

## **The State of Music Education in Manitoba**

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An accounting of the current state of music education in Manitoba depends upon (1) what one understands music education to mean, (2) what one regards as valid indicators of the state of affairs in the area so defined, and (3) what those indicators seem to show. We do not have a great deal of hard data to address the question. But abundant data, even if available, would not answer the question unequivocally because what data mean is always a matter of interpretation. All this is to say that what I offer in this report is interpretive, and grounded in carefully developed, firmly held convictions about the nature of music and music education. These observations are sometimes informed by data. More frequently, they are not. But they are in every instance informed by my 25 years' experience in the province—experience both extensively engaged with Manitoba music educators and intensively engaged in efforts to advance professional knowledge and expertise in the field. In preparing these remarks I have consulted many individuals and organizations,<sup>1</sup> but what I have to say should ultimately be considered my own: I do not want to misrepresent others, or to reveal what in some cases was shared in confidence. I stand firmly behind what I have to say, but I acknowledge that others with different understandings and aspirations for music education might be inclined to put things differently.

The length of my remarks is a function of at least two concerns: my determination to present a clear, balanced, and honest accounting, avoiding superficial, inspirational rhetoric

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<sup>1</sup> My sincere thanks to everyone for having shared their beliefs, their insights, and their concerns so openly.

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(despite its political appeal, such rhetoric does little to advance our understanding); and a desire to generate a document that may be useful for purposes other than affirmation and advocacy—one with the potential to help improve things by stimulating thought about alternatives to the status quo. I could not justify professionally investing time in anything less.

I first address the areas of elementary general music education, choral music education, and instrumental music education—the areas that, for better or worse, presently comprise school music in the province of Manitoba. However, because of a personal conviction that music education involves far more than school music, I also offer a few observations about community-based music education as reflected in Manitoba's music festivals. Following that, I turn my attention briefly<sup>2</sup> to the area in which I have been most intimately involved over the years: teacher training. And I conclude with a few speculative observations about how these particular emphases appear to coalesce—or not, as the case may be: the overall effectiveness of music education in Manitoba. I take a more critical stance there, indicating our areas of neglect and some of the potential threats we face.

## **General (Elementary) Music Education**

### **Instructional time and expertise**

Manitoba music educators work hard to assure that music is available to all elementary school aged students. At the K-8 level, 10% of the school day (about 30 minutes per day) is supposed to be devoted to the arts, and in a majority of school divisions something on the order of half that time is dedicated to music. Students in Winnipeg schools tend to receive between 90

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<sup>2</sup> I have tried to avoid devoting an inordinate amount of attention to this area, to counteract a natural tendency to speak at greatest length about the area I know best.

and 120 minutes (on average, perhaps 100 minutes?) of music per week.<sup>3</sup> And at least historically, music has been quite favored in comparison to the other arts (visual art also enjoys a relatively strong presence, while drama and dance are offered infrequently at this level), although there are no assurances this will remain the case indefinitely.

A point of considerable and deserved pride among Manitoba's elementary music educators is that most musical instruction delivered at this level is delivered by "specialists—as opposed to "generalists" or, perhaps more accurately, teachers without extensive musical training. As we will see, the meaning of these designations is not always clear.

It would be a serious mistake, in any event, to assume that what is true of Winnipeg is true of the province as a whole. In particular, these claims for instructional time and musical expertise cannot be sustained for rural Manitoba—the 1/3 of Manitoba's population residing beyond Winnipeg's perimeter highway. There is justified pride in the extent and quality of musical instruction in Winnipeg schools, but considerable unevenness across the province. The reasons for this are many and varied. The reality, though, is that both the allocation of instructional time for music and the definition of suitable musical expertise are quite "malleable."

Because what counts as musical instruction (as distinguished from mere exposure, or from general experience with "the arts" more broadly) is so ill-defined, there is a tendency, where funding is tight and music poorly understood, (1) to equate activity with instruction, and (2) to claim that the musical component of the "arts" requirement is achieved through extracurricular musical engagements or through the supposed "integration" of art into general

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<sup>3</sup> The curriculum document states: "A meaningful music program will require a minimum of 90-100 minutes a week." These figures translate to approximately 108-120 minutes per 6 day cycle.

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classroom activity.<sup>4</sup> In other words, a specific and defined place for music under the arts umbrella is not assured. That makes it possible to claim to have met provincial guidelines with relatively little actual instructional time by qualified music educators. The distinction between exposure or activity and instruction is not effectively drawn; nor is the role of musical instruction within broader consideration of arts instruction meaningfully addressed.

If music education specialists were exclusively charged with delivering instruction, these might be minor concerns. But the fact is, there exists no provincially recognized definition of what counts as minimally acceptable expertise in music education, and as a result, virtually any teacher may (at least theoretically) be charged with delivering or presumed to deliver musical instruction. This fact, coupled with the possibility of designating an extraordinarily broad range of activity arts- or music-related, means that there is no effective standard—only a very loosely consensual one. Moreover, even where musical expertise is stipulated as a requisite, music positions (especially in rural areas) can be designated fractionally. In such cases, music educators must choose between teaching outside their area of expertise and accepting what amounts to unstable, part-time employment. Such choices can often be deterrents to hiring and retaining strong music educators.

In addition, it is not uncommon to equate musical expertise and training with expertise in music education. The province of Manitoba does not certify music education specialists: it certifies teachers who are presumed, because certified, capable of teaching in virtually any area. The fact of the matter is, then, teachers become specialists by virtue of teaching assignment, not training. There is no official difference in presumed professional expertise, then, between (1) an

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<sup>4</sup> Under present circumstances, school administrators can (and in many settings, do) count as “time allocated to music” things like the following: clubs or choirs outside the school day, opening exercises, unguided music listening, dance/movement physical education, concerts, assemblies, and various forms of “integration” of music into non-music classes.

individual with a music performance degree followed by a Bachelor of Education degree, (2) an individual without a music degree but with considerable musical interest, and (3) an individual with extensive formal training in the discipline of music education.

Because there is no officially recognized difference between specialist and non-specialist, it is hardly surprising that their respective roles in music education are not differentiated. There is no definition of how specialist and non-specialist roles and responsibilities complement or articulate with each other. Nor, for that matter, is there any clear policy addressing how or to what extent the musical efforts of so-called community partners (musicians or musical interest groups without music educator training) relate to those of qualified music education professionals.<sup>5</sup>

In short, while there is validity to the claim that elementary music education tends to be delivered by individuals with relatively strong musical training, two reservations must be acknowledged: first, these claims are true primarily of the city of Winnipeg; and second, whether musical training equates to music education expertise depends very much on one's definition and expectations of music education. If one assumes music instruction within formal schooling differs from mere exposure and activity in virtue of its (instruction's) structure and sequence; and, if one further assumes that the effective achievement of such structure and sequence in music requires more than musical expertise, then claims to the amount of valid musical instruction and to the incidence of musical expertise in Manitoba schools must remain equivocal. Both can be, and often are, circumvented.

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<sup>5</sup> Some enthusiastically endorse programs that bring community partners into the schools. While there is nothing inherently wrong with this practice, and a good deal that is potentially right, it is important that it not be regarded as a substitute for delivery of instruction by qualified music education professionals. Thus, part of the significance of a distinction between the term "music specialist" and "music educator."

## Curriculum

There is considerable variation across the province, and even within Winnipeg, when it comes to music curriculum delivery at the elementary or early years level. That is at least partly because the curriculum document is very old (dating from the heyday of “aesthetic” education). Its narrow prescriptions for curricular content and dubious prescriptions for instructional sequence are followed by relatively few. And its vague claims to the aesthetic value of musical study are often regarded with justified suspicion.<sup>6</sup> The age of the official curriculum document and its consequent general neglect “cuts both ways.” On the one hand, this creates potentially fertile ground for innovation and responsiveness to the needs of local communities—since no one appears particularly concerned that the official document be adhered to. There is evidence of such innovation and responsiveness in many places. But of course, the success of such initiatives depends heavily upon professional music educational expertise, and upon the provision of time and resources. We have already suggested that these are often scarce. On the other hand, the absence of ongoing curricular revision (especially in the absence of significant professional development) can result in stagnancy, in the entrenchment of practices that are out of pace with the times. So while Manitoba does have extraordinary pockets of innovation and highly creative musical instruction at the elementary level, there is no effective mechanism for the diffusion of successful practices or for music curriculum renewal. These problems are exacerbated by reductions and eliminations of music coordinator/supervisor positions, because would be the individuals who might be expected to facilitate diffusion and renewal efforts.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> It might be more accurate to say that the curriculum document is simply ignored—because of an overall reduced credibility following from components that practitioners simply regard as impractical and/or outmoded. The “buy-in” by current practitioners who are committed, for instance, to the recent vogue of multiculturalism, is negligible.

<sup>7</sup> If, for some nefarious reason, one were to set out to de-professionalize music educators, one of the surest strategies would be to fill their time with instructional obligations and administrivia, and to eliminate positions devoted to coordinating or helping achieve common direction. In reporting on the alarming demise of music education in

The vacuum created by curricular inactivity in the province has been filled primarily by methodology. Instructional methodologies—the means to educational ends—have become ends in themselves. Thus, method (or better, “methodolatry” as Tom Regelski calls it) has replaced critical examination of the ends of music education and the ways these should (1) evolve over time and (2) vary from community to community. Thus, at the elementary level, Orff or Kodaly proficiency (and the accumulation of “levels” by teachers) serve as presumed evidence of proficiency as an elementary music educator. This is not the place to discuss at length what is, after all, a tendency that is not unique to Manitoba. But it is worth noting that preoccupation with successful adherence to method leads to unhealthy divisiveness within the field (along doctrinary lines) and tends to foreclose the possible creation of new and diverse methods, tailored to changing circumstances and diverse musical needs.<sup>8</sup> Since no method can serve all ends equally well, preoccupation with methodology tends to restrict curricular possibilities to those embedded in the given method, unwisely precluding other possibilities.<sup>9</sup>

There appears to be widespread agreement among early years music educators that the “old” curriculum document<sup>10</sup> needs to be replaced by a new one. Unfortunately, though, people’s reasons are seldom grounded in anything more substantial than convictions that new is better, or

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California, the authors of *The Sound of Silence* also make the point that the bleak situation there “has been compounded by the elimination of the position of Fine Arts Coordinator in many school districts which means there is no one to keep music ‘on the table’ when budget constraints are discussed at the administrative/district level.” Thus, we might well regard the elimination of supervisor/coordinator positions – and indeed, the absence of any such position at the governmental level in Manitoba – as indicators of weakness or erosion. *The Sound of Silence: The Unprecedented Deline of Music Education in California Public Schools, a Statistical Review* (September 2004). See <http://www.music-for-all.org/sos.html>.

