

**THE VALIDITY OF SELMER MUSIC GUIDANCE SURVEY
SCORES AT INDIAN HILLS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

BY

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THE VALIDITY OF SELMER MUSIC GUIDANCE SURVEY
SCORES AT INDIAN HILLS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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Presented to
the Graduate Council of
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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Music Education

by
Lonnie Earl Pollard

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Research Paper written by
Lonnie Earl Pollard entitled "The Validity of Selmer Music
Guidance Survey Scores at Indian Hills Elementary School."
I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Master of Music Education.

Thomas W. Cowan
Major Professor

Accepted for the Council:

Wayne E. Stamps
Dean of the Graduate School

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PRESENT PROBLEM

For years music educators have sought ways to predict the probability of future success or failure of young people about to engage in the study of a musical instrument for the first time. Many learned people such as Mark Hindsley feel that the determination of the child to succeed is the only substantial difference in the success of one child and the failure of another child. Other experts such as William Revelli insist that the instrument the child attempts to learn will be the deciding factor in the success of the future musical experiences. However, most predictions of musical success are based on music aptitude tests. These tests are generally given in the fall of each school year to all students interested in the instrumental music program of the school. The cut-off point for passing or failing is left to the discretion of the instrumental instructor. For example, assuming the score of 65 (of a possible 100) is selected as the lowest passing score, students who scored 65 or above would be considered as having instrumental potential; therefore, these students would be encouraged to join the instrumental program. Students who scored below 65 on the music aptitude test would be considered as lacking instrumental potential and, therefore, would not be encouraged to participate in the instrumental program. If the theory that music aptitude can be tested is true, then it would follow that students scoring high on a music aptitude test would be better instrumentalists than students scoring low on the same test. It is this hypothesis that was tested. To test the validity of the hypothesis it was necessary to compare the musical ability of students who had scored high on such a test to the ability of students who scored low on the same test. However, before introducing

his own research the author would like to consider the views of some of the great music aptitude testers both past and present.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A discussion of musical aptitude should start with some of the views of the most famous music aptitude pioneer of all, Seashore.

Musical talent is not a single talent; it is a hierarchy of talents, many of which are entirely independent of one another. Therefore a description of a musical talent reduces itself to the picturing of the relative prominence or latency of each musical talent. The talents naturally group themselves so that we have, for example, the tonal group, the rhythmic group, the motor group, and others; and within each of these we may trace much detail. (27,6)

The detail of the Seashore testing may be examined in the sample talent charts on page 11 of this paper. Few if any other tests would attempt to go into such detail. Seashore also felt that music aptitude is inborn.

On the basis of our experiments in measuring these sensory capacities we find that the basic capacities, the sense of pitch, sense of time, sense of loudness, and the sense of timbre are elemental, by which we mean they are largely inborn and function from early childhood. After a comparatively early age they do not vary with intelligence, with training, or with increasing age. (27,3)

The test philosophy of Seashore has been criticized on a number of counts. Many psychologists and musicians have disagreed with its atomistic and unmusical orientation. They have emphasized the belief that the test gets at "psychophysiological and not necessarily musical differences." (9,235) They question the value of a performer being able to discriminate pitches which differ by only one cycle when his audience can only discriminate pitches which are five or more cycles apart. Likewise the pianist need not bother with less than half-tones. Other psychologists doubt Seashore's claim that test scores reflect

pure native capacity and cannot be improved with practice. (9,236)
The talent charts on page 12 might, however, serve as a strong argument for the Seashore claim of the reflection of "pure native capacity". The chart of Viola shows 1000 hours of private instruction to a girl of average brightness. The chart of Jean shows a lack of any instruction to a girl of below average brightness. Despite their differences Jean scored as well or better in all areas of the test.

