



# COALITION CONTACT

COALITION FOR MUSIC EDUCATION IN CANADA

NEWSLETTER

MUSIC MUST SURVIVE

P.O. Box 556, Agincourt, Ontario M1S 3C5 Telephone: (416) 298-2871 Fax: (416) 298-5730 Email: coalitionformusiced@bellnet.ca Website: www.coalitionformusiced.ca

NEWSLETTER #17, Winter, 2004

## **DISMAL STATISTICS FROM ABROAD**

An article written for the Manchester Guardian of Wednesday December 17, 2003 points out the abysmal failings of the once vaunted public educational system of the UK. The failure of the system has been accelerated by huge budget cuts and an emphasis on Standard Assessment Tests (STATS). "The government, while protesting that it wants to see enjoyment and creativity, is emphatic about its priorities. STATS, targets and a limited curriculum must remain because they are the keys to delivering measurable improvements. All evidence of boredom, disaffection and stress among children and teachers, of employers dissatisfaction, and of universities' unease, is dismissed with one simple argument: that what the government is doing is what works"

Unfortunately the government is deluding itself. The statistics prove otherwise. After an initial, impressive rise in exam performance a few years ago, things have reverted to the old percentages with 25% of the age group unable to read, write or use numbers adequately. These children have had 4 – 5 years of being tested to death. "If the system isn't working for them, it isn't going to work." The beginning years showed improvement because students and teachers learned how to cram for the tests. Now they have reached the limits of what restricted resources and content can produce. In other words, teaching "for the test" has been shown not to work in Great Britain and other jurisdictions. Why then are so many administrations in Canada still employing this backward method of educational philosophy?

One of the most pernicious results of this kind of education is that it results in an even greater widening of the gap between rich and poor children. At the same time it does nothing to address the teaching of the kinds of skills both individuals and the economy are going to need in the future – creativity, teamwork and communication.

So what is the remedy? It lies in what we as music and art and drama teachers have been saying all along, but to which the governments have turned a collective deaf ear. Initiate a curriculum that respects the creativity and competence of all children. Install a broad-based

curriculum that has an emphasis on fostering creativity, self learning and learning outside the classroom.

In England some comprehensive schools are bucking the trend and are pioneering a "new" approach, inspired by the Royal Society of the Arts. The project is called Opening Minds and starts with each school designing its own curriculum, emphasizing the development of competencies such as learning to learn, learning to think, learning to take responsibility and learning how to relate to others. Significantly, all the projects include art, music and drama.

The results have been beyond anyone's expectations. In one tough school, 87% of the control group were given detentions in a year. Among the Opening Minds learners, the figure was 16%. In another school, the exclusion rate fell by 90%. Another school reported far fewer conflicts in the corridors and playgrounds. Academic performance has risen in every Opening Minds school.

With statistics like these, it is no wonder that more than 200 schools and colleges are talking to the RSA about adopting the approach.

Here in Canada we should learn, and learn quickly from these and a myriad of other statistics before we let yet another generation of children go down the drain academically.

---

## **ON A LIGHTER NOTE**

Have you ever cringed at the sound of the bells/buzzers that some tone-deaf builders have incorporated into a school's PA system? As a "wandering" music teacher I often used to think, "Here we are trying to instill a love of fine, musical sounds into these children we teach, when at least six times a day they are subjected to an inhuman, loud, brain-numbing signal that tells them to come in, go out, change classes or listen up." Well, Westmount Secondary school in Hamilton, Ontario gave the bells the push in 1990 and since then has used music to mark the beginning and end of classes. The music may not always be soft but at least it is less jarring than the alternative.

Do you know of any other schools that have gone this same route?

Did you know that for 400 years, (mid 1400 – mid 1800) Europe experienced very low temperatures in winter? Researchers at the University of Tennessee and Columbia University suggest that this slowed the growth of the alpine spruce and produced extremely dense wood. Coincidentally, the great violin makers in Italy were working at this time and used this wood. Is this the reason that Antonio Stradivarius produced his most prized and valuable instruments from 1700 to 1720? He probably used wood that grew during the coldest part of this era (1645 to 1715).

*The above two items were first published in the Globe and Mail Social Science Column.*

## COMPANIES AND ASSOCIATIONS THAT ARE SUPPORTING THE COALITION FINANCIALLY FOR THE YEAR 2003 – 2004

A. K. Blessing	B & J Music
Canadian Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences	Counterpoint Musical Services
Canadian Music Industry Education Committee	D'Addario Canada
Efkay Music Group	Fender Musical Instrument Corp.
Frederick Harris (Royal Conservatory of Music)	Hal Leonard Corp.
Jam Industries	Kawai Canada
La SiDo Godin Guitar Company	G. Le Blanc Corp.
Levy's Leathers	Long and McQuade Ltd.
Music Industry Association of Canada	Rico
Roland Canada Music Ltd.	Sabian Ltd.
Selmer St. John's Music Ltd.	Universal Music Inc.
Walters Music	Yamaha Canada Music Ltd.
Yamaha Music Gallery	Zildjian

Many, many thanks to these organizations and companies. Without their contributions the Coalition would not be able to carry on its work of supporting music education in Canada.