<sup>8</sup> It has the further negative effect, because these methods have “curricula” inherent within them, of exchanging authority over curriculum matters from province to method builders. My thanks to Brian Roberts for this point. Consider, too, that doctrinaire adherence to methodology contributes to the de-skilling, and hence the de-professionalization, of music education.

<sup>9</sup> This also amounts to importing curricular priorities and instructional strategies from elsewhere rather than developing them in response to local needs, interests, and concerns, a fact seldom noted by devotees of brand-name methods.

<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, the curriculum guide or curriculum document is commonly referred to as “the curriculum”—which, of course, it is not. Curriculum consists, rather, in the experiences actually undergone by students. This is more than simply a terminological distinction, I submit.

that the old is outmoded in one sense or other. Whether desired change can be accomplished without altering dramatically the instructional methods and educational aims with which teachers have become comfortable is seldom considered.

An equally serious concern is that this perceived need for curricular revision in music has become conflated with curriculum revision efforts in “the arts” generally. In their enthusiastic endorsements of collective value of the arts, music educators often overlook the fact that changes to the arts curriculum have considerable potential to reconfigure the place of music instruction in the overall curriculum—to lead, that is, to the potential demise rather than enhancement of music education in the province. A justified interest in musical curricular revision has, in other words, become conflated with an agenda devoted to enhancing the status of the arts more broadly.<sup>11</sup> Having seen the results of such efforts in other provinces, I believe there is cause for serious concern.

Years of curricular neglect and the absence of meaningful professional development opportunities concerned with the nature of curriculum have led to naïveté about its nature and to assumptions about the way formal guideline documents should relate to professional practice.<sup>12</sup> This is but one example of the shortsightedness of equating method with curriculum, and of the adverse consequences of a system of professional development that neglects such foundational matters in its single-minded pursuit of method.

One further outgrowth of the state of affairs just discussed (where professional knowledge is reduced to method, and curriculum development/revision are largely abandoned) is

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<sup>11</sup> This has occurred, it should be noted, without the “blessing” of the music educators and remains a matter of serious concern for many.

<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, at least to my way of thinking, many seem to see curriculum documents as prescriptive tools for assuring standardization and uniformity. Such documents should include certain mandatory provisions, but, wherever possible, options should be recognized and encouraged. Uniformity is desirable only in some areas and to certain degrees; it can also suppress diversity and impede desired change.

the absence of articulation between the curricular practices deployed in early years, middle years, and senior years. That is, the kind of linkage and continuity one would expect to find between various levels of a carefully devised curriculum simply does not exist. This is a significant problem that does not appear to have been meaningfully addressed for decades. It is exacerbated by political and organizational divisions that impede dialogue across disciplinary lines and by programs of professional development (both pre-service and in-service) that implicitly accept and perpetuate the discreteness of elementary, secondary, general, choral, and instrumental musical concerns—to the neglect of the broader conception of music education that should unify them. The tendency of elementary music educators to deploy skills and concepts without careful consideration of the instructional needs and practices of secondary music education, or for secondary music educators to re-teach things taught differently in elementary years (but one example: the teaching of rhythm and counting systems) makes for serious inefficiencies of the kind that structured curriculum guides are supposed to resolve.<sup>13</sup>

### **Music Teacher Certification and Professional Development**

Since the late 1980s, teacher certification in Manitoba has been based on successful completion of a Bachelor of Education “After Degree” (B.Ed.[A.D.]) comprised of sixty hours of “education” (not *music* education) coursework. Thus, to become certified, one completes two university degrees. The musical or music education content of the first degree is not specified and may range from negligible to substantial. The musical or music education content of the

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<sup>13</sup> The incompatibility of such reading/counting systems is itself a serious problem; however, middle and senior years music educators would be generally reluctant to concede that student arrive in their programs with anything resembling adequate or uniform preparedness in these areas – regardless of the system being used.

B.Ed. likewise varies.<sup>14</sup> Because the certification eventually conferred is not specialist certification, the B.Ed. is designed to create generalist teachers—not teachers who specialize in music. The powers that be (1) have little understanding or appreciation of the distinctiveness of musical development and musical education,<sup>15</sup> and (2) find it desirable to preserve the “flexibility” of teacher assignment that comes of generalist rather than specialist certification. Hence, there is little interest in, and a great deal of resistance to, the idea of certifying music education specialists. This means that beginning music teachers enter the field with relatively modest preparation in the concerns of music education per se—Its philosophical, psychological, sociological, and curricular foundations, to say nothing of its distinctive instructional concerns. Music teachers are generally trained as elementary music teachers, choir directors, or instrumental (i.e., band) directors.

We have already considered some of the unintended effects of this approach. To some extent this may be unavoidable, give the facts of curricular crowding and the general inability of novice teachers to address more abstract concerns. However, what becomes especially noteworthy in light of these considerations is the massive front-loading of professional development in Manitoba’s system. Many students enter the teaching field with six years of university studies already behind them, usually accompanied by significant debts. There is no requirement or incentive, and usually little inclination, to continue studies in music education after entering the field. In fact, there are quite a number of disincentives.

One of the major casualties of this system of certification and professional development for the groups with which this report is concerned is music education’s professional disciplinary

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<sup>14</sup> The musical preparation of non-music teachers varies even more widely. One dares say (here I resist the temptation to point an accusatory finger) it is often neglected almost entirely.

<sup>15</sup> One hesitates to say it, but this distinction between education and music education also has deep roots in people’s desires to protect instructional territory and assure adequate course enrolments within university faculties.

identity. Rather than as music educators, teachers identify as practitioners of this or that methodology, in this or that instructional setting. They belong to professional organizations organized around similar areas of interest, which serve only to reinforce and perpetuate disciplinary division. The *foundational* concerns that should undergird, unite, and direct the field are largely neglected.

The curricular and structural organization of Manitoba's postsecondary institutions plays a significant role in this situation. The first-degree plus second-degree structure fails to address the integration of content and method. In fact, it works against it in many ways. The music curricula in Schools of Music are based extensively on considerations like the development of musical performance skills, together with significant knowledge in the areas of conventional ("classical") music history and music theory (more appropriately designated rudiments than "theory" but that is another story). Admissions and recruiting are based on considerations other than music education; and curricula yield room for music education concerns grudgingly, if at all. The predominant result of socialization is musician, not music educator identity. In Faculties of Education, geared as they are to the creation of general "educator" identity, there is similar resistance to the incorporation of music education courses. Interestingly (or distressingly, depending upon one's perspective) then, music education enjoys a place of significance in neither Schools of Music nor in Faculties of Education, the former regarding it as Education's concern, and the latter regarding it as Music's. As a result, music education's voice is marginal and muted. Pre-service preparation specific to music education is seriously constrained and opportunities for meaningful, sustained in-service professional development that might address this deficit are effectively precluded by a system that neither prioritizes nor facilitates graduate studies.

The direct results of this situation for elementary music education are that (1) both pre-service and in-service training are devoted primarily to developing methodological proficiency, and (2) elementary music instruction remains a relatively minor concern within the broader domain of music education—to the detriment both of the profession and of the students who should be its beneficiaries. One of the things the emerging research literature on early childhood development and music makes abundantly clear is the indispensability and profound importance of high quality musical experience and instruction in the early years. Unfortunately, the lion's share of the musical resources usually go elsewhere.

## **Evaluation**

Conventional wisdom in the province has it that we are doing a good job with elementary music education. Judged in quantitative terms (the amount of time devoted to instruction, the number of students receiving it, and the specifically-musical preparation of most teachers, at least in Winnipeg), and comparatively (that is, compared to the prevailing circumstances in many other Canadian provinces), this conventional wisdom may well be justified.

However, among those concerned about curriculum renewal, the claim is sometimes advanced that while we are doing very good work with conventional concerns such as music literacy and performing skills, we are neglecting new and emerging concerns such as technology, creativity/composition, cultural or multicultural education, integration/interdisciplinarity, and so on. In the absence of curricular directives, the relative emphasis placed upon these latter areas is up to the individual teacher. It remains to be seen, however, whether a revised, more prescriptive curriculum could achieve gains in these areas without jeopardizing achievement in the so-called conventional areas mentioned above. Many of those who support curriculum revision in the

abstract would likely reverse their stance if “the curriculum question” were posed directly: *Of all the things that should be taught, what, given finite time and resources, must be taught?*

Furthermore, it remains to be seen whether the so-called conventional areas are being taught and learned satisfactorily, across the board. To be sure, numerous exemplary programs can be identified. But the state of affairs on average, taken province-wide, is another matter. A case in point: Manitoba’s Grade 5 Music Assessment, undertaken in the mid-1980s. This was a very ambitious and extensive assessment project, undertaken by provincial evaluation experts in close consultation with the field. The instrument employed had its faults, as is invariably and unavoidably the case. Its faults notwithstanding, however, a number of very important findings emerged. Among them: (1) Grade 5 students were, on average, achieving satisfactorily the objectives set for Grade 1 students; (2) there was not a significant correlation between allotted instructional time and student achievement; (3) the strongest correlation to achievement was student involvement in private or non-school music study; and (4) formal evaluation, when and if it occurred, was seldom undertaken by music experts – and most often by school principals.<sup>16</sup>

These findings raise serious questions about the validity of assertions that conventional learnings (performance and literacy skills) are currently being addressed satisfactorily in the province. Certainly, it appears that twenty years ago they were not.<sup>17</sup> And since no curriculum

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<sup>16</sup> Many questions of genuine significance could not be addressed in this assessment because the contingencies associated with the province’s broader assessment program prohibited collecting data in any way that would have permitted linkage between specific teachers, schools, or school divisions, and student performance. It is also well worth noting that the inability to distinguish between specialist and non-specialist music educators first emerged in this assessment effort, only to be subsequently ignored.

