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# **The National Music Teacher**

**Mason Luther Whiting**

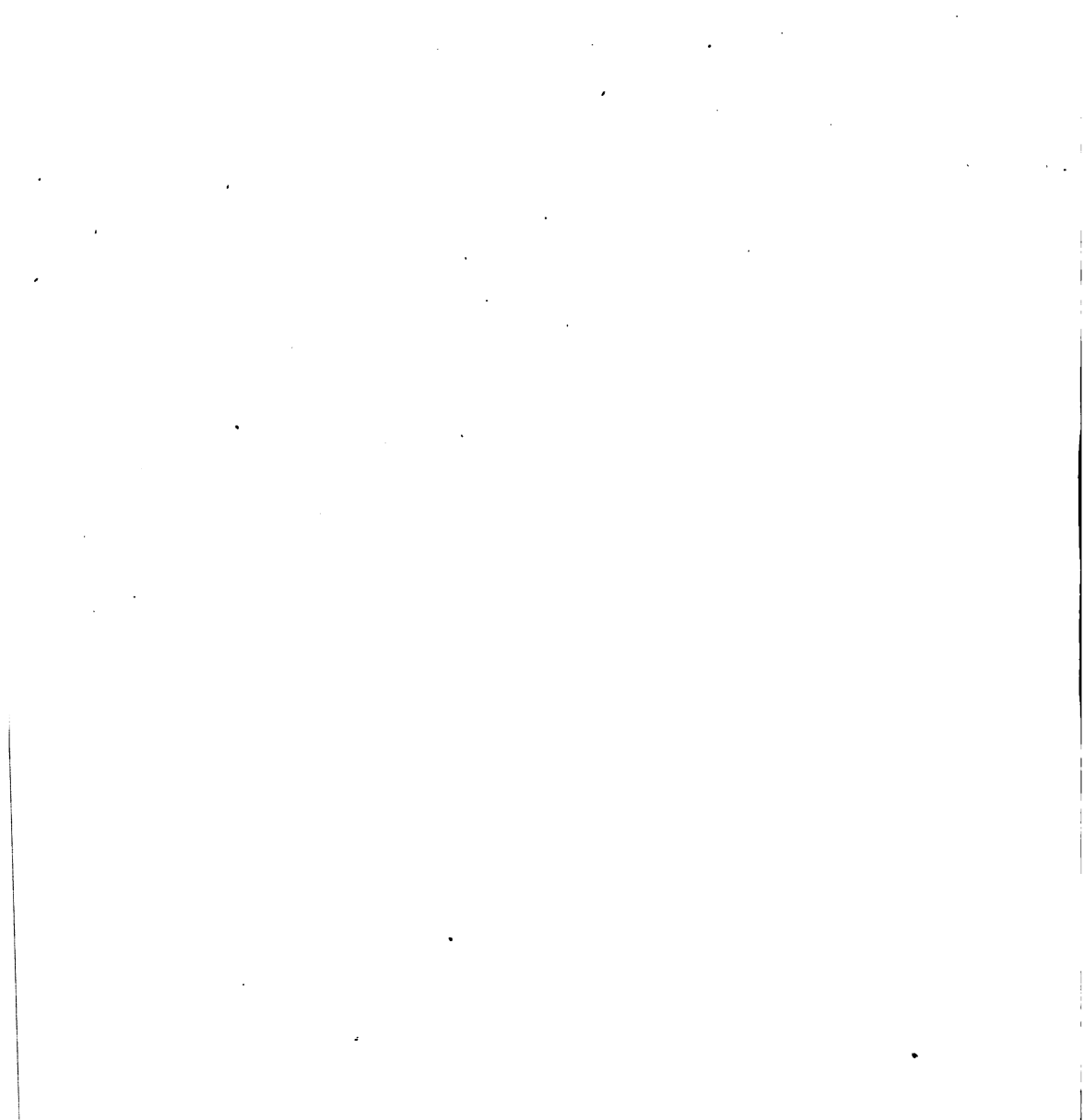
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**Title: The National Music Teacher**

**Author: Mason Luther Whiting**

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THE  
NATIONAL MUSIC TEACHI

A PRACTICAL GUIDE IN TEACHING VOCAL MUSIC  
AND SIGHT-SINGING TO THE

YOUNGEST



PUPILS

IN SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES.

