Music Education In Canada
PART I: The Status of Music Education in Canada

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(Editor's Note: The following is the first part of a two-part article on Canadian Music Education. Part two and the bibliography will appear in the Fall issue.)

Overview

According to the British North America Act, education in Canada is the responsibility of the provinces, not of the federal government. Marked differences in music education exist from province to province, within one province from one board of education to another, and even from one school to another. This article seeks to present a general impression of music education in Canada, while acknowledging that many local variations exist which are beyond the scope of this necessarily limited overview.

All ten provinces have official music curriculum documents, although several are in the process of revision. These documents vary a great deal in quality and in depth of coverage. Some provide little more than lists of recommended song books and method books, while others provide detailed guidance, especially for the classroom teacher at the elementary school level.

In general, music is compulsory at the elementary school level, although the regulations are sometimes ignored. Much elementary music instruction is provided by classroom teachers, although some music specialists are hired to assist classroom teachers, to teach classroom music on an intinerant basis, or to teach instrumental programs for selected students. There is a wide variation in the quality of teaching, depending on the interest, ability, and experience of the teachers involved.

Elementary school music programs tend to be performance oriented. Children sing and/or play simple instruments (recorder, ukelele, Orff instruments). Traditional wind and string instruments are introduced to selected students in some schools in some areas of the country, usually around grade four or five. Well developed programs involving creation and listening are quite rare, though they can be found, usually in the larger urban centres where music specialists are involved in the planning and teaching of the music program. There is growing interest in English Canada in the use of the Orff and Kodaly approaches to music teaching. In French Canada the Dalcroze approach has been influential.

At the secondary school level, music is optional, and the percentage of students involved in music programs decreases markedly. It has been estimated that 80 to 90% of Canadian elementary school children receive
some music instruction, while the percentage of secondary school students involved in music programs varies from 3 to 25%. Music specialists teach at the secondary school level, although sometimes the term “specialist” must be interpreted generously. Relatively few music teachers have training beyond the Bachelor's degree level, and many do not have a Bachelor of Music degree although they do have some practical musical background and perhaps some university credits in music. As enrollments have declined in recent years, fewer music teachers are needed. As a result, recent well-qualified Music Education graduates have sometimes been unable to obtain jobs while under-qualified music teachers with tenure carry on undistinguished programs.

Secondary school programs tend to be performance oriented. Band programs are particularly common, though marching bands are rarely found. There is a growing number of jazz ensembles. There are some strong choral and string programs, but the quality of string programs especially tends to vary considerably from one board to another. Most string programs are located in large urban areas. Various ethnic groups have tended to retain their identity and musical traditions. There is, for example, a strong choral tradition among the Manitoba and Ontario Mennonites, and schools in predominantly Mennonite areas tend to have excellent choral programs. Well developed listening programs are relatively rare, and programs emphasizing creative experiences are even more rare. There is, however, increasing interest, especially among the younger, better qualified teachers, in comprehensive musicianship type approaches. The General Music class is not common in Canadian secondary schools. Related arts and aesthetic education programs are rare, though exemplary programs in these areas can be found.

Space and facilities for music instruction tend to be more adequate at the secondary school level than at the elementary level. Most secondary schools with a music program have a specially equipped music room or more than one music room where the program involves more than one music teacher. Elementary music teachers generally use regular classrooms, gymnasiums, hallways, or basements, seldom a specially equipped music room.

In the past, education materials used in schools in English Canada have for the most part been produced by foreign publishers. In recent years, with Canadians' growing concern for national identity, there has been increased interest in the development and use of Canadian education materials. This has led to the teaching of more Canadian compositions and to the publishing in Canada of music text books which include Canadian folk and composed music.

Although most provincial music curriculum documents include a statement concerning the values of music, for the most part music teachers lack a carefully thought out philosophy of music education. Results of a recent survey indicate that the justifications for the
inclusion of music in the educational program are most often extrinsic to the nature of music as an expressive art. Many of those surveyed stressed the use of music to develop co-operation, confidence, language, and social skills. Others justified the teaching of music because it develops cultural awareness, enriches students’ lives, and upgrades society in general.

Very few schools in Canada offer special curricular programs for the gifted or the handicapped. The gifted may be served by all-city performing groups sponsored by some of the large boards in the urban areas. These groups meet outside school hours and are regarded as enrichment activities. In English Canada, talented music students whose parents can afford the cost will probably study music with a private teacher or at a conservatory or community music school (performance and theoretical training are available). In Quebec, the provincial government subsidizes a network of conservatories which provide free music instruction for those seeking private music study.

