

EDWIN GORDON'S PHILOSOPHY OF MUSIC LEARNING THEORY

E. Gordon believes that music aptitude (i.e. the ability to experience music) develops up to the age of nine and stabilizes at that age. After that point, the child (adult) may learn music skills, but according to their aptitude, which does not change.

For this reason, much of his learning theory is focused on early childhood. He advises a wide variety of music experience for the young child.

His chants for young children are wordless and encompass tonal and modal music, many in odd meters (5/8 7/8) along with the usual ones. He also includes some rhythms to be tapped out or played to the children, again with odd meters as well as common ones.

Audiation, or inner hearing is central to Gordon's philosophy. He identifies 7 types of audiation experienced in 6 different stages.

Types of Audiation

1. As we listen to music, familiar or unfamiliar, we audiate tonal and rhythmic patterns and connect them in order to give syntactical meaning, just as we do when we listen to someone speak.
2. Notational audiation: hearing what we are reading.
3. Another form of notational audiation: writing from dictation familiar and unfamiliar patterns in familiar and unfamiliar music. We audiate what we have received aurally.
4. Recalling without the aid of notation familiar tonal and rhythmic patterns in familiar music and performing them silently, vocally, or on an instrument.
5. Writing familiar patterns in familiar music that we recall through audiation. This is another form of notational audiation.
6. Creating or improvising unfamiliar music, using both familiar and unfamiliar patterns and performing it silently, vocally, or on an instrument.
7. Writing unfamiliar music, using both familiar and unfamiliar patterns, that we have recently or are presently creating or improvising.

Stages of Audiation

The stages are hierarchical. When one is omitted, learning is not ideal. After the first stage, 2 - 6 usually occur concurrently.

1. We retain a series of pitches and durations as an "after-sound" for only a few seconds, about the same length we retain an "afterimage" of what we have just seen. Unless musical meaning is given to the "after-sound" within a few seconds, what was retained is lost.
2. We organize the tonal and rhythmic patterns on the basis of consciously recognizing the pitch center and durations in the placement of the macro beats in the music. First we *imitate* the sounds, then organize through audiation.
3. We consciously establish the tonality and the meter of the music. These first 3 stages are a continuous interaction.
4. A further clarification and identification, about tonality, meter, and tonal and rhythmic patterns.
5. We consciously recall patterns from other music we have audiated. This helps us clarify and make better decisions about the tonality and meter we are audiating at the moment.
6. As we are engaging in stages 1 - 5, we are consciously predicting the next patterns we will be audiating. More patterns are audiated at this stage than in the others. The more accurate our predictions, the better we understand the music.