate between the sounds around you and between the sounds of musical instruments because of tone color. In this text, you will explore major factors affecting tone color. You also will become acquainted with elementary school classroom instruments and will change the tone color of your voice to enhance the musicality of your performances.

Dynamics refers to the volume of music. Loud and quiet are the most fundamental aspects of dynamics. You will experience sudden and gradual changes in dynamics. You will become familiar with the Italian terms traditionally used to indicate dynamics and learn to read some basic dynamic indications.

Pitch is rooted in the frequency of the vibration of a sound. Pitch is the comparative of highness or lowness of a tone. Horizontal organization of pitches results in the melody or tune of a piece of music. Vertical organization of pitches results in harmony. In the portion of the "Pitch" chapter devoted to horizontal pitch, you will learn to perceive pitches moving higher, lower or staying the same. A little bit of horizontal pitch notation will be introduced so that you can sound starting pitches of songs and lead your students in playing simple passages on melody bells. In the chapter portion focusing on vertical pitch, you will perform harmony in ways appropriate for elementary students.

Form is the overall structure of music. Form refers to the organization of the other components, particularly pitch and rhythm. In this chapter, you will concentrate on traditional forms that are comprised of verses, phrases and/or sections. You will learn to perceive and to label the segments normally found in elementary school songs.

Throughout Section I, you will have opportunities to search online for examples that will extend your experience beyond this text. As you explore, you will hear a wide variety of types of music while becoming familiar with the online resources easily available for use in your future classroom.

In order to learn, you will be actively involved in moving, singing and vocalizing, playing instruments, listening as well as exploring and creating. These are the five areas of skills necessary for music performance. These are the same five areas that typically comprise the skill curriculum for elementary children.

The successful completion of "The Bare Necessities" will not transform you into a musician, but it will equip you with the conceptual and skill content essential for guiding the musical experiences of the children in your class for one year. You will be able to look at music materials for children and understand many terms, directions and music symbols. You will have music content competence comparable to that in other subject areas that you teach. Let's get started.