DESIGNED TO ACCOMPANY THE NATIONAL MUSIC CHARTS AND MUSIC REA

By LUTHER WHITING MASON,

SUPERINTENDENT OF MUSIC IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOLS OF BOSTON, MASS.

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## P R E F A C E .

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THE NATIONAL MUSIC TEACHER, MUSIC CHARTS, and READERS are the result of twenty years' experience in the public schools of the United States, the last six years having been spent in the Primary Schools of Boston, Mass., under very favorable circumstances.

As an expression of my appreciation, and at the same time as a matter of information to those seeking to establish music in their schools, I wish to mention here three things which have been fundamental in ensuring me the success I have gained in the Boston Primary Schools.

1. These schools had received special attention from the able Superintendent for several years; and, among the other important results accomplished, the children were comfortably seated at separate desks, in a manner most favorable for varied and constant employment.

2. Musical instruction was introduced into the Primary Schools under the supervision of a liberal and attentive Music Committee, through whose influence the proper means for instruction in this branch were furnished; and a portion of time was set apart for daily instruction by the regular teachers.

3. A much larger proportion of the regular teachers are able to carry out the programme of instruction in music than was at first anticipated; so that at the present time a Primary-School teacher in Boston who is unable to teach singing is an exception; and of those who do not cheerfully co-operate in the work the number is still less, if indeed there are any.

To these propitious circumstances, I say, I am indebted for the success I have met with in Boston. It is inappropriate for me here to express my thanks to the Committee, Superintendent, and Teachers, for their support and co-operation.

In another direction my obligation extends to several friends of Boston teachers, my undertakings in the line of music might never have seen the light. I am indebted to Mrs. S. C. Chevallier for valuable help in preparing the Manual. If I have been so fortunate as to diffuse any of the Manual in the school-room, it is her skillful lens which has transferred them to paper. The "Illustrative Reports" presented are indeed little else than reports of what has been given to the school-children in her presence. I am indebted, therefore, to any extent ideal or imaginative, but all is actually done with the little ones.

The time will yet come, as I trust, when the benefit of Music will be carried not only into every school household in the land. To this end I have done my effort; and that this unpretending Manual may have a useful share toward such an end is my earnest hope.

BOSTON, April 12th, 1870.



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## PART I.

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# PRELIMINARY TRAINING

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### CHAPTER I.

#### **The Speaking Voice.**

THE proper training of the speaking voice is the best preparation for singing. In many points speech and song are identical.

Listen to a child's tone in speech. Is it clear, sweet, melodious? If not, there is wrong management somewhere. Most little children, if healthy, will by nature make agreeable tones. They would continue to do so under proper training. It would cost little effort to keep them in the right path in this respect.

But we often hear a very faulty quality of voice from little children in the school-room and elsewhere. Whence comes it? In a great degree from imitation. They hear and catch disagreeable tones in the street, in the school-room, at home. If they never heard any but a sweet quality of voice, they would catch and retain pleasant intonations unconsciously. The inference is obvious; the ear should be cultivated in this respect. The little ones should have the opportunity to hear melodious sounds, as much as possible; and their attention should be directed to the quality of the sound, whether in musical instruments, in

song, or in the speech of those about them. They should be furnished in their minds a standard of excellence in voice.

The teacher will do well to call the attention of the child to the sound of her own voice, and ask them to imitate it. For this purpose, the various sounds of the vowels, as well as familiar sentences. Take for instance salutations: "Good morning!" "How do you do?" require the children to repeat them politely and loudly and with strained tones. Good instruction is the best auxiliary to the singing lesson.

One test whether the child is in a way to use the voice properly in reading, speaking or singing, is found in the face. If he is straining the muscles of his face with speech, he is probably straining his vocal organs also. In school customs, hearing and seeing such a child might be prompted to ask, "Is he in pain?" The teacher might regretted that he would so often have occasion to do so during the reading and concert recitation in many schools. A placid, or better, a cheerful countenance a right method of vocalization in speech or song.

