

## PSYCHOLOGICAL MALADJUSTMENT IN MUSICAL ACTIVITIES

*Takeshi Kurokawa*

There is a close relationship between musical activities and personality, although the nature and mechanism of the relationship is not scientifically concluded. They should be searched in the area of motivation, psychological nature of music and music activities as a defense mechanism. Musical activities, like any other human activity, can become drawn into the emotional conflicts of the disturbed personality, and may, itself, become the main battlefield of the disturbance.

The psychological maladjustments in musical activities are shown in the following forms.

1. Conflict over unaccepted emotion and phantasies which involves acceptable musical activities and lead to disturbances such as stage fright, performance anxiety, hysterical paralysis which cause many occupational psychomotor disturbances.
2. Inferiority and guilt feeling interfere with enjoyable and constructive musical experiences.
3. Musical activity may become involved in an unwholesome withdrawal from reality, with sterile preoccupation with music or purposeless day dream. People encounter many examples of this type.
4. In the course of studying music, the maladjustment shows in the forms of:
  - a) Tonal downing. (inhibited expression)
  - b) Stammering and excessive speed. (over-anxiety)

c) Limited repertoire.

d) Resistance to guidance.

We music teachers, should observe these symptoms and with the equipment of psychological insight and understanding personalities, and try to guide our students towards their emotional stability and professional achievements. Musical achievement is an expression of total personality in, and with, the aesthetic works, which are integrated expression of personality and culture.

### 1. Psychological function of music.

Music activities are determined by their twin motivation of human life: those from within our organism and those from the circumstances of life. To clarify how they are determined is not easy because of complexity of higher thoughts involved, lack of immediate practicability and public interest and lack of unified methodology of research.

So far the most successful approach to the problem of the psychological nature of musical activities is found in the field of psychoanalysis. They treat musical activity either as a type of defense mechanism or source of conflict.

When the study of motivation in musical activities is completed, the psychological nature of musical activities will be presented in less drastic phraseology.

M. Varro made the following observation in his study.

Robert Schuman had lived a more intense emotional life than his frail psychophysical constitution could stand, and he overtaxed his brain with ceaseless mental activities. Beethoven's basically affirmative, optimistic world view radiates from his works. The key note of Bach's personality is an almost undisturbed harmony in life, in work, and in the relationship of both to the outer world. This harmonic balance was safeguarded by his deep religious faith and happy family life, as well as by a rare lack of worldly ambitions which minimized social frictions.

Both Bach and Beethoven achieved perfect adjustment by dint of their genius. Schuman, a supreme, but congenitally neurotic talent, could reach only partial adjustment, and this brings him closer to the problem of the talented music student we wish to discuss.

The disparity between aims and capabilities, i.e. a lack of talent for what the student wants to accomplish, creates a crucial problem. The world is full of frustrated music teachers and orchestra musicians who wanted to become concert artists.

Varro cites the examples of B. Walter and S. Rachmaninoff in their psychological crisis. And also he cites four examples of psychological maladjustments of music students and concludes that their psychological maladjustment showed in: 1. Tonal downing of performance. 2. Stammering of phrasing. 3. Limited repertoire. 4. Cramp of finger and arms. 5. Resistance to guidance.

Creative work has therapeutic value in itself. It is not only because cathartic, in the sense that it provides an outlet for pent-up emotions, but mainly it integrates the personality in, and with, the work.

Provided the teacher is a good observer, equipped with some psychological insight and

human understanding, he might be able to help his pupils with their emotional disturbances or professional deficiencies. The teacher who has a feeling for such things will soon find out that, since every achievement comes from the total personality, his student's problems can be best approached, in one case, from human side, and in another from the musical, technical side. Sometimes he may simply demonstrate the connection between both sides and that the student work out the solution in his own way.

If a teacher effectively helps his students in adjusting their aims to their capacities, in overcoming handicaps, and in straightening out their emotional conflicts, it is not too much to say that his work definitely has therapeutic significance.

