CHAPTER 4

1930–1939

Vocational Education Act: The Early Years

The Technical Instruction Commission of 1925-26 issued a printed report in 1927 and prepared the ground for the 1930 Vocational Education Act. In the report music was not referred to specifically, but it was included in the ensuing Act.

The 1930 Vocational Education Act made provision for "Continuation Education" i.e. “education to continue and supplement education provided in elementary schools... for young people”, who were defined as students between the ages of 14 and 16 years. The Act also provided for “technical education” i.e. “education pertaining to trades ...education in science and art (including in the county boroughs of Dublin and Cork, music) and also includes physical training.” This education would normally begin at sixteen years and later.

It should firstly be noted that music was placed firmly in the higher category of technical education which has eventually led to the development of the College of Music. Secondly when in 1931 music became compulsory in the primary schools it followed that music should be "continued" in the second level vocational school and, as music was a special case, in a Dublin Municipal special School of Music. The distinction between continuation and technical education soon began to exercise the minds of the City of Dublin VEC Board of Studies when in 1936 it drew up an important report on the education scheme for the Vocational Education Committee, but in the meantime the work of the school went forward. The age range of music pupils always placed the school in an uncertain status, ranging from primary to secondary and higher, and not until the last twenty years has its specialised status been fully recognised as a third-level college.

Maud Davin Director

By 1931 the new City of Dublin VEC had completed its appointments, and Maud Davin had begun her term in office as Director, a post which she held until her marriage to Frank Aiken in 1934. This position attracted a large number of applications as this contemporary newspaper account records:

At a meeting of the Dublin Vocational Education Committee, Mr Cormac...
Breathnach presiding, Miss Maud Davin, 39 Fitzwilliam Place, was elected Director of the Municipal School of Music. The successful candidate is the youngest daughter of the late John Davin. At a previous meeting the Committee had narrowed down the applicants from 31 to 12 as follows:-

Madame Bonfils, Mr J.C. Browner, Mr Joseph Crofts, Miss M. Davin, Mr B. Franklin, Mr Christopher Kiernan, Mr William Mitchell, Mr Louis O’Brien, Mr Robert O’Dwyer, Miss P. O’Hara, Mr Joseph Schofield, Mr A. Viani, and Mr H. R. White.

Another report referred to her qualifications and experience:

The Committee sat for close on three hours before the appointment was made. The position carries a salary of £350 per annum, rising by annual increments to £500.

Miss Davin was appointed by the Committee of the School owing to her qualifications, and her record of distinctions made a great impression on those who selected her for the post. She spent four years at the Royal Academy and five at the London Academy of Music, where she was the leader of the orchestra under Sir Alexander McKenzie. She holds the highest distinctions in both Academies and carried off five gold medals at the Feis Ceoil and four at the London Academy. She was also awarded the Beethoven Prize at the Feis Ceoil and the prize for string quartet in 1928. She has studied in Paris and Munich, and her many friends in musical circles state that she is one of the most earnest workers in the profession. Full of tact and with a great charm of manner it is not surprising that her appointment has brought her the congratulations of friends from far and near, who wish her success in the position which she has won through sheer merit and ability.

The new Director’s first report in August 1931 outlined her vision of the School’s programme:-

To: The Chairman and Member of the Vocational Education Committee

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I beg to submit a report on the Municipal School of Music giving my observations on the work of last Session generally and some suggestions for the future.

The curriculum covers a wide range of subjects, probably wider than in almost any other Academy, including as it does String and Wind Instruments, Vocal and Pianoforte classes, Uilleann Pipes and Irish War-Pipes, Fife and Drums, etc. During the short time which has elapsed since my appointment I have made the closest study of the working of all these classes and have made many re-arrangements of teaching methods and time-tables which I find have led to better results. Notably I have arranged that not more than four students per hour shall receive individual instruction in any branch, as this is the minimum time in which teacher and pupil can make any progress; and I also made provisional arrangements for training in Theory of Music and Aural Culture, vital subjects which hitherto had received no special attention. The number of students enrolled was very large.

The singing classes were excellent and the teacher most capable. The orchestral classes, Senior and Junior, were attractive, and efficiently trained and conducted. As yet there have been but few wind instruments in the Orchestra, but I hope to develop the brass and reed instrument classes to such extent that they may take a considerable part in a full Orchestra.