## DAY OF 1,000 MELODIES

The Coalition is intending to create an annual event that would capture the imagination of the country. Right across Canada, at exactly the same time (e.g. 10:00 AM in Vancouver, 11:00 AM in Winnipeg, Edmonton and Regina, 1:00 PM in Toronto and Montréal, 2:00 PM in Halifax and 2:30 PM in Newfoundland) schools will move their music programs outside with an open-air concert: choirs, bands etc. While they play a 15 minute or half-hour concert, of music of their own choice, they will be united at one point by performing one piece of music – a simple and inspiring piece by a Canadian composer. The idea being that if one were to open the front door of one's home and stand in the street near a school, anywhere in Canada, one would hear music and the skies would be filled with melody produced by school children. The date is yet to be determined but we are aiming for April or May 2005.

The music will be set in seven arrangements for school groups: junior band, senior band, junior choir, senior choir, strings, recorder and jazz band. We will attempt to involve as many as possible of our 16,800 Canadian schools in this project on this special Music Education Day.

## SIGNIFICANT ANNIVERSARIES

Two highly successful organizations are having significant anniversaries this year. The first is the Learning through the Arts program, which had its beginnings ten years ago with programs in only 8 schools. Today 100,000 children, 5000 teachers and 500 artists take part in 8 provinces and the Yukon and there are pilot programs in 10 countries including Italy, Sweden, the UK, Australia, Portugal, the United States, Singapore, Japan and Malaysia. Queen's University has developed first rate statistics showing that students in the LTTA program scored as much as 11 percentile points higher in certain aspects of math, were happier to attend school and were more engaged in learning than other students who were not in the program. LTTA has also been in the forefront of e-learning, especially in the education of first nation students. What a great Canadian success story!

The other anniversary is the 25th year of the founding of the Toronto Children's Choir under the direction of Jean Ashworth Bartle. It is hard to believe that this fabulous group has been singing together under Jean's direction for this long. At their 25th gala concert, as one looked out at the gathering of nearly 500 young people ranging in age from 6 to adulthood (the alumni choir) and listened to the always exquisite musical sounds that they made, one could only be grateful that this "National Treasure" belongs to Canada. To date this choir (which

began as a school choir) has performed across the USA and Canada, in England, Australia, Russia, Finland, South Africa, Italy, France and Holland and in venues as exalted as the Royal Albert Hall, Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Centre. The concert featured such Canadian notables as Ben Heppner, and Catherine Robbin. From England came Sir Andrew Davis and Sir David Willcox both of whom conducted pieces they had composed specifically for the choir. Harry Freedman, Eleanor Daley, and Ruth Watson Henderson (who has also been the fabulous accompanist for all these 25 years) also had their compositions performed. Congratulations to the Toronto Children's Choir! May it have another 25 years of success!

---

## CANADIAN BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Coalition has completed a basic bibliography called, "Helpful Resources for Teachers of Elementary Music." The collection is divided into three parts. The first consists of basic materials – books, CD's, Videos, and so on, designed primarily for the beginning teacher, or the teacher who has been forced to teach music in his or her classroom in spite of having no training in the subject. The second part contains material suggested for the teacher who has more skill and experience in music. The third is for the specialist or teacher who has much experience in teaching music and is, perhaps looking for additional ideas.

The booklet has gone to the printers and will be ready for distribution sometime late March or April. Order from the Coalition office (first one free, subsequent copies \$5.00). We hope that this Bibliography will be a work in progress. It will be revised from time to time so if you have further suggestions, please send them along to be considered for the next edition. Please keep in mind that we are looking for resources that would be useful in all parts of Canada.

---

## STUDENTS SPEAK OUT

Isabel Hornstein, a music and drama teacher in Queen Alexandra Middle School, Toronto sends some wonderful quotations from student essays about the importance of music in education. When it seemed likely that a teacher would have to be cut at their school, Isabel asked how the students would feel if their music program would have to be taught by their home room teacher. The response was altogether negative. Then she led discussions about the Arts in the Curriculum and gave the students resources that were developed by the Coalition for Music Education in Canada – mainly the booklet of research articles "Making Music Makes You Smarter." The result was a group of wonderful essays.

Some quotations from these were printed in the CMEA Journal (Fall 2003) but it seems appropriate to reprint others here. Congratulations Isabel and students for undertaking this thoughtful project.

"Music gives kids an academic edge in school and a competitive edge in the working world." *Naima Akhter*. "Music and Art are not only a great advantage to students, but for teachers as well. [These subjects] give the chances to present the core curriculum in lively, creative, and entertaining way... Participating in the arts powerfully strengthens such vital characteristics such as self-esteem, self-discipline, creativity, and self-expression. [The arts] help develop problem-solving skills, integrate subject matter across the curriculum and have a high correlation with overall academic achievement. All students must have equal access to arts education." *Nusrat Zahan*.