James Mursell declared that the only way to test the validity of the Seashore tests was to find out if persons scoring high and low on these tests also scored high or low in music behavior (sight reading, playing, theory, etc.). Seashore himself, for reasons not stated was against the idea of such a testing device. (19,17)

Another well-known man in the field of music aptitude testing in England, Herbert D. Wing, had this to say of his studies and of all musical aptitude and general intelligence:

The relationship of intelligence and musical aptitude assumes some importance; this is because if, as seems to be the case, the correlation is comparatively small, music may provide an avenue to success for those who are not in the top rank of intelligence. This does not mean that intelligence is not a help in music aptitude, but high intelligence cannot induce music aptitude if there is no musical sensitivity in the child. (35,42)

Wing seems to agree with Seashore that musical aptitude is inborn. Wing, however, places much more concern than Seashore on the attitude and interest of the child. He feels that the results of the test are only tools to be used with other information to gain insight into musical potential.

In his book The Psychology of Music, Schoen expresses views which coincide with those of Wing. He also felt talent to be an inborn

quality, but listed as secondary factors such things as intelligence (which he felt should be above average), will power, self confidence, and temperament. (25,162)

E. F. Bartholomew expressed a different view on the subject of native talent. While agreeing that talent was inborn, he went on to state that talent is, at birth, one of the traits of each and every normal person. Bartholomew reasons that just as all normal people have an inborn ability to learn science, mathematics, language, etc., they also are given an ability to learn music. He therefore discounts the value of music aptitude tests with a quote from W. H. Cummings. Cummings said, "No one can tell whether a child may turn out to be a Mozart, a Paderewski,...unless its facilities are cultivated". (2,37-38)

One of the more impressive recent studies in predicting the success of beginning instrumentalists was conducted by Robert Copeland. The findings of Mr. Copeland also tend to agree with those of Wing and Schoen.

A majority of the music aptitude tests available to music teachers have subtests which purport to measure pitch discrimination, rhythmic sensitivity, and memory for musical or tonal expressions. The results of this investigation support the hypothesis of the music aptitude test constructors that these variables are facets of music aptitude. However, the results of this investigation also indicate the extra-musical variables not generally evaluated may also be relevant to the determination of levels of musical aptitude. These variables are: interest in music, home enrichment, academic intelligence, socioeconomic background, musical achievement, and musical training. The writer suggests that educators who seek to predict the level of musical aptitude may be able to improve their accuracy of prediction by giving due consideration to measures of relevant extra-musical variables. The results of the multiple regression analyses suggest that interest in music, home enrichment, and socioeconomic background may be important extra-musical variables. (6,70)

Copeland is at apparent contradiction to Seashore on the matter of the influence of musical training in bringing to the surface the

native talent. Seashore felt the talent would rise into evidence even without training.

There does seem to be a few points on which most studies which were examined tend to agree. Robert G. Petzeld mentions that older children seem to score higher than younger children. (21,70) Seashore was the only opinion which in any way disagreed with this statement. All testers agreed that there were no differences in the scores of boys and girls. Also, all testers agreed that their tests were better able to predict failure than success. This would point to the extra-musical factors on the child as an influence for success.

John C. Cooley is the only author who stated that musical talent tests scores have not been found to be correlated with intelligence or with various personality traits. Later in the same article, however, he contradicts himself by stating that high intelligence and music reading ability went hand in hand. (5,114)

The collection of expert opinions on the matter of music talent tests could go on and on. So, also, could the list of contradictions and agreements. The point of the cases thus far mentioned is to shatter any idea of one man having the final answer to this many sided question of the value of music aptitude tests. There are as many answers as there are testers. A possible correct decision for a music instructor debating the wisdom of music aptitude tests is to study the results of previous tests, evaluate the present ability of the students as compared to the test scores, consider the extra-musical factors involved, and make a decision as to the validity of the test. The purpose of this research was to do just that.

POPULATION STUDIED

The students studied are from the Indian Hills Elementary School in Hopkinsville, Kentucky. The method used to test the students was observation of musical performance. Testing of the hypothesis and observation of the students took place over a period of two quarters. The students were compared to other students who had received the same instruction, had the same instructor, played the same instruments, and were in the same grade of the same school. All students tested were in their first year of instruction.