*sy* use of the voice. There is a difference; and children should be taught to sing. *Yelling* in concert or single recitations of spelling and other exercises, are as they are offensive to true taste. The use of false intonations in scholars is by unpathetic conversation with them, upon which they are interested, and thus making them peculiarities of the school-room. The quality of voice—usually taking the wrong tone—is diffidence; this includes inferiority—the latter where the child is in poverty and degradation. The remedy is the same: *Encourage the child.* Little children need encouragement and not reproof or punishment. If he succeeds, give him credit for what he has done, and lead him to hope for better results next time. Thus early to cultivate his self-respect. The following training in the following points, to be done before he can sing or read well.

1. The position of the body.  
 2. The position of the breath.  
 3. The position of the voice.  
 4. The position of the vowels.  
 5. The position of the consonants and pronunciation.

Such a foundation being laid for instruction in the elements of music, the method herein given may be pursued without any doubt as to results. Children learn to sing as easily as to speak. The question whether the child has a talent for music need no more be asked, than whether he has a talent for language before he begins to utter words, or before deciding whether it will be safe for him to attempt to acquire the language spoken by his parents. It requires no special gift for a child to learn French, German, English or any other language if he hears it at the right age and in the right way. So in Music, the same truth will hold.

The teacher need have no misgivings in commencing her task. The children *have* the gift, and will rather surprise us by its development, than fall short of our just expectations.

Of course we cannot expect perfection in the use of the speaking voice before attempting to sing; and the question will naturally occur: How far is it required to carry the training in speech, before *beginning* to teach singing?

This would be a good test, viz. For each child to stand properly, look the teacher in the face and pronounce his or her name with a clear distinct voice *and with the proper inflections.*

On applying this test to a class of children who were in school their second year, the teacher was surprised that so few could speak their names so as to be understood by a stranger.

A very instructive lesson followed this trial. The teacher seeing this to be a reasonable test applied herself energetically to instructing those who failed. She proceeded something after this manner:—

respects is best carried on in connection

PRELIMINARY TRAINING

*Teacher.* Now, children, I want you to tell me your names again, and I want you to speak just as distinctly as Mary Chapman did. And I want you to speak your *real names*. You must not say your *baby-names*, such as Jimmie, for James; Lizzie, for Elizabeth; Johnny, for John.

The first row, stand! The first boy, commence, and tell your names in the order in which you stand.

*First boy.* Michael Donnelly [*letting his head drop as he began to speak.*]

*T.* [*Kindly.*] No, Michael. I will speak your name now, and you notice which way my voice goes,—Michael Donnelly. [*Michael doesn't seem to understand; Mary Chapman holds up her hand.*]

*T.* Well, Mary?

*Mary.* Your voice went *up* when you said *Michael*, and *down* when you said *Donnelly*.

*T.* Mary may speak his name as I did.

*Mary.* Michael Donnelly.

*T.* That was right. Mary may say it again, and Michael may say it after her.

Mary pronounces his name as before and Michael imitates her exactly, with a full consciousness of his success, and his countenance beams with delight at the approval of his teacher; and Mary looks more beautiful in the unconscious experience, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." So the teacher proceeds through the class with a very marked improvement, owing to Michael's success.

One very important result from this lesson, which did not occupy more than twenty minutes, was, that before the teacher got

through she had six or eight volunteer assistants seemed desirous to share the honors of little Mary C

In a class under such successful training in the singing is as easily cultivated as are flowers in the trees in North Carolina.

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CHAPTER II.

**The Singing Voice.**

Here, too, the first thing to which the teacher attention is the quality of tone produced by the child reiterate what was said above,—the different factors guarded against and removed. The "baby-tone" accompanying "baby-talk"—which has perhaps been cultivated at home, and called "cunning" at school place to a smooth, round, pleasant quality,—that is tone.

The harsh screaming which boys in particular must never be allowed. They can easily be led between *noise* and music, and can at least be educated the latter. There is as much difference between the often heard in school-rooms and a true musical tone the crash of broken crockery and the ring of a silver.

The principal points which require attention in a child's singing-voice are these:—

1. **QUALITY OF TONE.** It must be clear, melodiously started and evenly sustained.

2. **POWER OF TONE.** Not strained on the one side, feeble as to be imperfect or husky.