<sup>17</sup> It is remarkable that so little use was made of the results of this comprehensive survey which, in the wrong hands, might well have been taken as grounds for eliminating rather than continuing elementary music instruction in the province. One constructive response would have been curriculum revision, if the items on the assessment (derived from official curriculum documents) were no longer deemed relevant or valid. Another might have been to undertake a different, complementary form of assessment: one designed to address what practitioners believed to be their “real” instructional priorities (again assuming that the assessment’s validity was questionable). Still another (assuming assessment validity) would have been to change instructional practices. None of these responses

revision or program of systematic evaluation was subsequently undertaken to address the findings of this assessment, there is little evidence that things have changed in the ensuing twenty years. In fact, there may be reason to expect that, in the absence of such efforts, the inevitable “drift” may have led to even greater disparity between the (largely conventional) objectives stipulated in the curriculum and its outcomes. In other words, we lack qualitative and comprehensively collected data (to say nothing of data gathered with a view to specifically musical validity) on the effectiveness of elementary music education in the province. Without these data, claims to effectiveness (or ineffectiveness, for that matter) must be regarded as anecdotal and selective.

We can have reasonable confidence in figures that relate to the incidence of music instruction in Manitoba elementary schools. And similarly, we can document the extent to which music classes are taught by people with formal musical training (though again, this is not the same as music education training). What we are not able to do is speak unequivocally of the extent of the return on such investments. Nor are we able to rectify things like the disparities between rural and urban settings, the ways music specialization is interpreted, the tendency to accept activity as equivalent to instruction in some quarters, or the extent to which integration dilutes the depth, quality, and durability of musical learning.<sup>18</sup> Such insights and improvements require thorough, systematic, and regular evaluation tailored to instructional priorities endorsed by local practitioners. The validity and effectiveness of such evaluation, it seems clear, ultimately rest upon the ability (and time!) of individual educators to design and implement evaluative systems that show what is working or not, and that suggest strategies for

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occurred. Nor, fortunately, were the distressing results apparently regarded as problematic by the educational authorities at the time.

<sup>18</sup> In the words of one rural Manitoba elementary music educator, “Integration is killing us.”

improvement. This in turn requires professional development of a kind not widely available at present, and the time, resources, and supports (e.g., music coordinators) to assure such vital concerns are not neglected.

The sociological literature on professionalization points to de-skilling and intensification as significant deterrents to professional stature. The elementary music education community routinely teaches large classes with inadequate preparation time (many important endeavors must be undertaken outside the formal curriculum—during lunches, before or after school)—precisely the kind of circumstances that impede professional growth and increased professional effectiveness. Without systematic evaluation and the development of clearly defined standards,<sup>19</sup> however, such problems can only be addressed politically. This is very much the situation at present.

### **Organization(s)**

Another of the significant deterrents to professionalism identified in the literature is isolation – what might be characterized as a divide-and-conquer strategy. Because the elementary music teacher is often the only music specialist in a given school, and because generalist (non-music) teachers have not been trained in ways that make them aware and appreciative of the distinctive nature and import of musical education, elementary music teachers are often quite isolated. There is a proliferation of organizations in Manitoba purporting to represent the professional interests and concerns of elementary music educators. The Manitoba Music Educators' Association is seen by many (particularly by secondary school educators) as

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<sup>19</sup> Here I speak of standards with regard to things like teacher time, class size, the definition of instruction (as distinct from activity), and so forth. I do not speak of, nor do I endorse, the development of performance standards for students on any but a local level.

the de facto elementary music organization in the province, although it would seem from its mandate to be the organization best situated to represent music educators collectively. In recent years, active organizations have grown that are devoted to particular methodologies (Kodaly, Orff)—as opposed to elementary music education more comprehensively, and as opposed as well to general music defined as music for all “general students”, regardless of age. These organizations are well-intended and highly beneficial in many ways. However, they also have the effect of dividing and fragmenting. And they render all the more difficult the challenge of addressing relationships between elementary music and musical studies at the secondary level—since there exists no unified vision or voice for elementary music education. Nor do methodologically oriented associations do a terribly effective job of looking after the broad professional development concerns of elementary music educators, preferring to pursue systematic and sequenced training in the preferred methodology.

### **In sum**

There is much for Manitoba to be proud of and thankful for when it comes to the school-based musical education of its elementary-aged children. Depending upon the criteria one chooses to employ, it could be argued that its early years musical education system is among the healthiest in Canada. The passionate commitment and tireless efforts of those who teach at this level are both inspired and inspiring. At the same time, it must be recognized that unless certain decisive steps are taken in light of areas of concern addressed above, all this could change overnight.

Instructional time and expertise vary much more widely than they should in a province convinced of and committed to quality early years music education. The curriculum, while quite

dated, has not proven a substantial impediment to the delivery of credible elementary musical education;<sup>20</sup> and it remains to be seen whether efforts to “update” the curriculum will compromise rather than enhance what seems in many ways to be working well at present. Music teacher certification and professional development are conceptualized and executed in ways that do not serve elementary music specialists well.<sup>21</sup> And the evaluation of elementary music education is much neglected—a concern that renders it potentially quite vulnerable to those who regard it as an entertaining diversion rather than a key educational component within the school curriculum.

Elementary music education currently thrives, where it does, because of a delicate balance between passionate commitment on the part of music teachers and administrators’ belief in music’s unique social and educational benefits to the school community. It struggles, where it does, because music is seen as an enjoyable diversion or release from the rigors of schooling, rather than a vital component therein. For the most part, and especially in the city of Winnipeg, administrators have seen elementary music education as a high enough priority to warrant allocation of the substantial resources it requires.<sup>22</sup> In rural areas, the fact that school funding is tied to enrolments, together with the desire to offer a full complement of programs, have situated music much more precariously—and the trends do not appear at all promising.

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<sup>20</sup> This should give pause to those who naively consider curriculum and standardization key to effective music education—a stance I have sometimes characterized as a “curriculum fetish.” It might be argued that an investment in ongoing professional development would generate a higher yield than curriculum revision—leaving the act of curriculum design, implementation, evaluation, and revision at the local level while assuring that such “locals” have the means and skills necessary to do it.

<sup>21</sup> This same observation applies equally to secondary certification and professional development. A further concern that warrants careful attention, particularly at the elementary level, is careful delineation of specialist and non-specialist roles in music education. This effort would help guard against the tendency in some quarters to proceed as if music education expertise is not necessary, while at the same time assuring that recognition of specialization does not absolve others of a stake in the process of educating musically.

<sup>22</sup> If not always those it needs or deserves.

Put in slightly different terms, elementary music education thrives where the good will and determination of teachers, administration, and parents insist it must; but there are no guarantees, and this precarious balance could erode or deteriorate quickly.<sup>23</sup> This is especially so because elementary music education is so often regarded as charming and entertaining, but not necessarily educational (so that, please note, any teacher can teach it), a situation exacerbated by the fact it tends to be less highly visible or “flashy” than the high-profile performing ensembles at secondary levels. The health of elementary music thus requires special, *collective vigilance*, lest the current state of affairs begin to erode seriously, as it already shows signs of doing in many rural areas.<sup>24</sup> Where elementary programs suffer, the continued health of secondary programs cannot be far behind. That is one further reason the health of elementary music programs must become a paramount concern for all who value music education in Manitoba.

### **In Brief:**

- “Specialist” delivery a point of pride
- 90-120 minutes instruction per cycle (half the “arts” allocation?)
- Widespread variation in both instructional time and teacher expertise
- Exemplary, passionate commitment by teachers

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<sup>23</sup> The alarming declines in participation in music courses in the state of California between 1999 and 2004 were led by General Music, which plummeted 86% during that period. The overall declines in music participation in California amounted to a staggering 47% -- the largest of any subject area by a factor of four! In short, the decline in music programs has been “vastly disproportionate” to all other curricula, the other “arts” included (the “other arts” declined only half as fast as music); and these precipitous declines were led by declines in general music, suggesting perhaps that its welfare is an important index of the overall health of the system.

<sup>24</sup> While not everyone might consider Brandon typically “rural” (being Manitoba’s second most populous city, at 45,000, and being a “university town” as well), its provisions for elementary general music have eroded dramatically during the last decade. It has also seen its music coordinator position eliminated. And as one teacher points out, when a kindergarten receives one 20-minute class per cycle, this amounts to slightly less than two full days of music per year. According to local elementary music educators, only one Brandon school in eight meets the provincially recommended time allotment for music. If Brandon is losing ground, one can easily imagine what may be occurring in other, more remote centers.