TESTING PROCEDURE

The procedure for testing the students was as follows: A selected music aptitude test was given at the opening of school to all students in grades four and five. The test was given at 8:30 A.M. in an air-conditioned, well lighted, soundproof room. There was no one present in the room other than the students and the tester. The test scores were recorded but were not disclosed to anyone. All interested students were invited to participate in the band program. The students were all advised of the instruments best suited to their physical characteristics. Once each quarter each student was given a playing test over selected material. At this time a tape recording was made of the test; the instructor was consulted about the progress of each child; and the test results were recorded.

The playing test itself followed the procedures and conditions of Vernon V. Tarrell. (31,196-199)

The music to be played should not be unreasonably technical and should be given to the students several days in advance of the test. Evaluation of playing must be based on: tone quality, intonation, rhythm, phrasing, and style. Students are graded on each area of their playing as: poor (1 point), below average (2 points), average (3 points), above average (4 points), and excellent (5 points).

The Selmer Music Guidance Survey was selected for use in this research paper because it is so widely used in southern Kentucky. For this reason, the author felt a test of the validity of the Selmer test might be of service to the bands of the region.

The first playing test was given on December 1, 1970 at ten o'clock in the morning on the stage of the Indian Hills Elementary School. The material selected for the test was from the "First Division Band Book". All of the children taking the test had been studying the instruments for nine weeks. Of the fifteen children in the class three were absent and one had a broken arm. The band director, Mr. Stuppy, felt that additional comments about three of the students would be of interest and aid to anyone studying the results of the test. These comments will be noted on the playing test chart. The average playing score of the students taking the playing test will also be noted later as will the average aptitude test score of the group. It was of particular interest to the author that nine students who began the band class in the fall have since dropped out of the class. Their individual and average scores will also be given later for comparison with those of the students who remained in band.

If the reader chooses to listen to the tape of the playing test he will notice noise in the background from a physical education class on the floor below the stage.

The second playing test was given on January 18, 1971 at ten o'clock in the morning on the same stage as the first test. All students were present for this test. The playing of the group had matured considerably in the six weeks since the first test. Mr. Stuppy felt the group had made the most progress in the area of tone production. His feelings were shown to be correct, as noted on the chart of playing test number two. Mr. Stuppy commented on the playing of four students.

At the conclusion of the testing the results were examined. It is assumed by the authors of the Selmer Music Guidance Survey that the test is an accurate indicator of potential musical success. The purpose of this research was to either substantiate or contradict this assumption. The students music instructor was given the opportunity to state facts about any child he thought would be of aid to the reader. This research, however, has made no attempt to measure or test the influence of any outside factors on performance. The reader is, of course, free to draw his own conclusions about any possible effect of outside factors on the students progress. This research was interested in only one question - did students who scored high on the Selmer test perform better than the students who scored low on the Selmer test?

CONCLUSIONS

Mr. Stuppy and the author agreed that the Selmer Music Guidance Survey had been more accurate in the prediction of musical failure than in the prediction of success. The difference of 39.2 points in the average scores of the students who dropped out of band and the students who remained in the band would tend to substantiate our conclusions. However, we did not find that the persons making the highest scores on the Selmer test always performed better than persons making a lower score. For example: on the first playing test the two highest averages were achieved by Lonnie (4.6) and Gary (4.4) while the two highest Selmer test scores were registered by Shawn (116) and Andrew (118). Also, Debbie's averages of 4.2 and 4.6 do not coincide with her relatively low Selmer score of 88; she had the fourth highest average on the first test and tied for highest on the second test while having the lowest Selmer score of the group.

The influence of extra-musical factors is pointed out not only in the scores of Debbie but in the scores of Phyllis. Phyllis had suffered a loss when her father died in November, and her playing reflected this loss. By January she was well on the road to recovery.