During my short term of office I had pleasure in reporting to you many successful activities; chiefly the Competitions amongst Children’s Choirs for the Municipal Shield, the fine Concert given by our students at the Mansion House in July last, and the many successes obtained in the Father Mathew Feis and in the Feis Ceoil.

During the Session which is now commencing I am aiming at a much higher standard of work. There are at present two vacancies for teachers of the piano and one for the violoncello, and the success of the
School depends on securing teachers who can train advanced students so that they will not look for higher instruction elsewhere.

Amongst the subjects listed in our curriculum this year is Elocution, which I consider an essential part of musical training and indeed of general education; I would, therefore, ask you to secure for our School a capable teacher of this subject.

It is desirable that some Prize Scheme should attach to the School of Music. For the present I suggest that you offer a limited number of scholarships each year for public competition, these scholarships to consist of free training in the higher classes of vocal and instrumental music.

We want a standard of examination for Music in Ireland and I have some views on the subject which I shall express at a later date.

I am most anxious to encourage the appreciation and the development of Irish Music. With this intent I suggest that Mr Carl Hardebeck be asked to give a series of say twelve lectures on Irish Music: six of these lectures might with advantage be for teachers, and six for students. Of course Mr Hardebeck’s special association with Irish Music is well known and his recent lectures in Trinity College attracted considerable attention and created much enthusiasm.

In conclusion I have to thank you for the assistance you have given me, and to hope that by selecting capable teachers you will enable me to fulfil my aim of making our School a centre of education in Music.

Yours faithfully
Maud Davin Director

August 1931

Miss Davin submitted further regular detailed reports. She was a woman of noted organisational ability and proved a very dynamic Director. She got corresponding support from the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee. The following Committee report of 1933 is a typical example:

School of Music

The following recommendations were adopted:

That Mr Michael O’Higgins who won the Gold Medal (Baritone) at the Feis Ceoil be awarded a scholarship consisting of free musical training.

That classes in Elocution be inaugurated.

That the School year shall consist of thirty-nine weeks divided into three terms.

That the scale of fees be unchanged.

That an Assistant be appointed to Mr A. Burke, Part-time Teacher of Brass and Reed Instruments.

That the Director report and submit scheme for Irish Choir.

That Rudiments of Music continues to be a compulsory subject, exemption from this subject to be left to the discretion of the Director.

That the Director report from time to time any suitable sites in re proposal regarding the acquisition of more suitable premises.

It was noted that reference was made to the possibility of Bursaries – Cups, Medals and Scholarships – towards the help and encouragement of the students.

Teaching Staff 1932-1934

In 1932 the following teachers were listed:

Mrs K. Andrews       Miss A.G. Higgins
Jean Bertin           Michael McNamara
Mrs F. Bloom-Pollock  Patrick Murphy
Mrs J.D. Brennan      Joseph O’Keeffe
Alex Burke            R.M. Power
Madame L. Donnelly    Leo Purcell
Miss M.E. Haimer      Leo Rowsome

As ever the question of new premises was constantly discussed, and the School also provided its services for local community purposes, as this entry in the Minutes of 1933 shows:

A letter was read from the Director of the School of Music stating that she had been asked by the Women’s Industrial Development Association to provide some music at the Mannequin Parade of Irish-made goods to be held at the Abbey Theatre on the 27th-28th instant; and proposing, subject to the Committee’s sanction, to bring some six or seven students under the guidance of Mr McNamara, to give a
performance by way of an advertisement for the School.

The existing part-time Teaching Staff of the Municipal School of Music were re-appointed for the Session 1933-34, at their current remuneration:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Rate per hour</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pianoforte</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs J.D. Brennan</td>
<td>5/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss M. Haimer</td>
<td>5/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. Murphy</td>
<td>5/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss E. Reidy</td>
<td>5/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Singing and Choir Training</strong></td>
<td>6/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Jean Bertin</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Irish Music</strong></td>
<td>8/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl Hardebeck</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elements of Music and Aural Training</strong></td>
<td>5/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss A. G. Higgins</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tonic Sol-fa</strong></td>
<td>8/6</td>
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<tr>
<td>R. Power</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Viola and Violin</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Conductor – Junior Orchestra</strong></td>
<td>5/-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Michael McNamara</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Violin</strong></td>
<td>5/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs E. Bloom-Pollock</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Violoncello</strong></td>
<td>5/-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs K. Andrews-Pollaky</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Wind Instruments (Wood and Brass)</strong></td>
<td>5/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex Burke</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Uilleann Pipes</strong></td>
<td>6/-</td>
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<tr>
<td>L. Rowsome</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Irish War-Pipes</strong></td>
<td>5/-</td>
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<tr>
<td>L. Purcell</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fifes, Drums and Flute</strong></td>
<td>5/-</td>
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<tr>
<td>J. O’Keeffe</td>
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Recommendation — That Messrs. McCullough’s quotations be accepted for a new Challen Baby Grand Piano at £84, and two new Challen Upright Pianos at £58 16s. each.