Varro's study<sup>(1)</sup> is speculative rather than scientific nature. But the author's sincerity makes this study of high practical value. The significance of the study is found in its educational implications. The author's experiences and examples, which he examines with deep insight, give us good suggestions in our professional field.

According to H. Kohut<sup>(2)</sup>, the emotional significance of musical activities can be traced in three divisions of tonal experiences. First, music as sensual enjoyment of vicarious gratification of drives, particularly through its sound and rhythm. Second, music as the playful, and therefore, enjoyable repetition of a basically conflicting or anxiety-provoking situation, particularly as embodied in tune and harmonies. Third, music as work or esthetic

(1) Varro, M. Personality problems of the music students. MUSIC THERAPY 1951 Proceedings of N.A.M.T. 1952. p. 141-150.

(2) Kohut, H. The psychological significance of music activity. MUSIC THERAPY 1951 Proceedings of N.A.M.T. 1952. p. 151-157.

experience, as enjoyable submission to the rule of the beauty.

These three divisions correspond to three sets of functions in psychoanalytical differentiation: 1. the instinctual drives; the id. 2. internal agent of culture; the super ego. 3. psychological organ of mastery; the ego. In the first stage, music can effect: (a) a specific discharge of emotion. (b) a non-specific calming various emotions. In the second stage of psychic function, there is a primitive fear of unorganized sound demonstrable in the startled reaction of the infant, which, in a modified form, persists throughout life. And musical sequence, from dissonance to consonance, serve as playful repetition and playful solution of a basically threatening situation. In the third stage, music as work, the submission to a set of esthetic rules gives us a satisfaction and a feeling of security which is akin to the moral satisfaction of having done right.

On the whole there are two possibilities of the relationship between musical activities and emotional conflicts. The one is music as therapy; the other is music as a source of conflict.

Musical activity, like any other human activity, can become drawn into the emotional conflicts of the disturbed personality and may, itself, become the main battle field of the disturbance. To enumerate a few possibilities: (1) Conflict over unacceptable and, therefore, strongly rejected emotions and phantasies may involve, in itself, quite acceptable musical act and lead to disturbances for which the individual can find no explanation. Here belongs the whole gamut of inhibitions, from the mild forms of stage fright and performance anxiety, to the severe hysterical paralysis which make the playing, singing, or dancing impossible. (2) Inferiority feelings and a sense

of guilt may, for specific personal reasons, interfere with what should otherwise be an enjoyable experience. This may occur as part of a generally imperished capacity for enjoyment or work, or it may involve predominantly musical activity; e.g. if in the individual's past there were expectations from the side of parents or teachers which exceeded the abilities of the child, or if there was unsuccessful competition with a more gifted brother or sister. (3) Finally, it may occur that musical activity may become involved in an unwholesome withdrawal from reality, either predominantly in the form of a sterile preoccupation with music or, more often, and increasingly as the disturbance becomes more severe, in combination with purposeless day-dreaming.

Kohut's study is of theoretical speculation rather than quantitative nature but one of the most significant papers in this field. The approach is highly psychoanalytical again but this seems to be the only effective approach so far to reach the nature of the relationship between psychological maladjustment and musical activities. He emphasizes music as a source of conflict and this statement opens a new area of study which has been neglected. The forms of maladjustments in musical activities have never been clarified better than this study and the nature of the relationship between them examined thoroughly.

A highly psychoanalytical approach is also taken by F. Haisch.<sup>(3)</sup> He insists that the playing of music affords a narcissistic self-gratification of the libidinal wish to play once more a child. Musical rhythm represents both impulse and control since it consists of a periodic repetition of a pattern of tension and

(3) Haisch, E. On the psychoanalytic interpretation of music; A review. *Psyche* Heidelberg. 1953. No. 7 p. 81-88.

release. Music may be regarded as a fractionated discharge of impulses. Various musical instruments and music forms are expressions of feeling from different stages of psychosexual development. Inferences about personality based on biographical data about composers can be related to inferences drawn from their music.

