Editorial

Proposals for Change to the Face of Music Education
Lee Willingham & Lee Bartel, editors

Recently, we encouraged readers of the Canadian Music Educator to respond to issues we posed regarding the mandate, mission, and relevance of our sponsoring organization, The Canadian Music Educators’ Association. Those who responded have been very clear about two things. First, the format and content of the journal is now widely accepted as a practical and helpful tool for the classroom music teacher, the student teacher candidate, and to some extent, those in tertiary music education programs.

I am finding the new format of the “Canadian Music Educator” magazine to be much more worthwhile than it ever was before. I actually read it cover to cover now.

Secondary Music Teacher

Second, readers have been forthright in their concerns about the fragmentation of music education organizations across Canada. The effectiveness of the C.M.E.A. appears to be limited since its voice represents only a fraction of music educators in this country. The diversity of provincial organizations and specialized music organizations results in division and often duplication of resources and costs.

I do believe we should all be united. Isn’t this what C.M.E.A. is for?

Elementary Music Teacher

Dialogue is a first step towards change. We exercise a little “editorial license” in proposing the following in the interest of improving the state of music education in this country. These proposals reflect the spirit of the responses of our readers during the past few months. We propose that:

1. The C.M.E.A. president and executive initiate bridge-building dialogue with the national leadership of all of the established music education organizations. (e.g., Kodaly Society of Canada, Orff Society of Canada, Canadian Band Association, Canadian Choral Conductors’ Association, and others) along with provincial music education leaders.

2. The purpose of Inter-Organizational dialogue be to investigate the mandate and services offered by each of the organizations with the intent of identifying duplication, and possible cost savings, as well as identifying and exploring potential forms of partnership and alliance.
3. The publications of all music organizations must be examined. The following questions need to be answered: Does each organization need its own journal or newsletter, soliciting advertisers and writers from the same Canadian “pool” of resources? Would a shared journal support monthly issues, rather than quarterly? Would provincial organizations entertain the idea of partnering with a national publication?

4. The costs of membership and services must be explored. How might a music teacher benefit from both elementary and secondary, or both instrumental and choral resources, without having to join four separate organizations? How might costs be shared without compromising the integrity of mandate and service of each group?

5. After initial talks, a structure for a single Canadian music education organization must be designed and proposed to the stakeholders.

- What would it look like? How might it be administered?

- Would there be sufficient funds to establish a Canadian office, such as the M.E.N.C. in the United States?

- How might such an alliance of music education provide more resources, support, expertise, consultation, conferences, and curriculum development for the member teacher, or aspiring student teacher, or university professor?

- What roles and purposes could it serve in relation to government policy, media, and other arts organizations.

- Most importantly, how might the alliance of music educators’ organizations in this country strengthen the status and quality of music education in the classrooms and communities across this country?

Dr. Tim Lautzenheizer, in a recent conference, asked all of the delegates to clap. He then asked us to turn our hands over, and clap “upside down” from the way we customarily clap. The sound of the clapping changed dramatically. A strong, crisp, buoyant wave of applause morphed into a muted, tentative patter of hand clapping. The point? Change is uncomfortable, and sometimes causes us to feel uncertain and downright afraid. We cling to known and the familiar, even when truthfully we sense that other ways merit consideration.

As editors of the Canadian Music Educator, it is easy for us to sit at our computers and write about change. It is not easy to begin dialogue, or to initiate even the first stages of conversation. What we can do is provide a catalyst that initiates some action. We can also provide a national forum for readers and other music educators to express their ideas.
So, we invite you to consider carefully what changing the face of music education in Canada would mean to you. We also ask you to think about how it might look in your classroom and school. Finally, let us know what you’ve thought about. We’ll share it with the country.

*I had joined the Board (of a music organization) believing that I could help with the mission of improving elementary music education in public schools, but found that the little band of bright and well-meaning volunteers spent its time just keeping the organization alive, barely. I left after two years due to the absolute futility of it all, and haven't thought much about these professional organizations since, until now. I do think that our profession is just too small to keep all these special interest groups afloat (Kodaly, Orff, Band, etc.)-- somehow they all need to be under the umbrella of a revitilized national body.*

Canadian Music Teacher

Lee Bartel  lbartel@chass.utoronto.ca
Lee Willingham  lwillingham@oise.utoronto.ca