Canadian students wishing to study music at the post-secondary level can enroll in conservatory courses which are practical in nature and generally involve private instruction. The student may choose to work toward the Associateship diploma in performance or teaching through study at the Royal Conservatory of Music of Toronto, for example. Or he could study privately in his home community, following the syllabus of the Royal Conservatory and taking the practical and theoretical examinations offered by the Conservatory twice a year in centres across Canada.

Post-secondary music study in Canada is also possible at the community college level. Community college programs tend to stress practical work in performance rather than academic course work, and tend to emphasize the fields of jazz and popular music. Such programs lead to a diploma, not a degree.

To obtain a degree in music, a student must complete a three or four year university course. Bachelor of Music programs in Music Education, Performance, Theory and Composition, and Music History and Literature are available in Canada, although not all programs are offered in all provinces. Music courses are also available at some universities to students in Bachelor of Arts degree programs. The number of students graduating with bachelors degrees in music across Canada is not large (a total of 740 to 1977-8). The training of music teachers varies considerably from province to province. For example, in Ontario students take a four-year Bachelor of Music course, and then a one-year Bachelor of Education course in a Faculty of Education in order to qualify for a teaching certificate. In some other provinces (e.g. British Columbia and Alberta students can study music and education concurrently in an Education Faculty. Masters programs in music expanded during the sixties and seventies, but the scale of operation is still very small by
American standards. At the doctoral level, there is no specialized program in performance or music education available in Canada, although there are programs in composition and musicology.5

Although there is growing interest in the field of music therapy, only two post-secondary institutions in Canada currently offer programs to train music therapists. Some students travel to the United States or Britain for training as music therapists, but there are very few qualified music therapists working in Canada (approximately 20 were reported in 1978).6

Various resources for music education are available across Canada—e.g. conservatories, community music schools, private teachers, music festivals (mainly competitive festivals, although non-competitive festivals sponsored by boards of education can be found), summer music camps, provincial youth orchestras, bands and choirs. Concert tours to schools and communities in outlying areas are sponsored by provincial arts councils and the Canada Council, so that people in the vast northern area of Canada occasionally have the opportunity to hear live performers, but for the most part the rich community musical resources are in the southern urban centres. The national music examination system of the Royal Conservatory of Music of Toronto helps to provide national standards for private music teaching across Canada, but anyone can establish himself as a private teacher in a community, regardless of his qualifications. Conservatory examination certificates are used across the country for various purposes (e.g. for high school credit in music, for teacher certification as a music specialist, and for admission to university music programs). There are other examining bodies whose certificates are recognized in various parts of the country (e.g. the Western Board of Music). For adults interested in further education in music, courses are offered by university extension departments, school boards, and recreation departments. Most of these courses are in the southern urban centres, although there are some outreach programs in smaller northern centres (e.g. those sponsored by the University of British Columbia). Interested adults can also perform in community performing ensembles (e.g. community orchestras, bands and choirs, church choirs, Salvation Army bands).

National Sponsorship Organizations

Although education is officially under provincial control, there are many national and federal organizations directly or indirectly involved in music education in Canada. For example, the Canada Council sponsors programs which provide support in the field of music education, although grants go mainly to professional performers and composers. Musicians touring Canada with the financial assistance of the Canada Council Touring Office often present student concerts. Canada Council commissioning grants support composers who may write for student performers. Canada Council performing arts grants support selected
gifted music students undertaking advanced performance training. Musicians supported by the Canada Council Community Musicians Program may teach as well as perform within a community. The Canada Council Explorations program may support research projects within the music education field, as for example a recent survey of music programs in institutions for the physically disabled.7

A 1978 report for the Canada Council prepared by Helmut Blume recommended that a year-round national music school be established to provide advanced practical performance training for orchestra players, singers, conductors, opera stage designers and producers, and pianists. Students would study for one or two years at the school after having completed university or university level practical and theoretical study. Blume proposed that the national music school provide a type of professional internship rather than a degree or diploma program and he proposed that the school be situated at the Banff School of Fine Arts which is already well established and is located on federal land. There are already precedents for federal support for national schools for the performing arts in Canada (federal money helps support the National Theatre School and the National Ballet School).