His view is a good example of the application of the Freudian approach to music on clinical cases. He did not develop Freud's basic concept of music much further. But his suggestion on inferences about composer's personalities from their music or vice versa, is significant to music criticism and will open up new horizons in music criticism.

There is one highly clinical study by E. Racker<sup>(4)</sup>. He reports that the psychoanalysis of a young girl led to several conclusions with respect to the unconscious origin and meaning of music. The defense technique contained in music is one of identifications with the aggression. It represents a compromise for the id, ego and super-ego in which the impulse may be expressed through music which itself represents a good object. To sing is not to scream. It is the manic technique equivalent to the erotic union with the primary objects.

Also anthropological approaches are presented in this study to demonstrate the general validity of these conclusions. General characteristics of the study are the same as Haisch's. Anthropological approaches will add broader perspective to analytical view. The basic assumption is under influence of newer schools of psychoanalysis, i.e. cultural and social tendency. This approach is more acceptable to us as cultural and social nature in music will be combined with psychoanalytical nature of personality.

Basically the implication of Freud's idea on art, found in his "Beyond the Pleasure Principle", is the core of these studies. To summarize their arguments: There are three functions of music, emotional catharsis for repressed wishes, playful mastery of threats of trauma, and enjoyable submission to rules. Music can allow subtle regression via extra-verbal modes of psychic function. Music can contribute to the relief of primitive preverbal tensions and can provide for the maintenance of archaic object cathexes by virtue of its relationship to an archaic, emotional form of communication. The possibility of scientific music therapy based on a theory of *psychological function and structure* is also suggested by these study. Social nature of music as communicative function, and cultural nature are not neglected in these observations and they can contribute greatly to modern music esthetics.

## 2. Behavioral pattern of music students and musicians.

Historically, common opinion has held musicians to be quite abnormal, but recent studies and common observation have shown the musician in quite a different light, especially the young amateur musicians. C. Garder made a statistic study on the problem<sup>(5)</sup>. He reports his finding on the *Journal of Music Education Research*.

Comparing the young student musician with his classmates:

a) He possesses not only an excellent but wide variety of musical ability. An interest in

(4) Racker, E. A contribution to the psychoanalysis of music. *REVIEW OF PSYCHOANALYSIS*, Buenos Aires, 1952. No. 9 p. 3-29.

(5) Garder, E. Characteristics of outstanding high school musicians. *JOURNAL OF MUSIC EDUCATION RESEARCH*. Vol. 3. No. 1. 1955.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL MALADJUSTMENT IN MUSICAL ACTIVITIES

- more serious music together with a wider range of musical interest and preference.
- b) His pattern of extra music activities differs but little from his classmates. He appears to shun participation in rugged sports such as football or track, but turns often to more individual sports such as bowling or archery. His interest in sports excels that of the average student, particularly in the team sports of football, basketball and track.
  - c) He is an acknowledged leader among the student body. He holds proportionally more offices and earns more awards than his classmates.
  - d) His home background as reflected by his father's occupation appears to be above average though the data are not conclusive.
  - e) He excels the non-musician in intelligence and the better musician excels the poorer ones in intelligence and also in academic achievement.
  - f) The boy musician is less active, less emotionally stable, less objective, lightly less adept in his personal relations, and less masculine in interests.
  - g) The girls are less restrained, less objective, less friendly and less adept at personal relations.

Garder's intention of the research to describe characteristics of high school musicians by statistical approach is to be valued highly. His selection of subjects is rather limited as those are students in group participation of music activities. This group does not necessarily represent average music students because very often these students' musical activities are solitary one.

