



COALITION CONTACT

COALITION FOR MUSIC EDUCATION IN CANADA

NEWSLETTER

MUSIC MUST SURVIVE

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RESEARCH FINDINGS

Several research results have been published in the last months. While some of these studies are not complete, they all point out that music education enhances brain development and improves other learning in children, besides making a significant contribution to their quality of life.

McGill University Study

McGill University has been the scene of on-going research into just how our brains react to music. Robert Zatorre and Isabel Peretz have collaborated over the years, using new scanning techniques such as PET and MRI to see inside the brain and detect where pitch, melody, harmony and rhythm are processed. As you might expect the results are not simple. It appears that depending on the complexity and composition of the music, cortex clusters all over the brain are activated but certain of these seem to be responsible for each musical component such as rhythm, melody or harmony. Interestingly, the places where memory is stored, where logic and speech are processed, and the seat of emotion, are also affected.

In one experiment individuals selected a favourite piece of music. They were then played four different tapes - an excerpt from their favourite music, an excerpt from someone else's favourite, a few minutes of straight noise, and a passage of silence. Only during the playing of their "favourites" did the blood in the brain stream to certain places where the electro-chemical energy was firing. These were the areas which previous experiments had targeted as the places where such enjoyable pursuits and stimulants such as chocolate, champagne, recreational drugs and sex were also activated. The blood was seen as flowing away from the areas associated with fear and depression at this time. During the playing of other people's favourites, noise, or silence, nothing happened!

Zatorre says that our brains are "hard wired for music...Music recruits neural systems of reward and emotion...This is remarkable because music is neither strictly necessary for biological survival or reproduction, nor is it a pharmacological substance." He also states that, "The vast majority of people with no musical training can sing a song, and still recognize a tune even when it has been altered by being presented in a different key, instrument or rhythm. That seems to be innate, something our brains are wired to do... There is no known culture which does not have some sort of music."

These findings (which have great implications for music educators) were reported in a newspaper article by Paul McKay published in the Ottawa Citizen, November 18, 2002. More information can be found in a book by Mr. Zatorre and Ms. Peretz entitled "The Biological Foundations of Music" or at www.zlab.mcgill.ca.

Learning Through the Arts.

Dr. Rena Upitis and Dr. Katharine Smithrim, from the Faculty of Education, Queen's University released the first part of the National Assessment of a study they conducted for Learning Through the Arts. (This is a dynamic, new, arts-based educational program established by the Royal Conservatory of Music.) The research, involving 6,675 students in approximately 170 schools across Canada, is part of a three-year study on the effects of participating in the LTTA program from Grade 4-7. The students in the sample were selected from six sites.

On most measurements of mathematics and language, there were no significant differences between the LTTA schools and the control schools. This leads to the conclusion that including arts programs in the schools does not have the effect of lowering scores in other subjects because of "time taken away from the core subjects." However LTTA students did score significantly higher on tests of computation and estimation than the students in the control schools - a difference of 11 percentile points.

Activities outside of school, such as music lessons and reading for pleasure had a significant effect on student achievement in math and language regardless of socioeconomic status or the level of education of the mother. On the other hand, there was a strong negative relationship between achievement and “screen time” – video games, computers, and television.

The subjective evidence that came from the study shows that involvement in the arts goes hand in hand with students being engaged in all learning, and finding joy in being at school. Parents, teachers, and administrators all said that the schools in which LTTA was present were more interesting, and the program led to the growth of self-esteem and emotional involvement among the children taking part. The second part of the study is expected in the spring when the results of the work done with students in Grades 1-3 will be presented.

Dr. Frances Rauscher

Dr. Rauscher, Associate Professor of Cognitive Development at the University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh, gave the keynote address at the Ontario Music Educators Conference in Niagara Falls in November. In this talk Dr. Rauscher stated that music is an essential resource for five reasons.