Blume’s proposal met with considerable criticism from members of the Canadian musical community. The provincial government in Alberta did not want to give up control of the Banff School of Fine Arts, and many musicians and educators argued that a national music school should be located in a major urban centre, not in a small town like Banff. As a result of such criticism and political pressure, the Canada Council recommended that Banff not be considered as the location of a national music school. It remains to be seen whether or not a national music school will be established elsewhere in Canada. Meanwhile, Alberta is proceeding with its own five-year plan to convert the Banff School into Canada’s first year-round advanced conservatory of the arts, offering non-degree programs not only in music and opera but also in theatre, visual art, dance, design, and electronic media.

The federal government does contribute (along with provincial and private sources) to the support of the National Youth Orchestra of Canada. Established in 1960, the NYO is a training orchestra for gifted instrumentalists aged 14 to 24, selected through annual national auditions. It aims to develop Canada’s musical talent and to help provide a supply of well-trained performers for Canadian orchestras. During a typical session, about 100 players meet for an intensive summer of full orchestra rehearsals, sectionals, chamber ensembles and private coaching. Training sessions are held at various centres in Canada. Faculty members are outstanding teacher-performers from Canada, the United States and beyond. Programs feature music of a variety of styles including new Canadian works especially commissioned for the NYO. Concerts by the NYO have been presented in every major Canadian city as well as in centres in the United States, England, and Europe.
The federally funded Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada supports selected students undertaking advanced academic work in music (including music education). University professors of music undertaking research in the fields of music and music education are eligible for research grants and leave fellowships from SSHRCC.

While education falls under provincial jurisdiction, broadcasting in Canada is under federal control. The federal government supports the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (the national radio and television network which operates in English and French). For many years, the CBC has collaborated with provincial Departments of Education in preparing and presenting school music broadcasts on radio. For the teachers, especially the elementary classroom teacher with little or no music training, school music broadcasts can be of real assistance. In recent years there has been an increase in commercially available audio-visual aids, but school broadcasts remain a free source of enrichment for those teachers who choose to take advantage of them.

School music broadcasts in Canada have remained the domain of radio rather than television. The poor sound reproduction on T.V. and the high cost of T.V. production are two of the main reasons for this. CBC TV presents very little serious music programming for students or the general public. Only 3.4% of the total CBC T.V. broadcast hours from April, 1977 to March 31, 1978 involved music and/or dance, and only 1.8% was classed as “serious” music with 1.6% being “light entertainment”. In contrast, the English radio network of the CBC during that period presented music programming for 37.2% of its total A.M. broadcast hours and 66.3% of its total F.M. radio broadcast hours.

The CBC sponsors a national young composers competition and a Talent Festival competition for outstanding young performers, and has also contributed to general music education and to the development of Canadian culture by commissioning Canadian composers, broadcasting Canadian music, and presenting Canadian performers on radio, on T.V., and on records produced and distributed by CBC.

Les Jeunesses Musicales Canada is a national organization which aims to acquaint young Canadians with music and to assist talented young performing artists. JMC organizes an extensive concert program in centres across Canada. JMC concerts provide valuable experience for outstanding Canadian performers. Formats for these concerts vary: matinees for student audiences—supported by preparatory pedagogical material sent to schools—evening concerts for the general public, and informal family programs. JMC also sponsors educational workshops given by professional musicians for students. Outstanding members of JMC are selected to participate in the Jeunesses Musicales World Orchestra which was established in 1970.
Canadian Amateur Musicians/Musiciens Amateurs du Canada (CAMMAC) is a national non-profit association which seeks to promote and improve amateur music-making in Canada. CAMMAC members participate in regional reading sessions, classes, workshops, and choral and instrumental ensembles. CAMMAC summer programs cater to families. Parents and children are provided with opportunities to study and perform music.

The Alliance Chorale Canadienne is a national organization which seeks to promote and expand choral singing in Canada. It provides refresher courses for choral conductors, organizes choral congresses in which amateur singers participate, maintains a reference library of choral scores, and publishes choral music. Within Canada, the Alliance Chorale Canadienne works through provincial choral federations. Internationally it is a member of A Coeur Joie.

Competitive and non-competitive festivals, music competitions, and examinations are widespread in Canada. National organizations involved in such activities include the following:

1) The Federation of Canadian Music Festivals is concerned with the promotion and management of music festivals across Canada. Nine provincial organizations belong to the Federation, representing approximately 150 local festivals. The Federation also organizes the National Competitive Festival of Music.