- Strong support from community and school administrators
- Great unevenness, particularly between Winnipeg and rural Manitoba
- “Professional voice” isolated, fragmented, muted (especially compared to 2ndary)
- Curriculum outdated (1978), and followed by relatively few
- No “specialist” certification (hence, specialist status by assignment?)
- Music expertise loosely equated with music education expertise
- Evaluation seldom done, seldom with benefit of musical expertise
- Funding covers the full spectrum (nonexistent to strong)
- Activity often considered acceptable substitute for instruction
- “Integration is killing us”
- Elementary general music: “Not our concern” (secondary educators)
- Resources not generally commensurate with the importance of early learning
- Tendency to take Winnipeg as representative of province
- Teacher preparation and in-service overwhelmingly “methods” based
- No definition of specialist & non-specialist roles in music education
- Lots of quantitative data, little qualitative
- General failure to distinguish education from activity or entertainment
- Very little general music (music for the general student) beyond early years
- Weak articulation with middle years programs
- Weak communications among various “levels”, specialties
- Current status potentially compromised by “arts” curriculum
- Large classes, heavy loads, decreased provision for music coordinators

- Methodology substituted for curricular expertise
- Divisiveness (disciplinary, political) among musical specializations
- Professional development: massive “front end” loading, little thereafter
- Music education equated (reduced) to instructional method
- Music plus education equals music education?
- Unclear the extent to which conventional skills are being developed
- More consistency required (resources, scheduling, equipment, qualifications – though not necessarily “curriculum”?)
- University teacher training often responsive rather than leading
- Little collective, organized support for threatened programs

### **Choral Music Education**

My comments on the state of Choral music education in the province are somewhat more abbreviated than others. The reasons are several: receipt of less specific information from the provincial organization, and the fact that some of the important points to be made emerge satisfactorily in my discussions of elementary general and secondary instrumental music education.

It is very important to note, however, that Manitoba—and in particular, the geographical areas where Mennonite traditions constitute a strong cultural influence—has a well-deserved reputation for the richness of its choral music activity. The province probably has more than its share of passionate, highly qualified leaders, and the vitality of choral music within communities at large means significant support for school-based programs in some areas. This kind of community commitment to choral music is often matched by a broader attitude of commitment

and serious engagement in education generally. Again, however, it would be a mistake to generalize this state of affairs to the province at large. There is considerable unevenness both in terms of the incidence and quality of programs province-wide.

One of the more positive observations that can be made about choral music in Manitoba is that it is very strongly community based. Additionally, there is rich diversity of activity. A representative cross-section of choral ensembles includes university and conservatory groups, the Winnipeg Singers, provincial Honour Choir, a number of regional youth choirs, division-wide choirs in both Pembina Trails and St. James-Assiniboia, Manitoba Children's Choir, Camerata Nova, Ukrainian and other ethnic-choral activity, and a 2005 choral (MCA) initiative designated "Diversity Sings." Although activity at the professional end of the spectrum may be somewhat more attenuated than in the major Canadian urban centers, then, it is clear that choral music in Manitoba is vital and vibrant. ChoralFest Manitoba, a noncompetitive festival in Winnipeg in November, has high rates of participation and is growing each year. There is also some excellent choral work going on in some of Manitoba's elementary schools.

### **Instructional time and expertise**

Since music at secondary levels in Manitoba is optional, and since there is no high school graduation requirement in "the arts," the incidence and status of school choral music vary substantially across the province.<sup>25</sup> It is frequently the case that music teachers situated in elementary schools will introduce choir into the range of experiences and opportunities made available to students, but this is not a universal practice, nor is it stipulated by the elementary curriculum. What can be said, however, is that there are a number of passionately devoted and

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<sup>25</sup> They do for band, as well. However, the school band appears more firmly entrenched than choir.

seemingly tireless individuals who continue to advocate for and to provide—if sometimes as extracurricular options—choral music opportunities. Where offered as a for-credit option in senior years, approximately 100 hours of instruction generates one music credit.

## **Curriculum**

The choral music curriculum is, like the other music curricula in Manitoba, quite dated. As has been observed earlier, this “cuts both ways”: it extends to professionals considerable latitude of implementation (including the latitude to build their own), nurturing diversity and responsiveness to local needs and interests; on the other hand, it allows for more variation in terms of quality than some might regard as desirable—a claim that applies equally to all music education in the province at present.

There have been relatively recent efforts to devise what is referred to as “curriculum framework” documents – documents that provide for curricular scaffolding without the detail or prescriptiveness of conventional curriculum guides. Many appear to find these useful, though it is not clear the extent to which they actually influence current practices.

One notable development in recent years has been the growth of interest in the “vocal jazz” movement, which incorporates stylish repertoire, amplification, microphone work, rhythm section, and a showy, commercial mode of presentation. The proliferation of these groups has broadened the appeal of choral programs, though it is not clear that jazz improvisation instruction enters significantly into the instructional equation. Similarly, while the demands of microphone work, staging, and modern harmonies and voicings introduce new challenges to the conventional choral program, the repertoire is often more pop- than jazz-influenced. Whether these attempts to broaden the scope and appeal of choral programs may diminish the

effectiveness of more conventional choral programs (resources and instructional time being rather fixed commodities) is a question that has yet to be meaningfully addressed. The willingness of choral directors to attempt expansion of their conventional skill sets is laudable, although it is true at the same time that this often means they are teaching outside what they have been trained to do (a statement that applies equally to the jazz components of most instrumental programs, as we shall see).

As has been suggested in the context of the discussion of elementary general music, we are better situated to speak to the state of choral education from the quantitative than the qualitative perspective. The number of choirs (if not choral programs?<sup>26</sup>) in the schools appears to be increasing. And the number of groups performing at ChoralFest—arguably an indirect index of performance standards—is also on the rise.

### **Music Teacher Certification, Professional Development, Evaluation**

I have already commented at some length about certification and professional development practices within the province, and will not repeat myself here since some further discussion will be devoted to the topic as it pertains to secondary instrumental music. It does warrant consideration, however, that for a number of years one of Manitoba's music teacher training institutions (Brandon University) folded together programs dedicated to training elementary and choral music educators—on grounds that there was sufficient overlap in the kind of training required for extant positions, and few enough dedicated choral positions available in the province, that graduates were best prepared in both areas (even if this entailed reductions in

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<sup>26</sup> I will only introduce this concern parenthetically here, though it is a significant one: what might be the difference between a school with a choir and a school with a choral program? The same question is applicable to bands and band programs. The distinction is well worth pursuing.

the depth with which either was addressed in itself). In recent years, this policy has been abandoned, such that general music and choral music are again studied discretely: an indication perhaps that tides are beginning to shift. In light of projected shortages of music teachers, however, it remains to be seen whether this practice can be sustained: that is, greater depth of choral preparation may inadequately prepare graduates for general music positions that need to be filled, even if it prepares them more adequately for choral positions that are relatively few in number. It probably warrants careful consideration that the intended recipients of general music and choral music instruction are often not the same. Accordingly, programs that prioritize the preparation of directors for elite performing ensembles may be drawn to the provision of choral activities for the few (the gifted, the motivated, etc.) rather than the general student population. This is a consideration that deserves careful scrutiny, and not just by devotees of choral music.

It is worth noting again in this context that there appears to be relatively little differentiation in Manitoba between choral music and choral music education—a distinction that is, I submit, important in conceptualizing what differentiates choral activity or involvement from activities and experiences that serve ostensibly educational ends. These distinctions have significant implications for (1) curriculum design, (2) understanding choral music's potential educational role in the context of schooling, (3) the process of evaluation, and (4) the conceptualization of music education expertise. The equation of choral music and choral music education parallels the failure to distinguish between musical and music educational expertise already alluded to in the context of discussions of general music. Teacher training institutions must bear the brunt of the responsibility for this state of affairs, in addition to the uncomfortable compromises between Faculties of Education and Schools of Music, which allow inadequate instructional emphasis upon the kind of professional knowledge and skill specific to music

education, proper. Again, the erroneous assumption is that music education simply amounts to supplementing musical skill and understanding with generic pedagogical or methodological expertise. Such misguided assumptions are impediments to the professionalization of music education.

Last, it bears mention that, within certain quarters, unfortunate tension exists between those dedicated to vocal instruction and those dedicated to choral instruction. In particular, the belief appears to be that the effective development of the solo or operatic voice is compromised by choral singing. Although not unique to Manitoba, this situation creates divisiveness where it arguably should not exist, and creates tensions within organizations that should be, in a province the size of Manitoba, devoted to both vocal and choral excellence.

## **Organization**

The umbrella organization for those with choral involvements in the province is the MCA (Manitoba Choral Association, [www.manitobasings.org](http://www.manitobasings.org)). Its board, executive, and membership support a considerable range of choral activity in the province—school music included (though perhaps less centrally than is the case for the Manitoba Band Association, as we shall see). In terms of numbers, there are relatively fewer dedicated choral positions in the schools, which means that many school-based choral educators direct choirs in addition to extensive involvements in elementary music instruction. As a result, there may be somewhat more continuity between the elementary and choral organizations than there is between the elementary and the band organizations.

## **In Brief**

- Strong choral music heritage in many communities
- Considerable diversity of community-based activity
- Less activity in Middle Years than Early/Senior
- No arts graduation requirement in Manitoba
- Dated choral curriculum guide
- Secondary school activity a for-credit elective
- Growth of interest in Vocal Jazz
- Sufficient choral positions to warrant postsecondary curricular resources?
- Distinction between choral activity and choral music education?
- Tensions between vocal and choral interests
- Professional development concerns that parallel Elementary and Band

### **Middle/Senior Years Instrumental (i.e., Band) Music Education**

#### **Facts and figures**

We are fortunate to have specific facts and figures about the incidence of band programs in the province, and about trends over recent years. That is because the MBA (Manitoba Band Association, [www.mbband.org](http://www.mbband.org)) took the initiative in 1997 and 2002 to conduct surveys of band activity.<sup>27</sup> Although it did not address all the issues one might have liked, these surveys do in fact provide the kind of information that is not routinely collected in other areas, and that is, therefore, often unavailable for setting goals and gauging progress.

What we can say about band in Manitoba is this: Judged by the number of participants, the number of schools offering band instruction, and by the extent of support band receives from

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<sup>27</sup> All known band programs in the province are reported to have participated in the 2002 survey.