By this time also the School had begun its long association with Radio Eireann; an entry in early 1934 noted:

A Broadcast performance of students of the School of Music on the 10th February was announced.

In 1934 Miss Maud Davin resigned as Director, due to her forthcoming marriage to Mr Frank Aiken, Minister for Finance. The Committee accepted her resignation with regret and offered its good wishes.

**Joseph S. O'Brien Director**

In December 1934 Joseph O’Brien was appointed Director. He was one of a famous trio of musical brothers – one of whom, Vincent, was teacher of many noted musicians, including John McCormack. Mr O’Brien began his new task with spirit, his first report to the Committee was as follows:
After my short period as Director I have the following remarks and suggestions to make:

**Teaching Staff**

All the members of the teaching staff of the School, are, in my judgement, efficient and earnest; I find them attentive to their work in every detail.

The pianoforte classes are well catered for in the number of teachers. We have only two teachers of the violin and these are fully engaged; but, as there is an increasing demand for instruction in this instrument there is the need for an additional instructor.

Whilst I consider the teaching in all the classes quite admirable and in some cases outstanding, I find that there is no co-ordination between the work of the different teachers, nor is there proper grading of the students. At present the members of the staff teach as individuals rather than as a co-ordinated body, whose aim should be not alone the development of the talent with which the School is teeming, but also the gaining for the School its proper place in the forefront of Irish Schools of Music. With real co-operation amongst the teachers a spirit of emulation will be stirred amongst the students, whose abilities and training will be expressed in Concerts, Opera, Oratorio, Broadcasting, etc.

**Syllabus**

The syllabus for each of the classes as set forth in the printed brochure is far too elaborate; it cannot be followed and is almost a dead letter in practice. I propose to shape it to a more useful form, and to re-arrange the time-table and the gradation of classes, but as this is not of immediate urgency I shall bring my views before you at another meeting.

**Accommodation**

The class accommodation, whilst suitable in many respects, is not sufficient for the number of students who enrol. Some of the rooms are rather gloomy and tend towards depression rather than the inspiration of musical culture. The building does not contain a room adequate for the training of orchestras or choirs, and the work though admirably performed is seriously hampered by the limitations and unsuitability of even the largest room. If we had the whole building it would be helpful; but as a temporary solution it might be well to rent one or two rooms in the neighbourhood.

**Equipment**

The School is equipped reasonably well and the Committee has been quick to supply every want. The only additions I seek at the moment are (a) a small harmonium for purposes of choir-training, and (b) one or perhaps two small harps, as I would wish to include the harp in our instrumental programme.

**Policy**

One of the main aims of the School is to make it possible for the children of the people to take up the study of Music in its various phases, and to develop the talent of each student to its fullest extent. To this end a suitable scheme of scholarships and prizes is absolutely necessary; without the inducements and facilities so provided it will be difficult to attract talented students and almost impossible to retain them. We have, I understand, already lost some of our best students through their gaining scholarships elsewhere.

Another essential for the School is the establishment of its own system of examinations, both intern and extern. This would have the effect of raising the status of the School to that of a first class Musical Institute – a claim it can hardly put forward as long as it accepts the examinations of less important bodies.
I also recommend a change of name from "Municipal School of Music" to a comprehensive one such as "The National College of Music" or some such title. This would help to give due prestige to our certificates and diplomas.

**General**

Immediately on my appointment I was fortunately able to revive and take charge of the Senior Orchestra. I also inaugurated a Gaelic Choir which promises to be a great success. It is needless to say that Irish Music shall always have my special interest and keenest encouragement.