It is interesting that good high school musicians excel to poorer ones in other fields too. This suggests the intelligent nature of

music activities. Also it is very interesting that Garder detects certain traits of personal maladjustment in typical H. S. musicians. If the motivational study on these students could be done, it would have revealed rather significant facts. The study is limited to amateur musicians in group activities and it is highly dangerous to extend its conclusion to many professional students and musicians. Statistical methods applied to process the data in this study was not too elaborate, mostly depending on arithmetic means, but sufficient for the purpose of the study.

A thorough study on behavioral patterns of professional music students was done by C. Taylor<sup>(6)</sup>. A questionnaire and certain tests to 348 students entering the Peabody Conservatory of Music over a 3-year period is the basis of the study.

Apparently the levels of intelligence of the average conservatory student is that of the average American college students. Kuder Preference Record Form B. B. showed that the highest measured preferences are, as might be expected, musical and artistic, with literary running poor third. It is interesting to observe that both men and women in the upper groups substantially exceeded those of the lower group in the mechanical, computational and clerical categories.

Personality Adjustment Inventory by H. Bell showed that most of the students in most groups fall into the "average" category. Men in lower groups showed unsatisfactory adjustment in relation to home. One student in seven of the upper groups showed very unsatisfactory adjustment in one phrase. In the lower group the ratio was one in three.

(6) Taylor, C. Characteristics of 1st year conservatory students. JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN MUSIC EDUCATION. 1954. p. 105-118.

Most interesting is the fact that three-fifths of all the very unsatisfactory scores were in the area of home adjustment. On the positive side, one student in two of the upper groups showed excellent adjustment in one phase. In the lower group the ratio was one student in two and a half.

Harromer Multiple Choice Test with Rorschach cards, showed that : the upper group, on the average, checked 30% poor response. On in 5 5/3 exceeded the 4% mark. None of these 11 students gave any serious maladjustment in the Bell Adjustment Inventory. On being questioned as to evidence of emotional disturbance or *personality difficulties*, the administration found no evidence in the behavior of the upper students, and evidence in the behavior of the lower group students. All the characteristics in common to the groups :

**Both Groups :**

Distaste for mathematics.

Linguistic intelligence factor higher than total group.

Music preference high.

Little difference in musical test scores.

**Upper Group.**

Higher ration of women to men.

Double the member of students with no brothers or sisters as compared with total group.

More students from larger community.

No composition majors.

Quantitative intelligence higher.

Women inferior in measured intelligence to men of lower group.

Mechanical, computational and clerical preference higher.

**Lower Group.**

Men average 2 years older.

Fathers slightly older than in other groups.

Foreign languages spoken in two homes out of five.

Half the interest in athletics and sports found in the upper group.

Measured intelligence *slightly less than upper group.*

Evidence of greater maladjustment with respect to home and health.

More evidence of emotional disturbance.

It is concluded on this evidence that student failure is due to :

- a. slightly inferior background.
- b. slightly inferior intelligence.
- c. narrower spread of interest.
- d. home or health difficulties.
- e. emotional disturbance.

It is interesting that this study is used for administrative measures such as individual guidance of music students. The questionnaires used are very extensive and the survey is one of a few studies of highly qualitative nature in this field.

3 years of surveying and 350 subjects furnish reasonable profiles of typical music students. Tests used in this research were highly dependable and the results are very concisely presented. General characteristics of music students according to their degree of excellence has many interesting facts and useful implications.

The most interesting fact is the detection of *inhibited or sublimated personal conflicts* among students in better groups. This shows that conflict-free personality does not necessarily guarantee excellent achievements in music. It shows that students who excel others in the capacity of personality readjustment also excel others in musical achievement.

The addition of motivational research and vocational interest to this kind of survey will

## PSYCHOLOGICAL MALADJUSTMENT IN MUSICAL ACTIVITIES

contribute to the clarification of complicated relationships between psychological maladjustment and musical activities.