Bowman, W. (2007). The state of music education in Manitoba. In K. Veblen & C. Beynon (Eds. with S. Horsley, U. DeAlwiss, & A. Heywood), *From sea to sea: Perspectives on Music education in Canada*. Retrieved from <http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/musiceducationE-books/1/>

school administrators, it is quite healthy, probably among the healthier in North America. It is an elective subject—required of no one for high school graduation. Some interest has been expressed in, and some successful experimentation done with, a mandatory band program in some middle schools.<sup>28</sup> Some 257 schools had band programs in 2002, an increase of 13% since 1997. Of the 80,000 students in Grades 4-12 to whom band is available in Manitoba, almost 1/3 were enrolled in band in 2002, and the percentage actually increased between 1997 and 2002.<sup>29</sup> In individual schools, the proportion of the student body involved in band ranges all the way from 2% to 100%.

In most school divisions, band students begin in Grade 7. Of those students, approximately 16% remain in band throughout their public school years. The greatest attrition occurs during middle years instruction (apparently, as much as 24% per year), but attrition moderates in senior years, with only 8% between Senior 3 and Senior 4. Attrition is reported to be strongly associated with the introduction of curricular options and choices, and the need to select more specialized subject matter, especially upon entry to senior-years study. Scheduling conflicts are often a major influence on decisions to discontinue participation. With the sole exception of the Western Manitoba region (which has seen moderate declines), however, both the number of schools offering band and the number of students in band programs increased between 1997 and 2002.

Almost all band students receive high school credit for their involvement in concert band, with approximately 85% of those who are involved receiving full credit, and approximately 10% receiving half credit. Only 3-5% receive no credit. In 2002, jazz band was offered for credit in

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<sup>28</sup> Ten percent of the middle schools offering band reported such a requirement in 2002.

<sup>29</sup> Exact percentages in 1997 and 2002 were 29.8% and 31.3% respectively.

about 64% of schools,<sup>30</sup> an increase from 44% in 1997.<sup>31</sup> It was available without credit at about 15% of schools with band programs, and not offered at all in 22% (as compared to 38% five years earlier).

There are 222 band directors in the province's schools, 51% of whom are women.<sup>32</sup> Although the amount of teaching credit assigned for band instruction varies, most positions are designated 50% to 100% of a full teaching load. In larger programs, the load credit has increased (with a trend toward multiple positions). In smaller programs, teaching-load allocations for band are decreasing. Most (76%) directors indicate that fundraising is a necessary part of their job, with more than half relying on fundraising efforts to subsidize purchases of such essentials as instruments, books, and music. Sixty percent of Manitoba's band programs report having parent organizations.

## **Curriculum**

As in other areas of music instruction in Manitoba, the band curriculum is quite dated. There appear, however, to be fewer expressions of concern over this state of affairs among band directors than among other music teachers in the province. In general, the curriculum appears to consist of the music performed; that is, the other emphases outlined in the curriculum guide often appear to receive modest attention. It is not clear that a revised curriculum would necessarily change these circumstances.

A for-credit jazz curriculum (developed in the USA by IAJE, the International Association for Jazz Education) was officially approved in the province in 1998. The primary

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<sup>30</sup> 41% for full credit, 23% for half.

<sup>31</sup> 28% full credit, 16% half credit.

<sup>32</sup> No figures are available for the split between middle and senior years programs.

significance of this addition appears to have been the addition of credit for such instruction, which, prior to that time, had often been delivered as an extracurricular option. Although the number of jazz bands in Manitoba has increased dramatically during the last two decades—a trend both recognized and supported by conferring formal curricular status—relatively few music educators have had substantial jazz background or formal university coursework in jazz improvisation, history, theory, or pedagogy. As a result, the distinction between jazz bands and their “stage band” precursors is not always evident, nor is improvisation as salient a feature as the curriculum rightly stipulates it should be. Ultimately, these concerns probably relate more directly to professional development opportunities (or the lack thereof) than they do to curriculum. But it might be argued that this illustrates clearly the necessity for in-depth and sustained professional development where meaningful curriculum revision is envisioned – and the need for substantive evaluation as well.

## **Evaluation**

The indications of program effectiveness tend, for the most part, to come from enrolment numbers, from informal administrative and parental estimations, and from the adjudications received at festivals like the Winnipeg Optimist Festival and the Brandon Jazz Festival. Festival participation is optional, but very widespread.<sup>33</sup> Although they provide valuable opportunities to hear other groups perform, it is not clear to what extent these festivals serve the educational function of improving instruction and enhancing musicianship. The brevity of performance and adjudication time, the need to offer criticism to directors indirectly (through comments to the

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<sup>33</sup> Many bands also elect to attend out-of-province festivals, which provide valuable opportunities to hear how local standards compare with those elsewhere.

group, which must often be “gentle” and general),<sup>34</sup> and the optional nature of participation each limit the extent to which these events, despite their obviously motivational and social value, actually improve practices.

On a somewhat broader level, it is commendable that the MBA has undertaken to gather facts and figures on an ongoing basis—the kind of empirical data that help document and evaluate progress, changes that warrant attention, areas of neglect, and so on. Empirical data like these lend crucial support to claims about program problems and efficacy, assuring that assertions can be backed by numbers when necessary, and enhancing the ability to detect trends.

### **Professional Development**

The areas of pre- and in-service professional development that have been identified as concerns elsewhere in this report are equally of concern (or should be) to instrumental music educators. These include the necessity to train and certify (and often, to teach) as “generalists”; the lengthy front-end loading of professional development; the general failure to provide for meaningful career-long engagements with the potential to challenge and transform practice; the general neglect of mentoring, supervision, or evaluation for beginning (novice) teachers; and more.

For the most part, post-secondary instruction for music educators in the province consists of the provision of technique and methods (including conducting) instruction—a largely

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<sup>34</sup> Indeed, one of the potential disadvantages of festivals where adjudications are public and addressed to so many participants is that critical comments are often sanitized to the point of ineffectiveness. The need for criticism to be constructive in such situations often precludes the possibility of warranted negative commentary; in any event, the challenge of finding a suitable balance between the two is one of the greatest difficulties in adjudicating. Short adjudications, no matter how brilliant, are seldom effective at modifying a director’s instructional/musical skills extensively enough to make a lasting difference. These comments should not detract from festivals per se, who are, after all, doing what festivals are designed to do to the best of their ability. But their utility, validity, and reliability for evaluation (whether formative or summative) should not be taken for granted. They are not suitable substitutes for informed, professional evaluation.

technicist undertaking that neglects significant components of professional knowledge and expertise in music education (and in education, generally), and that serves primarily to prepare future teachers for the status quo. The implicit assumption, to which I have pointed elsewhere, is that music education equals musical expertise supplemented by knowledge of techniques for teaching music effectively. Since the band director's instructional role in middle and secondary programs in Manitoba is extensively equated with that of the conductor, the pursuit of professional development (where and when initiated) often takes the form of advanced conducting study—to the unfortunate exclusion, all-too-often, of broader professional knowledge in music education. Jazz expertise is one of the frequent casualties of such endeavors, but so are advanced studies in such vital concerns as evaluation; curriculum design and implementation; musically-specific study in important foundational areas such as psychology, sociology, and philosophy.<sup>35</sup>

The other notable casualty to professional development of such approaches is awareness of the commonalties between (in this case) band and other areas of music educational endeavor.<sup>36</sup> This exacerbates fragmentation within the profession and leads to the neglect of potential linkages and alliances that are vital to the future of the profession.

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<sup>35</sup> Dr. Brian Roberts makes a telling, if controversial, point in this regard. The fact that the graduate student “consumer” of advanced music education studies continues to demand “advanced techniques” courses rather than “dry foundations courses” does so, Roberts asserts, because s/he is not so much an educator as a musician in identity -- performing through their ensembles, not teaching students. This point could be made more diplomatically, of course; but whether it would then be heard is an important question.

<sup>36</sup> And, unfortunately, even between instrumental instruction at different “levels” – early years, middle years, senior years. The importance of the linkages among these three areas is widely neglected, resulting all-too-frequently in pedagogical practices at different levels that have little inherent relationship to one another.

## Organization

The Manitoba Band Association has emerged as a very strong advocate for band programs in the province, and deserves a good deal of the credit for the patterns of growth described above. As is usually the case, much of its effectiveness has been a function of the determination and hard work of the individuals involved. There is some expression of concern that the current generation of music education graduates, those currently entering the field, may be more reluctant to commit to professional obligations beyond “the job” than their predecessors.

Although MBA has been a tireless and highly effective advocate for band, its contribution to the overall health of music education in the province is somewhat more equivocal, a concern explored in the section that follows. To pose rhetorically the issue addressed there, however, consider the following questions—questions that warrant equally careful consideration by other professional organizations in the province. Is it conceivable for the success of band to be associated with the demise of music education? Can one have musical bands yet still fall short of the broader task of educating society musically or of providing meaningful musical education to every student? What is the nature of MBA’s relationship and obligations to other musical organizations in the province?<sup>37</sup>

## Concerns

Again, band programs have thrived in no small part because of the dedicated efforts of MBA. By most accounts, Manitoba’s band movement is among the healthiest in the country (whether gauged by number of students involved, enrolment trends, or the number of programs proportional to the province’s population). The health of bands and the effectiveness of MBA in

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<sup>37</sup> And to the music industry?

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helping to create and maintain it are but one side of the coin, however. The other is that, in Manitoba, instrumental music education means, for all practical purposes, band and band only. There are only pockets of guitar; little composition or music technology; and only one division in which strings are taught.<sup>38</sup> The strength of the band movement, then, is both cause for celebration and concern: concern that *music education may become equated with concert band at the expense of other possibilities, and that efforts to nurture other forms of music education may be treated as competing with rather than complementing what currently exists*. A related concern is that the ends of music education become so self-evidently those of the concert band that band ceases to be seen as a means to the end of music education, and becomes an end in itself. Where that happens, vigor, growth, and the capacity to respond to changing socio-educational values will eventually subside.

