

Talks About Our Winnetka Schools

By CARLETON W. WASHBURNE,
Superintendent, Winnetka Public Schools.

MUSIC IN THE WINNETKA SCHOOLS

"Let each child have a song to express any mood he may feel. No music is too good for children. The tendency of schools to give children tawdry music on the supposition that good music is too difficult is not only without foundation, but is the worst thing we can do to children musically. The other day I played two selections for the upper grade children at Skokie. One was a piece of catchy, melodic, popular music that was not bad and that even I thought would appeal more strongly to the children than some of the finer things. Immediately after it I played a much more difficult piece of music that was a classical masterpiece. I started to say to the children, 'Of course you will like the first one better,' with the intention of trying to show them why the second really was superior. But the children interrupted me. They said, 'Oh, we like the second one much better. There's nothing to the first one.' This gave me some hope that the work we have been doing in music with the Winnetka children during the past few years is bearing fruit."

The above quotations are from remarks made from time to time by Caroline Kohlsaas, supervisor of music work in the Winnetka Schools—the woman who was selected by Edward Yeomans and the Board of Education some six years ago to change the music in the Winnetka Schools from ordinary school music to real training in appreciation of the finest music and enjoyment of choral singing.

Sing Songs of Value

From Kindergarten through the eighth grade the children in Winnetka sing only songs of real value. Much of their singing consists of folk songs—simple and beautiful melodies that have been handed down the generations and have lasted because of their intrinsic value. As the folk song expresses the more childlike moods of mankind, it is particularly well adapted to the singing of children.

But as the children progress in the grades they branch into more complicated music. They sing such things as Bach Chorals. They become acquainted with the work of the great musicians of all times.

It is because of this superior quality of the music in Winnetka that a grant has recently been made to subsidize concerts by the Little Symphony Orchestra in the Skokie School.

Concert This Spring

This same orchestra has been playing in the New Trier High school to delighted audiences last year and this year. This spring they will give one concert at Skokie. The concert will

be preceded by explanatory talks, illustrated at the piano, by a trained musician, in each of the lower grade schools and at the North Shore Country Day School. The children will therefore go to the concert familiar with the music and able to listen intelligently.

If the concert this spring is a success, the Music Fund which is being administered by Thomas Whitney Surette of Concord, Massachusetts, will subsidize five more such concerts, preceded in each case by lectures in all the schools, for next year.

The work in the primary grades in the Winnetka Schools consists partially of rhythms. A teacher in this work (Clementine Eastman) plays various types of music on the piano which the children interpret through very free rhythmic motions—dances if you wish to call them such, although they are far less formal than any dances. These rhythms not only are fine physi-

cal education and an excellent relaxation after seat work in the schools, but they are a real training in interpretation of the rhythm in music.

In the upper grades there are glee clubs and an orchestra in addition to the regular work in music. These are in charge of Miss Kathryne Ramsay, Mrs. Kohlsaas's assistant. There is also a band in charge of Mr. Schumacker who has this work at the New Trier High school.

It would be hard to find any school, public or private, in which a wider range of opportunity is offered for children to learn to love and understand fine music.



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