1. We need music to express feelings and ideas that words cannot convey.
2. Beyond the expression of our deepest feelings, we also need music to expand the child’s way of knowing and to bring creativity to the nation’s classrooms.
3. Beyond giving children an essential language, and beyond giving them new ways of knowing, we also need music to help students integrate their learning and discover the connectedness of things.
4. Beyond creativity and beyond integration in the schools, we also need music education to help children who are emotionally and physically restricted.
5. When all is said and done, music can build community not only within the school but beyond the school as well, in neighbourhoods, in different cultures, and across generations.

In addition to the keynote speech, Dr. Rauscher shared some of her newest (not yet published) research with us. A study was begun five years ago to determine if individual music instruction in piano, singing, or rhythm instruments could improve at-risk Head Start children’s reasoning in other domains, such as arithmetic. It was a very large study and the

general conclusions were that all three types of instruction improved children’s spatial and arithmetic abilities, and that different types of instruction had different effects on children’s reasoning. Piano, singing, and rhythm training all improved the children’s mental imagery, but the rhythm training improved their ability to sequence items (a skill essential to all learning) significantly more than piano and singing training.

In the last year of the study the children were tracked when they entered the public schools and were re-tested along with Head Start children who did not get music instruction, at-risk children who were not in Head Start, and just “regular middle-income children.” The children who received the music lessons scored significantly higher than at-risk children in the typical Head Start program, and especially higher than the at-risk children who were not in Head Start. An unexpected finding was that these Head Start children (those receiving music lessons) scored at the same level as middle-income children! This result has not been experienced before in other studies comparing Head Start children with so-called regular students in other subjects.

We look forward to the publication of the complete research conclusions. It seems that the data will provide yet more proof that quality music education is an essential tool to promote cognitive growth in children.

NOTES FROM THE COALITION FOR MUSIC EDUCATION IN CANADA

The Coalition continues to work to ensure that every child in Canada has access to quality music instruction, taught by a certified music teacher. We have now completed our 10th year of writing, printing and distributing materials to teachers in every province, and last year we mailed a steady flow of our 4 printed brochures, postcards, our 6 books, and our 2 videos to teachers and parents across the country. We attended workshops and talked to whatever group would have us (if we had the money to travel to where they were.)

Our reorganization is working well. This year the Communications and Research Committee will produce a revised brochure that will include the information from several of the old pamphlets. We also hope to revise our booklet on research to include up-to-date findings from Dr. Rauscher and the Learning Through the Arts initiative and others.

The Public Relations Committee is preparing a package to be mailed to every High School and Junior High – public and private, across Canada. The package will contain pre-written newspaper articles on the importance of music education to students' development, a poster "Making Music Makes You Smarter" and the most recent research which shows the amazing brain enhancement children undergo when they are involved in "making music."

It is hoped that the students and teachers in these schools will encourage the local newspapers in their community to print the articles and thereby spread the word about the value of music, to entire communities.

HOLIDAY TUBA FESTIVAL

Holiday Tuba Festivals were held in Edmonton, Regina, Winnipeg, North Bay, Halifax and Toronto this year. It was the 11th annual Tuba Festival for Toronto and attracted around 92 tuba, euphonium and baritone players as well as about 200 students singing and an uncounted number of people passing by at lunch time. Everyone had a great time in spite of the minus 10 degree weather. School music was given a boost with coverage in the Toronto Star, CBC News, City TV and Omni TV.

ARE YOU OUT OF POCKET? YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

According to a recent study done in the States, U.S. elementary school teachers spend more than \$1 billion a year of their own money on supplies for their classrooms. The average teacher's personal contribution is \$521 annually. All of this is in American funds!

On this side of the border, according to a survey conducted by Global Economics between December 2000 and January 2001, Canada's 300,000 teachers spent approximately \$180-million of their own salaries on school-related activities. This works out to nearly \$600 each. The amount varies from province to province. PEI teachers spent the least (\$282), Ontario teachers were in the middle (\$545) and those in British Columbia spent a whopping \$1,095. I wonder if the amount spent signals how much the cuts to education in the various provinces has resulted in shortages in basic supplies in the schools of various provinces. I wonder also that if a separate survey were conducted using music teachers only, whether the amount spent would be far higher across the board.