In response to my queries as I prepared this report, the MBA executive identified three additional major areas of concern. The first of these is the state of music education in small (often, rural)<sup>39</sup> communities. Over the last several decades, the number of applicants for band positions in rural Manitoba has declined steadily. When filled, they are often only occupied for a year or two before the band director moves on, most often to an urban position. A situation has evolved, then, in which smaller communities have become “revolving doors” for band instruction. Others are even less fortunate, with programs being cut for want of qualified personnel, or positions being filled with less qualified individuals—by teachers with very modest musical backgrounds or by musicians without music education backgrounds. These trends—the

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<sup>38</sup> At secondary levels there is negligible provision for the study of composition study or music for the general student. Clearly, positive statements about the state of music education in the province need to be balanced by acknowledgements of this sort: again, it depends upon what one assumes music education is, or should be. These areas of neglect warrant particular attention in view of the possibilities for life-long involvements they offer – involvements not necessarily extensively realized by present offerings.

<sup>39</sup> However, I submit that this concern may relate to band offerings in most communities outside Winnipeg proper.

shortage of qualified applicants, the willingness to settle for non-specialists, and reductions in teaching loads—are disturbing ones that require careful monitoring and strategic action.

The second area of concern expressed by MBA has to do with what it rightly characterizes as a “push” toward a new music curriculum. Specifically, there is widespread concern that revisions may fail to recognize, protect, and build upon current strengths, jeopardizing what is working well. There is genuine worry that band and music programs may fall victim to the well-intended efforts of government bureaucrats or educationists without the fundamental interests and values of music education at heart. The process of curriculum revision, it is noted, is a very delicate process to be undertaken with the utmost care. I would add that in light of the relative health of the situation at present, it might be wise to resist naïve faith in the importance of such documents.<sup>40</sup>

Third, MBA expresses keen interest in the idea of mandatory middle school band programs, already a provision in 10% of middle schools where band is offered. Despite mixed reviews and philosophical controversy, such plans are proving highly effective in addressing perennial problems with scheduling, course options, and financial stability. The debates around such proposals are well worth undertaking, drawing attention as they do to the ultimate educational roles associated with music study. And it is a strong indication of the esteem in which school music is currently held that these debates can occur at all.

### **In Brief**

- Overall numbers indicate growth
- Remarkable vitality compared to other Canadian provinces

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<sup>40</sup> Lest this be mistaken for an irresponsible rejection of curriculum guides outright, I hasten to add that professionalism and meaningful ongoing professional development are fundamentally requisite in their absence.

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- Elective credit in Senior Years (some mandatory band in Middle Years)
- Figures do not address quality or disparity between urban/rural
- MBA an effective advocate for band, but not instrumental music more broadly
- MBA gathers data on school-based activity
- Number of jazz bands increasing (curriculum document, allocation of credit)
- Dated curriculum guide (recently-adopted jazz curriculum – little professional development, however)
- Jazz band = stage band? Role of improvisation?
- The actual curriculum generally consists of the music performed
- Festival participation widespread, optional (evidence of improving practice?)
- Professional development concerns parallel those identified in other areas
- Pre-service instrumental music education = band methods?
- In-service professional development = conducting rather than music education?
- Rural programs in jeopardy?

### **University Music Teacher Education**

The current health of music education in Manitoba owes a great deal to skills, attitudes, and dispositions developed over the years in the province's music programs at Brandon University and the University of Manitoba. Many of its current weaknesses and vulnerabilities can be traced to the same places.

As indicated above, teacher certification in Manitoba is conferred upon completion of a Bachelors degree followed by a 60 credit hour Bachelor of Education AD (“after degree”), or alternatively, by five year concurrent degree programs which integrate studies somewhat and

confer both degrees at once. Since the literal requirement for certification is the successful completion of (since the late 1980s) 60 hours of education coursework, it is theoretically possible for students to complete a 5-year concurrent program including substantial music education coursework without compromises to musical or educational content (compared, that is, to the 6-year consecutive degree option). In practice, however, both Music and Education are reluctant to make many accommodations for music education coursework, a situation that means graduates are minimally rather than substantially prepared professionally.<sup>41</sup>

On the other hand, students who complete a first degree in Music (this need not be, and often is not a “music education” degree) and follow it with the B.Ed.(A.D.) may complete what each Faculty regards as a more legitimate program of studies in each respective area (i.e., in music and in education), yet emerge from six years of study with what is arguably a less substantial preparation in music education per se. From the perspective of music education this option (music plus education, studied consecutively) is hardly a suitable or desirable arrangement, because professional studies in music education figure centrally in neither the first degree or after-degree, and because the two years of education studies may make little to no explicit provision for continuing musical engagements. Music and education remain profoundly separate disciplines.

Ultimately, however, Faculties of Education “hold the cards” when it comes to determining what kind of studies comprise the 60 hours required by the province. And since

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<sup>41</sup> Clearly, here I use the term “professional” to designate music education. In common practice, Education Faculties tend to regard only general education coursework as “professional”, which means that music education is regarded as specialized, “music” coursework. The reverse situation exists with regard to Schools of Music, who see things like Applied Study, music history, and music theory as essential musical content: music education is, in other words, not a substantial component of the musical core.

there is deep commitment there to the principle of “generalist” preparation,<sup>42</sup> music educator preparation remains largely the sum of musical and general educational preparation. Music education’s professional knowledge and skills<sup>43</sup> form a relatively small component in this equation, a situation that imposes major constraints upon the ability of university music education professionals to develop many of the skills and abilities essential for beginning music educators.

One of the province’s universities has a “joint” department of music education, with departmental status in both Education and Music, thereby conferring responsibility for music education upon a single body with close links both to Education and to Music. In practice, however, this “joint-ness” is a very precarious and at times antagonistic arrangement in which (1) Music Education has jurisdiction *only* over concurrent program students (Non-music students, or students pursuing the B.Ed.[A.D.] as a second degree remain the sole responsibility of other Education constituencies); (2) members are considered music faculty for purposes of workload assignment, which leads to the erosion of members’ music education teaching in response to other perceived needs in music; and (3) both Faculties routinely implement across-the-board changes in program requirements without consulting each other or considering their adverse impact upon music education students.

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<sup>42</sup> This is another of those concepts that is frequently espoused and poorly understood. Dichotomizing the universe into specialists (narrow) and generalists (broad) hardly does justice to the nature or benefits of specialization – or generalization, for that matter. Moreover, given the extraordinarily narrow range of training often envisioned by advocates of “music specialization” (the refinement of conducting skills, advanced training in this or that instructional technique, more courses in contemporary music, etc., etc.) one can hardly blame critics of specialization. Questions that need to be addressed: specialists of what? And to what ends? Please consider the important related points made in note 66, below.

<sup>43</sup> The nature of professional knowledge in music education requires careful scrutiny, especially in light of the extent to which it has become equated with (reduced to) the acquisition of instructional techniques and methods. Concerns like theoretical/philosophical foundations, psychological and sociological foundations, research, leadership, and evaluation are crucial, as is attention to the areas of secondary general music, music technology, composition and arranging, world musics, and the provision of alternatives to conventional performance opportunities.

Practitioners in the field are often keenly aware of certain gaps in the pre-service preparation of music educators, but seldom aware of the extreme constraints created by university politics and existing certification policies. The most promising solution to this dilemma would seem to be to confer “specialist” certification to music educators—restricted certificates based upon the amount and nature of specific music educational training and demonstrated competence in the area. However, specialist certification is a non-starter for the Education powers that be, convinced, as they are, that to be prepared in the highly specialized way that music educators arguably need to be precludes development of the kind of breadth worthy of the name “educator.” Little by way of dialogue is currently possible, and postsecondary music education professionals find themselves more or less stuck in the middle, trying to protect a very modest niche for music education.

These concerns notwithstanding, extant curricula for pre-service music educators are very prescriptive and technicist in orientation—dedicated to developing modest fluency in techniques and methods designed to serve a relatively narrow range of current practices. The unfortunate result is a music education curriculum that often holds little for the imaginative or the creative student. Many who might otherwise make excellent music educators find other curricula more appealing: curricula where experimentation, creativity, and innovation are, ironically, more prominent features.

An additional impediment to the effectiveness of undergraduate music teacher preparation programs in the province is that university (and therefore, music education) admissions are based primarily, if not exclusively, upon students’ promise as performers and the availability of applied teachers to deliver “applied” instruction to these students. Likewise, the “common” or core music curriculum is based on the implicit assumption that development as

musicians and performers is more fundamental than teaching skills and experience. All effective music educators must, on this view, be musicians first, and educators second.<sup>44</sup> Only after students have been effectively socialized as musicians, do teacher skills and identity enter the mix. This philosophical orientation<sup>45</sup> is the same one that presumes a first degree in music followed by a second degree in education constitutes adequate preparation for music educators. Unfortunately, it also leads to treating all first music degrees as equivalent, regardless of music education content or the lack thereof. One consequence is that prospective music teachers can use other music degrees (and often, even non-music degrees that include a modicum of musical study) as end runs around the rigors of music education studies—yet still present themselves as music educators.

It would be unfair and inaccurate to leave the impression that music teacher education programs have been indifferent or unresponsive to the changing needs of their graduates. The University of Manitoba Faculty of Music,<sup>46</sup> for example, has recently undertaken significant shifts in its priorities toward the needs and concerns of the music education community. And, at Brandon University, extensive revisions were recently undertaken with a view to reducing curricular congestion, reducing credit-hour requirements;<sup>47</sup> introducing electives; integrating methods instruction more effectively with field experience;<sup>48</sup> and introducing musically-specific

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<sup>44</sup> In at least one sense, this is entirely reasonable: highly refined aural skills, sometimes referred to as musicianship, are indispensable. However, this area is often insufficiently developed among music students destined for music education. Admittedly, it is one of the most challenging areas to improve in young adults when it has not been developed during formative years. Curricular constraints too-often lead to its neglect, and, where they do not, the means employed to develop and test it are often unrelated to the real-life musical tasks faced by music educators. This is, in my estimation, one of the greatest shortcomings of university *music* curricula in Manitoba.

<sup>45</sup> If, in fact, it can accurately be called “philosophical” when it consists more of unexamined assumptions than explicitly considered arguments.