### 3. Musical achievement and psychological factors.

W. Crower<sup>(7)</sup> gave a series of tests at the termination of the instructional period, for the purpose of determining :

1. The degree of correlation between certain measures of physical growth and motor development and achievement in beginning instrumental performance.
2. A level of maturity at which it is most feasible to begin the study of instrumental music.
3. the degree of correlation between achievement in beginning instrumental music performance and mental age, personal adjustment and musical capacity.

The tools of research were :

Watkins Objective Measurement of Musical Performance. Wetzler Grid Technique. Olson and Hugh Manual. Vander Luft Psychomotor Test. Seashore Test. Kuhlman Anderson Intelligence Test. Rogers Personality Adjustment Test.

On the basis of the research experiment and supporting literature, the following hypothesis were accepted :

1. Successful achievement in instrumental music performance at the 4th through 8th grade level is significantly influenced by the motor development of the individual student.
2. The 7th grade level is indicated as the time when optimum maturational conditions are present for the beginning of purposeful study of instrumental music.
3. Successful performance in instrumental music is also accompanied by high standing

intelligence, pitch discrimination, tonal memory and personal adjustment.

This study is highly qualitative and the methods used here were highly appropriate for the purpose of the research. Use of Wetzler Grid is not popular in research of this kind but very useful to clarify dynamic nature of musical development, although in this research its full utility is not found. The use of the Seashore Test is a little doubtful because the Test emphasize the static nature of musical capacity too much and neglect cultural nature of music.

Crower didn't develop the examination of the results of Rogers Personality Test. Further development of this phase might have brought forth very interesting outcomes.

Psychomotor development is more strongly emphasized rather than motivational development. It is plausible because of the complexity of motivational survey but it might yield significant results in this field of research.

### 4. Musical preference and psychological maladjustment.

The study to find possible factors influencing musical preference have been done by several researches. J. K. Morton reported that the most important factors influencing music preference are intellectual introversion, music recognition and musical training. Intelligence, sex, age and masculinity-femininity were found to be negligible factors influencing music preference.

A relatively high correlation was found between music preference and intellectual introversion, a low correlation was found between music preference and social extroversion. This finding is significant, for it is

(7) Crower, W. Dissertation Abstract. 19: 540. Sep. 1958.

facilitated if workers will bear in mind the distinction between intellectual introversion, social introversion and social extroversion.

Statistical manipulation of the data acquired is rather crude compared to I.P.A.T. studies in the similar field. His basic tool does not go beyond the scope of  $r$ 's,  $t$  and  $z$  scores. Morton's basic concept of intro- and extroversion of personality is less dynamic and does not seem to contribute to actual solution of the problem. The examination of music examples employed in this study are not sufficiently appropriate.

He confirmed the existence of the relationship between musical preference and personality experimentally. But the nature of the relation is not suggested.

The general hypothesis that independent dimensions of musical preference are personality and temperament factors seems to be sufficiently sustained by Cattell's study<sup>(8)</sup>. The factorization of the like-and-dislike reactions to 120 musical examples by 196 normal men and women yielded 12 factors, which are confirmed by two independent rotation of the materials. Modern statistical manipulation of factor analysis is fully utilized in this significant study of musical preference. Further study of motivational aspect of music activities

will clarify dynamic phases of music preference. The expression of maladjustment in musical preference is not static and absolute. Further research is expected on the study of cultural variances, motivational influences, developmental and educational aspect of musical performance.

The abstract nature of music is utilized in construction of Rorschach's-like projective tests in this study. The value of this study is significant in the field of projective personality measurement. From musician's view, music is more than an ink blot however scientifically it may be manipulated. It's social, cultural and psychological nature can't be ignored.

The nature of musical preference is the dynamic function of these factors. Establishing a one to one relationship between musical elements and personality factors seems to be a far reaching goal. Although psychological nature of like and dislike of certain music couldn't be clarified by this approach, still the factorization of like and dislike in music is a great contribution to the field.

(8) Cattell, R. Musical preference and personality diagnosis. JOURNAL OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY No. 39. 1954. p. 3-24.