My guess is that it would. I have watched music teachers dip into their own pockets for music, reeds, books, transportation costs etc. for many, many years.

So obviously, bake sales, and fruit and geranium selling can't make up for the huge amounts of money most provinces have drained from music programs, and more and more teachers are subsidizing their music programs for the sake of their students.

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF JAZZ EDUCATION, 30TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Over 7,000 performers, educators and students spent January 7th to the 11th enjoying and participating in workshops, clinics and musical performances at the IAJE conference in Toronto. This was the first time the conference was held outside the USA and it drew the third largest attendance in its history. IAJE officials were impressed with the Canadian content, the quality of participants, and in particular, the great number of young people attending. Hundreds of area elementary and secondary students participated in workshops and attended performances specifically designed for them including 400 secondary students who attended as guests of IAJE.

Congratulations to the many professional Canadian musicians who took part and in particular to the universities, community colleges and schools who performed at the conference.

Conference Teacher Track Scholarships were presented to 10 school music educators who have demonstrated outstanding service to students in the field of music education. These are presented each year to teachers in the host city. Congratulations to the following recipients from the Toronto District School Board: Christina Grant, John Pagnotta, Brian Rice, Murray Smith, and Ross Woodbridge and from the Toronto Catholic School Board: Andrew Rozbicki, Vince Gassi, Paul Champion, Mike Lewis and Frank Baggetta.

Congratulations also to Toronto saxophonist Jane Fair who won the Lil Harden Armstrong Heritage Award. Lil Armstrong was a gifted pianist, teacher and composer, and wife of Louis Armstrong. She played in many groups (including his) and was a significant figure in jazz history. The award is given each year to a North American woman who best signifies Lil Harden Armstrong's pioneering spirit in the world of jazz. Jane was trained first in Montreal and holds a Masters of

Music degree from the University of Toronto. Besides being a fabulous player she is also teaching students from 7 – 18 at the Humber College Community Music School.

NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF A WEBSITE!

The Coalition received an e-mail recently from a parent in Azerbaijan, requesting information about schools and conservatories in Canada where there are good music programs. Evidently his family intends to move to Canada and the quality of music education is determining factor in where they might locate. This shows, not only great enlightenment on the part of these parents in Azerbaijan, but also the power of the Internet, and the ability of our newly designed web page to “pull ‘em in.”

A NEW CONDUCTOR FOR TORONTO

It has been announced that after many months of uncertainty, Peter Oundjian has been appointed the new musical director of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. The mayor declared January 30, 2003, Toronto Symphony Day and this was celebrated by the giving of a free concert in the wonderful, newly renovated Roy Thomson Hall. Mr. Oundjian takes a keen interest in music education and demonstrated this by leading a rehearsal of the North Toronto Collegiate orchestra on the afternoon of the day of the announcement of his appointment. What a thrill for the students!

COALITION HOUSEKEEPING

This is our first newsletter for 2003. For the next few editions we will try a new tack to obtain information from advocacy groups across Canada. Each region will be invited to send news of their particular activities for one newsletter a year. Perhaps this will help to make Contact more representative of the nation as a whole. This arrangement does in no way stop any of you from sending in material. The more the merrier! In the meantime, keep up your membership in the Coalition (or join if you are not presently a member). We hope that the activities of the Coalition will help to turn the tide towards having

music become a more and more viable force in the education of all children in our country. The more we hear of what has happened to music in the USA since the rot began in earnest with Proposition 13 in California, almost 20 years ago, the more we should be absolutely terrified about the downfall in educational standards in general and arts standards in particular. The Coalition’s only mandate is to save and improve music programs across Canada. This might mean saving your job!!

Join us. Help us save school music!



▲ *CHEQUE PRESENTATION TO THE COALITION FOR \$3,000.00 FROM YAMAHA CANADA MUSIC LTD.—*
Left to right: Art Divers, Senior Vice-President, AVIT Group, Finance & Administration Division; George Bishop, Executive Director, Coalition for Music Education in Canada; Rob Bang, Vice-President, Musical Instrument Group, Manager - Piano Department; Yoshiro Doi, President of Yamaha Canada.

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