2) The Canadian Association of Youth Orchestras is a non-profit organization (incorporated in 1977) which seeks to encourage the development of youth orchestras in Canada. (At present there are approximately 40 local and regional youth orchestras across the country.) CAYO sponsors the biennial 10-day Canadian Festival of Youth Orchestras at the Banff Centre. It is a non-competitive festival which began in 1974 to provide opportunities for youth orchestras to rehearse with outstanding coaches and conductors and to gain performing experience. The association also promoted regional festivals of youth orchestras and helps provide workshops for local youth orchestras and seminars to assist adult members of youth orchestra organizations in their administrative functions. In addition, CAYO acts as the national voice for youth orchestras, stressing the importance of such orchestras in the musical life of young people and the communities from which they come, and providing liaison between youth orchestras, professional and community orchestras, and funding bodies.

3) The Canadian Stage Band Festival aims to promote jazz ensembles in Canada. It sponsors an annual festival for jazz bands of all levels.

4) L'Institute International de Musique du Canada is a non-profit organization (established in 1963) which organizes the Concours International de Montréal. The first Concours took place in 1965. Outstanding pianists from Canada and abroad competed. The 1966 competition was for violinists and in 1967 singers competed. The
current pattern involves a four-year cycle: one year of preparation followed by annual competitions for violinists, pianists, and singers. Substantial cash awards are given. There is a special prize for the best performance of the Canadian composition commissioned for the annual competition.

5) The Royal Conservatory of Music of Toronto offers practical and theoretical examinations in music twice a year at centres across Canada.

Voluntary Professional Organizations

Canadian music educators have a variety of voluntary associations available to them both nationally and provincially. Among the national associations are the following:

1) The Canadian University Music Society (formerly called the Canadian Association of University Schools of Music) has as members 17 university faculties and departments of music. In addition, 275 university teachers of music belong as individual members. Unlike the American National Association of Schools of Music CUMS plays no official role in accreditation of university music departments. Through its journal and conferences, CUMS aims to promote music scholarship at the university level, and to contribute to the development of university music programs.

2) The Canadian Federation of Music Teachers’ Associations is a federation of the provincial Registered Music Teachers’ Associations. An estimated 2900 people are involved in CFMTA activities annually. CFMTA is particularly concerned with raising the standards of music teaching and in promoting the professional status of private music teachers.

3) The Canadian Music Educators’ Association has approximately 2000 members, mainly elementary and secondary school music specialists and university teachers of Music Education, although some regular classroom teachers and some private music teachers also belong to CMEA. Since the late 1970s, negotiations have been underway to change the organization of CMEA so that it would become a federation of provincial Musical Educators’ Associations. Teachers would then no longer join CMEA directly but would automatically become members of CMEA by joining their provincial MEA. In the past, some provincial MEAs have been officially affiliated with CMEA while others have not, although each provincial MEA has been represented by its president who is automatically a member of the CMEA Board of Directors. It has been difficult and expensive for CMEA to provide bilingual services to its members, most of whom are English. As a result, CMEA's impact in French Canada has been relatively weak, and this remains an on-going problem for CMEA as a national organization.
4) The Canadian String Teachers' Association has about 200 members who are string teachers drawn from schools, universities, private studios, community music schools, and community Suzuki programs.

5) Music for Children, Carl Orff Canada, has about 350 members who are involved in the field of elementary school music teaching or teacher training.

6) The Kodaly Institute of Canada aims to develop curriculum and methods in English and French for use in Canadian music education, based on the Kodaly concept. Members are drawn from the ranks of elementary music specialists and university music educators.

7) The Royal Canadian College of Organists has as members church choir directors and teachers of organ as well as performing organists.

8) The Canadian Band Directors' Association attracts as members school and university band directors.

9) The Canadian Association of Teachers of Accordion has as members private and conservatory teachers of accordion.

10) The Canadian Music Therapy Association seeks to promote the field of music therapy and to encourage the training of music therapists in Canada. The Association has about 115 members who are involved in work with children and adults with various types of handicaps.