<sup>46</sup> Formerly a School of Music, Faculty status was conferred in 2005.

<sup>47</sup> These reductions were subsequently offset by additions from the Faculties of Music and Education—with less than satisfactory implications for music education students’ loads, tuition costs, and program flexibility.

<sup>48</sup> Currently, 26 weeks of field experience are required, 19 of them in music education. These are distributed throughout the concurrent curriculum in four different blocks—In students’ second, fourth, and fifth years of study.

courses in areas like evaluation, and technology. These revisions were undertaken after close consultation with program graduates and the field more broadly. Still, there remain profound areas of neglect. There is, for instance, little or no instruction devoted to the general music (the provision of musical experiences for general, non-performing students) beyond the early years; to cultural and musical pluralism and their implications for music instruction; to emerging “praxial” orientations to music curriculum and instruction; and so on. Although perhaps generally compatible with current practice in the schools,<sup>49</sup> such neglect falls short of what the profession has a right to expect by way of leadership from its universities. A strong case could be made that university programs are designed to perpetuate the status quo, not to transform it in ways that are congruent with emerging needs and values.

While for decades music education programs in Manitoba were able adequately to meet the supply needs for music teachers in the province. That situation appears to be changing as baby boomers near retirement and it becomes necessary to replace the stalwarts of the profession. Current programs do not appear to be attracting and retaining the number of qualified music education students necessary to meet emerging needs. A contributing factor may be that the number of years required to achieve music teacher certification has become considerably more extensive than in other, better-paying fields.

As has been implied already in several places, graduate studies in music education—meaningful, sustained in-service experience with the potential to significantly improve instruction—do not figure prominently in provisions for professional development in Manitoba. There are relatively few incentives, and quite a few disincentives, not least of which are (1) the tendency to reach the top of the province’s salary structure and (2) the expenses associated with

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<sup>49</sup> Manitoba is culturally diverse, for instance, but not as extensively as the major urban centers in Canada.

Bowman, W. (2007). The state of music education in Manitoba. In K. Veblen & C. Beynon (Eds. with S. Horsley, U. DeAlwiss, & A. Heywood), *From sea to sea: Perspectives on Music education in Canada*. Retrieved from <http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/musiceducationE-books/1/>

graduate studies,<sup>50</sup> and (3) the fact people's positions may be placed in jeopardy while away on educational leave.

While the necessity for effective leaders is widely acknowledged within the music education community, the historical and present tendency is to hope that leadership skills will eventually emerge, rather than carefully nurturing and cultivating them. Because the nature of music education positions (whether community- or school-based) relies upon them so extensively, leadership skills should be a part of every music educator's professional training and skill set. Unfortunately, this need is seldom recognized, and a seemingly endless list of methods-related needs precludes their serious consideration in any case.

My final point about music education in Manitoba universities is one that, while it could be made about almost all North American Schools of Music, is no less urgent locally. The widespread equation of music education with "school music" is a reductive assumption that serves neither music education nor Schools of Music (nor other postsecondary music students) well. The schools will increasingly require teachers with skill sets broader and more diverse than has been the case in the past. A crucial aspect of the reality to be faced by virtually all musicians in today's society is that they will teach music.<sup>51</sup> Accordingly, music education must assume a far more salient position within music studies in Manitoba (and other) universities if these institutions are to effectively fulfill their obligations to their students and to society. This will

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<sup>50</sup> Because one's initial place on the pay scale is tied to the number of years devoted to preparation (a policy initiated before increasing the education requirement for certification from one year to two), practitioners often enter the field near the top of the scale – which means that the financial return on subsequent study is rather modest.

<sup>51</sup> The question is not so much whether music graduates will teach, but whether they will teach with the benefit of some kind of orientation and formal instructional background. There are those (I am among them) who feel that the extent to which Schools of Music continue to hold out the hope of performance careers to students borders on the unethical.

require vision, initiative, and proactive leadership in degrees not often characteristic of postsecondary music institutions.<sup>52</sup>

### **Other Key Educational “Players”**

My inclusion of “other players” in the business of music education in this report stems from a deep conviction that equating music education to school music (and in turn, defining the limits and bounds of professional preparation by the needs of the public schools) is shortsighted and unwise. Music education is, or should be, conceived much more inclusively: if, that is, we are to create and nurture the kind of networks and alliances that assure the long-range health and vitality of music education. As is suggested elsewhere in this report, formal assessment of musical achievement points to private, out-of-school music instruction as one of the most potent determinants of musical achievement.<sup>53</sup> And community involvements of the kind that yield understanding of the transformative, educational potential of school-based musical offerings—and in turn generate substantial bases of support for music in the schools—are developed not by dubious advocacy arguments<sup>54</sup> but on-the-ground, first-hand experience with the arts and music. In Manitoba, these are often functions of involvement in local music festivals, conservatory study, or study with members of Manitoba’s Registered Music Teachers Association (MRMTA) or various musical “clubs”.

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<sup>52</sup> Meaningful change at the postsecondary level will therefore require broad and determined involvement from “outsiders” whose interests extend beyond preservation of the status quo – self-perpetuation being a concern every bit as pervasive at university levels as elsewhere.

<sup>53</sup> Or at any rate, one of the strongest correlates. Correlation does not necessarily entail causality.

<sup>54</sup> There is widespread endorsement of advocacy in the province of Manitoba, despite the fact (so I would characterize it) that the need for advocacy seldom arises where people’s musical, educational, and social needs are being met. I will not reiterate here what I have written at greater length elsewhere (ISME journal, 2005), but I do warrant saying that many if most of the claims put forward by advocates are claims on which music programs are ill-prepared to deliver. The long term effects of unsubstantiated and unsupportable advocacy arguments will not, I suggest, serve the profession well at all.

There are a number of “conservatories”<sup>55</sup> in Manitoba, notably the Manitoba Conservatory of Music and Arts, Brandon University’s Eckhardt-Gramatté Conservatory of Music, the University of Manitoba’s Division of Preparatory Studies. These offer a broad range of music instructional opportunities to students of all ages. As well, MRMTA helps assure the availability of highly qualified individual instruction. Such organizations also provide a broad range of competitive scholarships.

Regrettably, the kind of broad-based alliance that would bring together the disparate groups contributing to music education and create a more unified voice does not exist. As isolated as the patchwork pieces of Manitoba’s music educational fabric are (and forced to duplicate efforts as they often are), it is remarkable that it works as well as it does. It could become a formidable force if its resources were coordinated.

However, my purpose here is simply to comment briefly on Manitoba’s associated arts festivals—most of them predominantly dedicated to music—and to illuminate the important role they appear to play in the musical education of the province. As recently as the late 1980s the AMAF (Associated Manitoba Arts Festivals) had some 40 member-festivals. By 2005 this number has declined to 32, but still involves some 55,000 participants per year, approximately 40,000 of whom are involved in music.<sup>56</sup> Clearly, these are very substantial numbers—all the more so in light of the fact that each participant is directly or indirectly involved with many non-participants, be they family members, neighbors, or other acquaintances. The local music festival brings high quality music making, and, equally important, educational opportunities to very

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<sup>55</sup> “Conservatory” in quotation marks, because these are decidedly not the elitist organizations of the European traditions from which they emerged. It is undeniably the case that they do not cater to the population inclusively, and that finances are a determinant of one’s ability to use their services. But on the whole, they endeavor to serve a broad range of “talent” and serve the needs of their local communities.

<sup>56</sup> If one were to count ensembles as single participants, regardless of size, the number of annual music entries approximates 12-14,000 out of a total 18,000 entries.

significant numbers of Manitobans. In smaller, rural communities, festivals are major cultural events. For competitors as well as audience members, the opportunity to hear other performances is a valuable experience. Many school groups set the festival performance as one of their important year-long goals.

Not only do festivals offer valuable performance venues and potential scholarships for individuals and groups, they extend (or at least endeavor to) gentle or constructive criticism from unbiased outsiders. This benefits participants, but also participants' teachers, to whom most criticisms are ultimately directed. As such they provide valuable critique for teachers who, if adjudications are taken to heart, may change certain aspects of their instruction to the benefit of other, subsequent students. Given the paucity of formal or formative musical evaluation in school settings, the festival plays a critical role in gauging and in improving the quality of music teaching and learning.<sup>57</sup>

As indicated, however, festivals have seen some declines in recent years—not just in Manitoba, but across the country.<sup>58</sup> The festivals are not the only music organizations that have seen such declines. I am advised that the Winnipeg Music Festival, Junior Music Club, Wednesday Morning Musicale, and MRMTA—all with long, illustrious histories—have each seen declines in participation and have attempted to understand the reasons. Chief among these are smaller families, an ever-increasing range of choices, costs, and time. In households where both parents work, there is less time to devote to transportation to and from lessons or for festival participation itself. Many rural communities are suffering economically as well, which has

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<sup>57</sup> This role is, note, only a potential role. Teachers are under no obligation to have their students participate, or to take criticism seriously. It is also unfortunately the case that adjudicators are sometimes advised to “pad” their ratings and remarks to avoid alienating participants.

<sup>58</sup> A noted senior piano pedagogue with whom I recently adjudicated in another province speculated to me that the days of the music festival are in fact numbered. She pointed to increasing demands on people's leisure time, the priority media is assuming in people's lives, and the increasing “busy-ness” of life in general. She also observed that the number of participants in classes featuring high-level repertoire has declined dramatically in recent decades.

adverse impact on all aspects of community life—the festival included. The costs associated with lessons, accompanists, instruments, entry fees, and music are all escalating.

In addition, some festivals report that the number of volunteers (the heart and soul of many a local festival) is declining: older, more experienced individuals are not being replaced to the extent that is needed to keep things running smoothly, and those who remain are forced to pick up more of the slack. There is some concern, too, that the “old guard” may be resistant to change—an added impediment to bringing in new volunteers who may have different ideas as to how the festival could be run.