"Imagine a world without school plays, singing, paintings, and lots of other interesting activities, That's what our world will be at school if the School Board cut music/arts. Boring huh? Who knows what they will cut next?...Music, drama and arts all come with our education package. Without them, our education would be incomplete....We have to save the arts. By saving arts, we will be saving ourselves, our future and this society." *Siyang Li*

---

## MORE CONGRATULATIONS

Two Canadians (at least) took part in the Grammy Awards this year. Toronto trumpeter Brian Chahley was invited to Los Angeles to participate in the 2004 Gibson/Baldwin Grammy High School Jazz Ensembles program. Chahley, who is 16, is the only Canadian among the 29 music students from across America to be involved this year. This is a 10-day program, which began on January 31 and involved playing for various Grammy functions and appearing with jazz notables Kurt Elling and Chick Corea in various LA clubs. Congratulations Brian.

Saxophonist (and flautist) Jane Bunnett's group was nominated for an award in the Best Latin Jazz Album category for her very successful CD "Cuban Odyssey." Jane has been very much involved in music education, both in Canada and also in Cuba. Her group has toured schools to spread the music gospel and Jane was a member of the educational committee of CARAS for several years.

---

## PUBLICITY

The Public Service Announcements that 26 well-known artists have recorded for us have been shown and heard over such venues as CBC, Newsworld, Global TV, City TV, CHUM, CTV, and Rogers. Our heart-felt thanks

to the artists who gave of their time to make these announcements. Among these artists are: Heather Bambrick, Richard Bradshaw, Jim Cuddy, Denise Djokic, Alan Doyle, Moise Hammer, Ben Heppner, Linda Maguire, Natalie MacMaster, Tyler Stewart, Kerry Stratten, Kevin Young, and Pinchas Zukerman. Anne Murray has also agreed to record a PSA at a later date.

Our ad for the "Music Makes You Smarter" campaign has also been widely shown on TV. Everyone has agreed that it is quite marvelous and catches the eye extremely well. I have had perfect strangers come up to me in meetings and comment on the ad, not knowing that I had anything to do with the Coalition.

---

## TUBAFEST

Holiday Tubafest happenings took place in 9 locations across Canada this past December – Regina, Lethbridge, Edmonton, Williams Lake BC, North Bay, Moncton, Toronto, Halifax, Montréal, and Winnipeg. All were very successful by the accounts we received. The interesting component has been the increase, not only in players but also in the number of school choirs that have been bussed in for the event. More publicity for music and more chances for students to gather together and make music. The memories of these get-togethers will stay with these students for the rest of their lives. We hear rumours of other locations. If we have left you out, please tell us about your event.

---

## LATE BREAKING NEWS!

The British Columbia Music Educators Association has voted to be automatically affiliated with the Canadian Music Education Association. This brings 600 or so members to CMEA and strengthens both organizations. A win-win move for all.

---

## HOUSEKEEPING

We need your financial support, now more than ever. We have many national projects on the go and in the planning stages, and need money to support them. Now is the time to fight hard to keep music in your schools or have it reinstated if it has been cut. Our materials, PSA's, TV, radio and print ads, mailings, and guidelines etc. can help develop awareness but they all cost money to develop and produce. Our Board is comprised of volunteers each of whom puts in endless hours to further the cause but we can't do everything we want and need to do without financial help. Join us today!

**We have moved our office (a huge undertaking). Please take note of our new address, phone, fax and e-mail address. For further information about the Coalition, to join, or to obtain materials:**

Contact: George Bishop, Executive Director,  
P.O. Box 556,  
Agincourt Ontario Canada M1S 3C5  
Tel: (416) 298-2871, Fax: (416) 298-5730  
E-mail coalitionformusiced@bellnet.ca.

Lois Birkenshaw-Fleming, Newsletter Editor,  
Tel: (416) 921-6195, Fax: (416) 967-4151  
E-mail address  
<kipandloisfleming@sympatico.ca

---

## COALITION WEBSITE

Consult our website at [www.coalitionformusiced.ca](http://www.coalitionformusiced.ca). It is filled with information about our advocacy efforts and ways to find out about the tremendous power music can have in the lives of all people.

---

## Presentation of \$2000 cheque

**Anaheim:** One of the most popular places to be at NAMM for Yamaha Canada dealerships, is the annual Saturday evening reception for "Canadians Only". Hosted by Yamaha Canada Music Ltd, attendance approaches the 300 mark each year. Dealer's staff have been very complimentary about this casual and not to be missed event. To add to the evening, a Draw for Yamaha gear is offered with many of the people purchasing the draw tickets. In a time of less than an hour, Yamaha dealers purchased tickets in the amount of \$2000 which will be turned over to Coalition for Music Education in Canada (CMEC). The CMEC supports music education in schools and greatly appreciates the funds provided by Yamaha Canada dealers.



Photo: Left to Right:  
Toru Saruya, President Yamaha Canada  
George Bishop, Executive Director CMEC  
Robin McDowell: CMEC