As Director Joseph O’Brien submitted regular detailed reports and continued the proud tradition of the School. Enrolments for 1935-36 had reached the number of 1,622 with nearly 400 students of pianoforte and violin.

**Board of Studies 1936 Report Scheme of Organisation and Development for Schools**

A blueprint for the future of the City of Dublin VEC Schools and Colleges was provided by this report, which was the basis of planning by the Committee. Five Schools of Specialisation were proposed, which included the School of Music, with a system of regional feeder schools in the inner and outer city area:-.

**The School of Music Teaching Functions**

That the School of Music shall provide in Day and Evening classes, instruction in the Theory and Practice of Music, in Singing and Elocution, and in the Art of Teaching as applied to Music, and that the curriculum shall include courses of instruction as follows:-

2. Band and Orchestral Practice Classes.
5. Courses for Teachers and Performers in Elocution, Voice Culture, and Class Singing.

6. Special Courses for the training of Conductors, Choirmasters and Organists

**Diplomas**

That the School shall give diplomas, testifying high standards of attainment, in respect of certain of its organised courses of study and training.

**Civic Activities**

That, apart from its teaching activities, the School of Music shall take an important part in the development and diffusion of high standards of musical taste and appreciation, and that an important function of the School shall be the encouragement of Musical Culture and Class Singing in Schools, and the organisation of a Municipal Band and a Municipal Orchestra, and of Choirs and Bands in the large industrial and commercial undertakings of the City. Two main recommendations were made with regard to the School:-

1. That the existing School situated at Chatham Row, and already functioning as a specialised unit, shall be the Central School of Specialisation for Music and shall be designated the School (or The Dublin College) of Music.
2. That the present School Building being unsuited to the special requirements of the teaching activities, and the accommodation inadequate even for present needs, provision be made for the establishment of the School of Music in a new building on a more central and convenient site.

A Municipal Band and new premises had for long been the concern of the School and were clearly emphasised in this important report. As the outbreak of war drew near the School continued to struggle on courageously for its high purposes during a difficult period.

**Teaching Staff 1936-1938**

The following part-time teachers, (including J.J.O’Reilly, future Principal) were reappointed for the session 1936-37

at the same remuneration as hitherto, except in the case of Mr W. Reidy
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION ACT: THE EARLY YEARS

(Violoncello) for whom a higher rate of 7/6d per hour is recommended:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Instructor</th>
<th>Remuneration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pianoforte</td>
<td>Miss E. Reidy</td>
<td>5/- per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pianoforte, Harmony, Elements of Music and Aural Training</td>
<td>J. J. O'Reilly</td>
<td>5/- per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violin, Viola and Junior Orchestra</td>
<td>Michael McNamara</td>
<td>5/- per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violoncello</td>
<td>William Reidy</td>
<td>7/6 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double-Bass, Wind Instruments (Wood and Brass)</td>
<td>Comdt. C. Sauerzweig</td>
<td>5/- per hour</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uilleann Pipes</td>
<td>Leo Rowsome</td>
<td>6/- per hour</td>
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<tr>
<td>Irish War-Pipes</td>
<td>L. Purcell</td>
<td>5/- per hour</td>
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<tr>
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<td>M. Jean Bertin</td>
<td>6/- per hour</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tonic Sol-fa</td>
<td>R.M. Power</td>
<td>8/6 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifes, Drums and Flute</td>
<td>J. O'Keeffe</td>
<td>5/- per hour</td>
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The 1938 list reflects the expansion in choir training:

- **Singing and Choir training**
  - Jean Bertin

- **Pianoforte**
  - Mrs M. Byrne-Raymond
  - Miss J. Curran
  - Miss M.E. Haimer

- **Violin**
  - Miss Mabel Kenny

- **Choir Training**
  - Robert McNally (Day classes Tech. School)
  - (Evening Industrial Choirs)
  - Miss Nan Mulligan (Day classes Tech. School)

- **Violin and Viola, Conductor of Junior Orchestra**
  - Michael McNamara

- **Pianoforte**
  - P. Murphy

- **Fifes, Drums and Flute**
  - J. O'Keeffe

- **Pianoforte, Harmony, Elements of Music and Aural Training Choir Training**
  - (Day classes, Tech. Schools)
  - J. J. O'Reilly