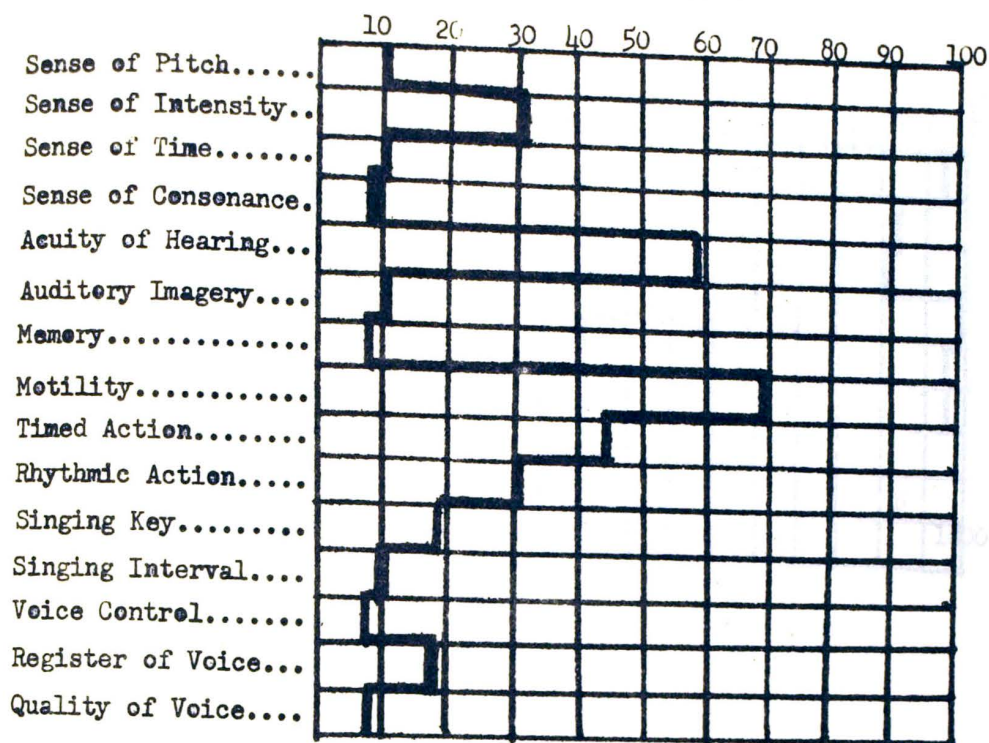
RECOMMENDATIONS

Frank W. Pinkerton has reported from the results of his survey of music instructors in the United States that 96 percent of the instructors in the United States rely on more than one means of selecting beginning instrumental students. (22,76-77) He has constructed a chart of the most often used methods involved in the selection of the students.

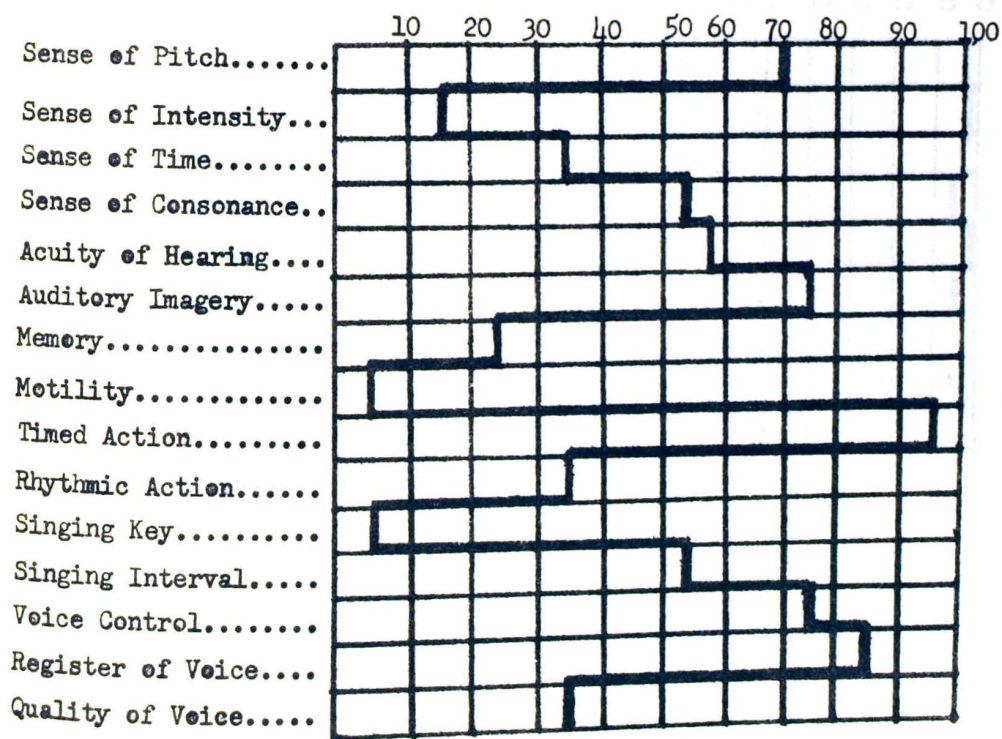
This chart is shown on page 16 of this research. It is of particular interest to the author that only 27.7 percent of those responding to the survey employed the use of music aptitude tests.

