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**THE WELL-DISCIPLINED MIND  
or *How to Exercise Your Brain***

In reading about the by-products of music study, one of which is the increase in spatial-temporal reasoning ability, I am reminded of the training and conditioning of children described by Aldous Huxley in his book, A Brave New World. The children were separated according to perceived aptitudes and given vastly different preparations for life. The children to be trained as workers were given colorless, plain surroundings, and were subjected to mild electric shock when they viewed a flower or some object of beauty. The children destined to become leaders, scientists, doctors, thinkers, and professionals, were given an enriched environment with ample music, art, and beauty. This training (as opposed to *education*) was to prepare them for a peaceful society, void of confusion, competition, and striving against a status quo. When anyone became agitated they simply inhaled the vapors of *soma*, available in public spaces, which calmed and soothed them and returned them to a more placid state of being.

When I read Huxley's book, I remember feeling that it was a fantastic world, remote from my own, although I could see certain solutions he described as relevant to present day life. I wonder if Huxley was aware of any of the brain research studies that have led to the present findings. When he wrote the book in the 1950's such studies must have been in embryonic stages only. However, the uses to which these findings could be applied would fit right into that world he wrote about. Just imagine, piano study, either private or group instruction, along with music notation, which together produce the greatest increase in spatial-temporal reasoning, could be made available only to those children who are destined for higher learning. The other children could be given only vocal music instruction, which seemed to produce no improvement whatever in the spatial-temporal reasoning.

An example of beautiful architecture which just happens to produce some of the finest acoustics in the world, is our own Carnegie Hall. When it was built, the science of acoustics was inchoate at the very least. Yet it has been the subject of constant study by those who would like to be able to duplicate those fine acoustics elsewhere. The initial effort was to build a beautiful hall which would hold many people for the concerts. I remember having a \$2.00 seat at the top and being thrilled with the sound! The creative impulse resulted in a hall which is synonymous with fine music and exquisite acoustics, and which is beautiful.

On the other hand, there is Avery Fisher Hall, which had the benefit of a battery of acousticians and architects whose collaborations produced one failure after another in the acoustics of that hall. About all you can say positively about the sound there, is that it is better than it was in the old Philharmonic Hall. As a college student, I sang a series of four concerts there on consecutive days. The “clouds” were adjusted and readjusted for every concert to attempt an improvement, to no avail. Here was a case in which science led, without its companions, art and beauty.

I am skeptical about the possibility of trying to separate the cognitive elements of music from its subjective, emotional ones, even for the sake of producing positive effects for other areas of study. The excitement and emotional intensity of the music experience are the very threshold over which the student must travel in order to reap the benefits described in the “Mozart effect.” Without this thrilling involvement in creating and interpreting music, we have only a dry exercise, void of emotional, spiritual, or mental involvement. Such an exercise is purely vapid, and surely useless..

While it is gratifying to know that music study has some beneficial spin-offs for the other areas of academic study, justifying music on the basis of them is tantamount to praising Beethoven’s writing of symphonies longer than any that had ever been written because they use more paper and

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ink to print and to publish. Just imagine, using the same standard of judgement, Mahler and Messiaen are even more important than Beethoven, not because their music is greater, but because their symphonies are even longer than Beethoven's! We could take this to ridiculous lengths in the visual arts as well: the Mona Lisa is much too small to have any impact, so it should be dropped from the canon of discussion on great art. And, above all, let symmetry reign in everything!