- **Tonic Sol-fa Choir Training**
  - (Evening Industrial Choirs)
  - R.M. Power

- **Irish War-Pipes**
  - L. Purcell

- **Pianoforte**
  - Miss E. Reidy

- **Violoncello**
  - William Reidy

- **Violin**
  - Miss N.A. Richardson

- **Uilleann Pipes**
  - L. Rowsome

- **Band Instruments**
  - Comdt. C. Sauerzweig

**Feis Prize-winners 1937**

Also noted at this time were lists of prize-winners at various Feiseanna, with the inevitable reference to the need for new premises, “the present building being deemed most unsuitable”

**Father Mathew Feis**

**String Orchestra**

Municipal School of Music

1st Place and Lord Mayor's Cup (97%)
Violin
(Under 14) Triona O’Carroll
(Under 17) Sean Woods
Piano Oliver O’Brien
Piano Duet (Junior) May and Lucy Ward
Contralto Solo Miss Robinson
McCullough Cup Albert Healy

Hugh Maguire

Proposed Scholarships in Municipal School of Music:

The recommendation that a number of scholarships be annually awarded in the School of Music has already been adopted. It is proposed that these take the form of training for a period of two years, subject to progress, discipline and 75% attendance. The number of awards and the subjects to be as follows:

**Intern** (Students of the School of Music)

**Extern** (Outside Competitors)

**Pianoforte**

Two Senior One Senior
Two Junior One Junior

**Violin**

Two Senior One Senior
Two Senior One Junior

**Singing**

One Male and One Male and
One Female One Female

**Violoncello**

One One

The examinations for these awards will necessitate the engagement of an external examiner to act with the Director. Mr Harold R. White to be employed as external examiner at the remuneration of 10/- per hour in connection with the award of scholarships in the Municipal School of Music.

The first scholarship-holders were listed as follows:

**Piano**

Maeve Tyndall Under 12 years
Eileen Chisholm Under 17 years
Maura Russell 17 to 25 years
Sara Bolger "

**Violin**

Hugh Maguire Under 12 years
Patrick Moran Under 17 years
Peggy Kelaghan 17 to 25 years
Michael Tobin "

Belfast Musical Festival

Violin (Under 14) Hugh Maguire
Violin Duet Michael Tobin and Patrick Moran

Feis Ceoil

Violin (Under 12) Charles Maguire
Senior Violin Peggy Kelaghan
Viola Éamonn Kennedy
Traditional Fiddle (Under 16) Patrick Moran

Scholarship Scheme

The School had finally begun a Scholarship Scheme, as this 1938 report recorded:

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VOCATIONAL EDUCATION ACT: THE EARLY YEARS

Violoncello
Lucy Ward 17 to 25 years
Teresa Maguire

Singing
Elizabeth Dooge
James Weafer
Seamus Fitzpatrick

In 1939 Extern Scholarships were awarded as follows:-

Senior Pianoforte
Margaret Folan 124 North Circular Road

Junior Pianoforte
Frances Rutledge 74 Ellesmere Avenue K.C.R.

Junior Violin
Martina O’Byrne 255 Clonliffe Road

Violoncello
Winifred Rankin 52 Home Villas Donnybrook

Singing
Phyllis Farrelly 4 Charleville Mall
Gerard Byrne “Drunmare” Howth Road

Concerts
In 1938 the School provided its services for local causes:-

The Sub-Committee recommend the granting of the free use of the Town Hall, Rathmines, to Ceol Cumann na nÓg for holding a Concert on the 29th January, 1938, and also recommend permission for the students of the Municipal School of Music to take part in a Concert in the Gaiety Theatre on the 6th February which is being held by the National Association of Old I.R.A. for the purpose of raising funds to build a Memorial Hall.

The demand for choirs is noted in the report for 1939:-

Letters were read from (a) Secretary, Dublin Orpheus Male Choir, asking if Scheme for Choirs, including provision of conductor, applies only to business houses, and (b) P.O. Lochlainn, Clann na h-Eireann, conveying request of Ard Coisde for the establishment of a Gaelic Choir and a Ceilidhe Band.

As the existing Scheme for Choirs was intended mainly for industrial firms where large numbers of workers are employed and did not embrace private Musical Societies or Social Clubs, the Committee regret that they are unable to accede to the requests and point out that choral instruction is provided in the School of Music at the nominal fee of 2/6d per pupil per Session.