The Selmer Music Guidance Survey has been found to be a good indicator of probable failure. The test was not found to indicate the degree of success a child might be expected to attain. With these two thoughts in mind the author would urge a music instructor to consider, along with the results of the music aptitude tests, the instrument most suited to the child and the many extra-musical factors which influence the child. The use of a music aptitude test can be a most useful tool in the selection of students; however, no test at all would be far better than a test which is not used wisely.

Talent Chart of Mr. Black



Talent Chart of Mr. Gray



Results of Playing Test Number One

Name	Instrument	Tone	Intonation	Phrasing	Style	Rhythm	Comments	Selmer	Average
Steve	Cornet	4	3	4	4	4		116	3.8
Jim	Cornet	4	4	4	4	4		112	4.0
Eddie	Cornet	2	3	3	3	3		90	2.8
Andrew	Trombone	4	4	4	4	4		118	4.0
Shawn	Alto Sax	3	4	4	4	4		116	3.8
Gary	Alto Sax	4	5	4	4	5		96	4.4
Phyllis	Tenor Sax	3	4	3	3	3	Father just died	114	3.2
Kim	Clarinet	3	4	3	3	4		108	3.4
Debbie	Clarinet	4	5	4	4	4	Works quite hard	88	4.2
Libbie	Clarinet	3	4	3	3	3		98	3.2
Lonnie	Bells	5	5	4	4	5	Broken arm	106	4.6
Bill*	Trombone	4	4	4	4	4	Absent	100	4.0
Emily*	Flute	4	3	3	3	3	Absent	100	3.2
Chuck*	Cornet	3	3	3	3	3	Absent	108	3.0
Ann*	Oboe	4	4	4	5	5	Broken arm	114	4.4
Average		3.6	3.9	3.6	3.7	3.8		105.6	3.7

* Mr. Stuppy graded these students as he felt they compared to the others.