There is a considerable overlap among the various associations for music educators. Almost all the associations are struggling to survive and cannot expand their services to members unless their income can be increased. Of the music educators' associations responding to a recent survey by the Canadian Conference of the Arts, none was receiving government financial support for administrative purposes. There is relatively little co-operation among the various associations, which tend to compete with each other for members. Since many music teachers are involved with several levels of students or several areas of specialization within the music education field, one teacher may in fact choose to belong to a number of different music associations locally, provincially, and nationally. Because he is busy with his teaching, he is limited in how much time he can contribute to each association. Yet each association relies almost completely on the voluntary services of members to organize workshops, conventions and meetings, to write, edit and publish newsletters and journals, to carry out special projects, and to handle the on-going administrative work. Most teachers limit their membership to one or two associations if any. There are thousands of music educators across Canada who belong to no voluntary associations in the field.
In spite of their lack of funds and their struggle to attract members, the voluntary associations have made and continue to make important contributions to the field of music education in Canada. Most significantly, they have improved communication within the profession. Music teachers often work alone in a school, cut off from other music teachers even within their own district. Communication among music teachers within a province is rare except through provincial voluntary associations. And music teachers would probably remain unaware of the problems, concerns, and successes of music education in other provinces if it were not for the national journals and newsletters of the voluntary associations.

Because most of the funds and energies of the voluntary associations go into organizing conferences and publishing newsletters or journals for their members, there is little money or energy left for other worthwhile projects such as the CMEA Music Research Council which seeks to promote and disseminate information on music education research, and the CMEA Council on Teacher Education in Music which seeks to obtain information on music teacher training across Canada and to make recommendations for the improvement of the training of music educators.

None of the Canadian national voluntary associations in the field of music education can compete in size and wealth with those in the United States, and many Canadian music educators in fact choose to join organizations like MENC, the American String Teachers Association, or the American Bandmasters Association. The publications and conferences of these American associations expand the horizons of Canadian teachers; but the national perspective of the Canadian associations remains a special attraction for many Canadian teachers.

Some national music organizations in Canada have educational concerns although they are not organizations for music teachers or students. Descriptions of five such organizations follow.

1) The Canadian Folk Music Society seeks to encourage the study, appreciation, and enjoyment of folk music in Canada, and to promote the publication and performance of Canadian folk music. Its publications and conferences and the folk music concerts which the society promotes in schools are of educational value.

2) The Canadian Music Council has broad interests in the field of music in Canada. Its concerns are not primarily educational, but music educators and music educators' organizations are represented on the Council. Its 1979 conference was on the topic “For All Children, Their Daily Music”. As a member of the International Music Council (UNESCO), the Canadian Music Council's concerns are international as well as national.

3) The Canadian League of Composers has some educational concerns in that the League seeks to increase public awareness of contemporary Canadian music. The League encourages the use of
Canadian music in schools, and provides an annual scholarship award for a promising composition student.

4) The Canadian Music Centre has broadly educational concerns in that it seeks to promote Canadian music and to disseminate information on Canadian composers and their works. Its libraries in Toronto, Montréal, Vancouver, and Calgary are valuable reference sources for students and teachers, as are the reference books and pamphlets which CMC has developed. Through its John Adaskin Project, CMC has sought to familiarize teachers with Canadian music suitable for student performers and to encourage Canadian composers to add to the available school repertoire. Since 1973, CMC has worked with the Canadian Music Educators' Association as joint sponsors of the John Adaskin Project (Canadian Music For Schools). CMC also co-operates with the Alliance for Canadian New Music Projects which sponsors Contemporary Showcase, a biennial non-competitive festival for student performers and a workshop for teachers.

5) The Canadian Conference of the Arts is the largest voluntary association in the cultural field in Canada. Its membership includes virtually all the major arts organizations in Canada (professional performing arts organizations as well as educational associations), plus individual members drawn from the performing arts and arts education. CCA seeks to promote the arts in Canada, to serve the interests of Canadian artists, and to gather and disseminate information concerning the arts in Canada. Through its conferences and publications, CCA seeks to improve communication between the arts community and the general public and government agencies. From 1977 to 1979, CCA supported an ambitious project—the National Inquiry into Arts and Education in Canada. The Inquiry was a pioneering effort by educators from all arts disciplines to study arts education across Canada and to consider future directions for the arts in education. It is most unfortunate that the national report of the Inquiry was never published, for a great deal of work went into its preparation. It is also unfortunate that Ontario, Quebec and Saskatchewan did not produce provincial arts and education reports as part of the National Inquiry.

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