Results of Playing Test Number Two

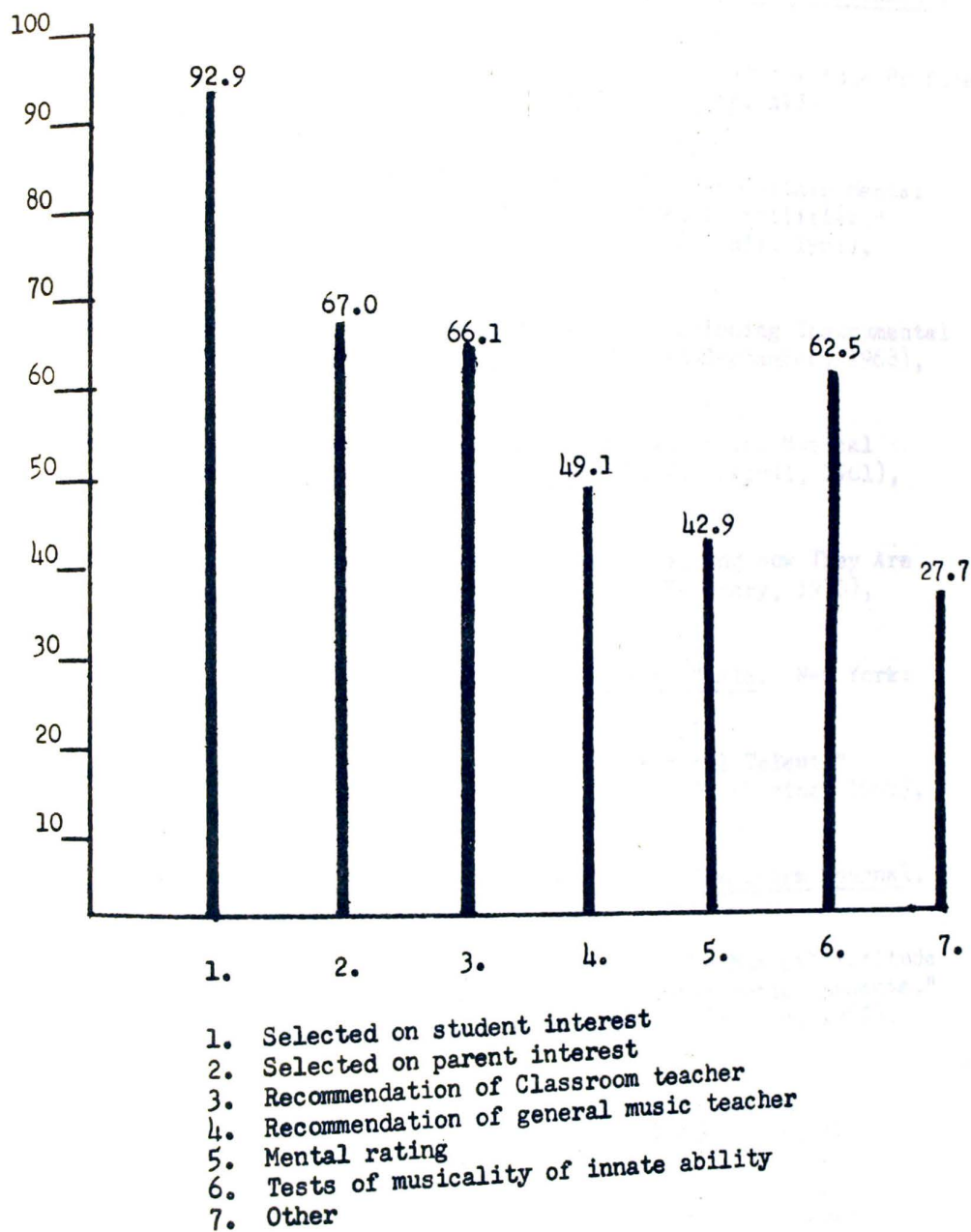
Name	Instrument	Tone	Intonation	Phrasing	Style	Rhythm	Comments	Selmer	Average
Steve	Cornet	4	4	4	4	3		116	3.8
Jim	Cornet	5	4	4	4	5		112	4.4
Eddie	Cornet	3	3	3	3	4		90	3.2
Andrew	Trombone	3	4	3	4	4		118	3.6
Shawn	Alto Sax	4	4	4	4	4		116	4.0
Gary	Alto Sax	4	4	4	4	5		96	4.2
Phyllis	Tenor Sax	4	4	4	4	4	Father died in November	114	4.0
Kim	Clarinet	4	4	4	3	4		108	3.8
Debbie	Clarinet	5	5	4	4	5	Works quite hard	88	4.6
Libbie	Clarinet	3	3	4	3	3		98	3.2
Lonnie	Bells	5	5	3	4	5	Arm in cast	106	4.4
Bill	Trombone	4	3	3	4	4		100	3.6
Emily	Flute	4	2	3	4	3		100	3.2
Chuck	Cornet	3	3	3	3	4		108	3.2
Ann	Oboe	4	4	5	5	5	Broken arm well now	114	4.6
Average		3.9	3.7	3.6	3.8	4.1		105.6	3.8

The following is a chart of Indian Hills Elementary School students who started band in the fall but for one reason or another have dropped out of the band program. Their instruments and scores are also given below.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Instrument</u>	<u>Test Score</u>
Terry	Cornet	64
Valarie	Clarinet	80
George	Trombone	70
Danya	Flute	43
Donna	Alto Sax	94
Robert	Cornet	39
Mike	Cornet	70
Jeff	Trombone	66
Sherry	Flute	72

The average test score of these students is 66.4. This is 39.2 points below the average of the students who did not drop out of band.

Criteria Used In Selection Of Instrumental Students



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