One of the concerns AMAF reports is the need for close communication with other educational partners so the festival can remain responsive and attuned to their needs. This, again, necessitates flexibility and willingness to change—to say nothing of recognition of festivals as important educational partners.

Busing remains a major festival obstacle for many in the public school system, because regularly scheduled morning and evening “runs” leave only limited time available for groups that wish to participate. Budgetary restrictions often prevent hiring private carriers as an alternative.

Finally, when school music positions are designated part time (half time, and often even less) due to budget restrictions—a troubling trend in rural divisions, especially—festival participation suffers. In this and other ways that are often overlooked, the fortunes of school music and of the musical life at the community level are intimately linked

The challenges of running a network of festivals that rely upon volunteer staffing and that cannot continue to exist without participants are immense. The festival must, therefore, offer experiences that people desire. In view of these obstacles, the health and vitality of the system is remarkable. But it cannot function effectively in isolation, and like the various organizations to

which school-based music educators belong, finding ways of communicating and supporting each other more effectively is key to the future health of music education in Manitoba. It is well worth considering, as well, that the health of such community-based educational endeavors may be an important index of the future health of music education in our schools and universities.

### **A Few Generalizations**

Since this report has already grown to unanticipated proportions, I will not reiterate most of what has already been said. Instead I will offer a few generalizations that warrant additional emphasis. Numerous other summary comments are dispersed throughout the body of this report

Depending upon one's perspective and the criteria by which one chooses to gauge it, Manitoba music education appears reasonably healthy. This could change dramatically over night, though, because we have failed to recognize the inevitability of change and to plan or prepare for it. We are especially vulnerable because of the narrow and anachronous nature of many of our program offerings;<sup>59</sup> because of our naïveté and complacency about curriculum “reforms”; because of the ad hoc and piecemeal nature of our organizational efforts; and because of our misguided subscription to notions like “learning through the arts,” “artists in the schools,” and “arts integration.” We have concerned ourselves myopically with techniques and methods, to the detriment of crucial philosophical, social, and professional considerations. We have not

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<sup>59</sup> The hegemonic prevalence of a relatively few, “orthodox” practices in Manitoba music education—Orff, Concert Band, what have you—creates a situation in which most if not all music education’s “eggs” are placed in a single basket. In such a situation, developments adverse to these particular practices can easily bring about the collapse of the entire system. The more narrowly music education is conceived and approached, the more vulnerable it becomes to the unavoidable and unpredictable vicissitudes of modern sociocultural values. Professional development devoted to enhancing narrow methodological proficiency (conducting technique, for instance; or various ‘levels’ of Orff, Kodaly, or whomever) rather than to professional knowledge in music education more broadly, has the very real potential to hasten the precipitous demise of music education. The point that well-intended (and highly marketable) professional development opportunities may weaken rather than strengthen the profession – whatever their psychological benefit for individual practitioners – is one that is seldom acknowledged.

assured that certification practices require professional expertise that is specific to music education and relevant to the future needs of the profession. Instead of devoting energy to modifying what we do in response to evolving societal needs, we have invested our time and efforts in advocacy programs designed to promote the status quo, often making brash promises on which we are ill-prepared to deliver.<sup>60</sup>

We need to develop much broader coalitions and communication networks that draw upon the unique strengths of all stakeholders in the province. And our efforts need to extend considerably beyond current advocacy efforts, which too-often commit us to practices quite different from those we may be willing or able to undertake. *The future viability and vitality of music education depends not so much on our ability to continue convincing people of the worth of what we have done in the past or are doing at present. It will depend, rather, upon our ability to anticipate futures that differ substantially from current circumstances, and to be proactive in the way we prepare for them.* Flexibility, strategic diversity, and collaborations are crucial—each of which require the development of habits quite different from those with which we have grown comfortable.

Once again, gauged by numbers alone and judged comparatively music education in Manitoba is in fairly good shape. On the other hand, there is considerably more diversity in quality than there should be, and considerably less curricular and instructional diversity than is needed. The challenge before us, then, is a complex one: to raise standards while at the same

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<sup>60</sup> Most of these issues stem directly from the misguided equation of music education with music techniques and instructional methods. Where such circumstances prevail, educators routinely prioritize technical over professional matters, creating the kind of professional vacuum in which those with political ambition presume to do the profession's thinking for it – more often than not to the detriment of music education. The intensification and deskilling referred to elsewhere in this report, both frequently associated with reductions in coordinator/supervisory supports, also contribute in major ways to the vulnerability alluded to here. To put it more succinctly: we advocate on behalf of musical education; what we deliver is standardized instructional practices (supported by narrow technical training rather than professional development).

time expanding the range of what we do; increasing the rigor of our efforts without further constricting the means by which we pursue them.

Many music educators currently find themselves teaching outside their primary areas of expertise or competence. This is hardly surprising, given the diversity of musical practices, ever-changing expectations as to which of these warrant educational priority, and the paucity of meaningful professional development opportunities/expectations for music educators. However, the general failure to address changing needs with postsecondary curricular revisions and with effective, meaningful professional development opportunities for current practitioners is a situation that requires urgent attention.

Postsecondary music education curricula are very crowded and congested, but, notably and unfortunately, *not* with music education content. Undergraduate and graduate programs alike neglect (and often, omit) concerns that are crucial to the preparation of professional music educators, while they continue to require extensive coursework in other areas for reasons that are more historical and political than professional. As a result, pre-service music educators often lack the time to devote adequate attention to the development of the music educational expertise the public has every right to expect. University music education programs are not adequately preparing students for the professional challenges they will face in the years just ahead. It is doubtful that a system devoted to supplementing basic musical training<sup>61</sup> with generic educational studies (to the end of preparing educational generalists), can be modified sufficiently to assure the attainment of needed music education expertise.

The continued strength and relevance of music education is also threatened by the assumption within postsecondary music institutions that it is an add-on to the “real” curriculum

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<sup>61</sup> Training which need not, and often does not, address concerns at the heart of music education.

consisting of music performance skills, music theory, and music history. Schools of Music would do well to examine carefully their conventional aspirations, derived from their conservatory roots and naïve aspirations to be all things to all people. Music education warrants a secure and prominent place at the core of all university music studies in Manitoba.

Curriculum—whether at tertiary or secondary levels—should be conceived of as a fluid rather than as a solid. Resistance to change assures eventual irrelevance, and is not an effective way of maintaining standards in any event. Again, professional development opportunities are key: opportunities devoted to helping music educators develop the professional skills and dispositions needed to make their own decisions and create their own curricula. Where curriculum development is regarded as an ongoing professional obligation (as it should be), it is imperative that clear standards<sup>62</sup> be set regarding time, resources, and facilities. Professional aspirations and obligations require commensurate and clearly stipulated supports.

Manitoba is fortunate to have many school administrators who sense the profound importance of music to education and who are willing to take the difficult steps necessary to assure its viability. This resource (enlightened administrative support) is one that must not be taken for granted, but carefully cultivated if music education is to retain a place of significance in the school curriculum.

*We have not succeeded in truly professionalizing music education within Manitoba because we have attended far too little to foundational knowledge and skills in music education. We train teachers for the status quo, and not as well as we should, even so. We do not prepare prospective music educators to transform existing practices, or give them the opportunities that*

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<sup>62</sup> Instead of mere “recommendations.”

*are essential to their growth as professionals. Nor do we design in-service educational opportunities to address these areas of neglect.*

We need to devote considerably closer attention to the distinctions among professional knowledge in music, in education generally, and in music education proper. The differences between teaching music and music education, between teaching and educating, and between educating musically and developing musical skills or imparting musical knowledge are crucial to our understandings of what, how, by whom, and why music education exists—whether in or out of formal schooling.

Ironically, the absence of “new” or “modern” music curricula in the province may have actually been a boon to music education in certain respects.<sup>63</sup> The lack of a recently revised curriculum may have actually preserved some of the challenge for music educators that comes of developing and modifying one’s own curriculum in response to local needs and values. The greatest difficulty may be that we have not satisfactorily nurtured the skills and understandings necessary to do this task effectively, making it more hit-and-miss than it should be.

The years just ahead will be critical ones for the music education profession in Manitoba, as many of the senior educators whose achievements have led and inspired others take retirement. The need for close collaboration across music’s various sub-disciplines has never been more crucial.

Music education advocacy efforts in the province need to be balanced by a much more critical examination of current practices. The injudicious promises made on our behalf by those who would garner support for music education at any cost will return to haunt us.

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<sup>63</sup> Indeed, we may want to ask ourselves what the absence of “up-to-date” curriculum documents in Manitoba at a time when school music’s health appears relatively robust means. Let me advance a few heretical options: (1) curriculum as we appear to think of it is not as significant a need as we tend to believe; (2) the criteria by which we are inclined to gauge the health of music education are misguided; or (3) some combination of the above.

Bowman, W. (2007). The state of music education in Manitoba. In K. Veblen & C. Beynon (Eds. with S. Horsley, U. DeAlwiss, & A. Heywood), *From sea to sea: Perspectives on Music education in Canada*. Retrieved from <http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/musiceducationE-books/1/>

Most of the many individuals and groups consulted in the process of preparing this report made fairly cursory positive comments about how well music education seems to be doing, especially compared to other Canadian provinces. Almost invariably, however, these assertions were followed by expressions of deep concern at the fragility of this state of affairs. Manitoba music educators are a highly committed group who take relatively little for granted. “Advancing the cause” is a task in which everyone seems prepared to accept a personal share of responsibility. However, assumptions as to the nature of that cause vary quite widely and are generally limited to elementary general music, choral music, and band. The notion that “music educator” means more is sometimes acknowledged, but there is insufficient time or effort devoted to the implications of that acknowledgment. As a result, music education in the province remains a largely untheorized practice—one devoted to doing what we do, and to garnering the supports deemed necessary for its continuation.

Despite the self-absorption of our various disciplinary organizations, and despite our fragmentation, our lack of communication, and our neglect of collaboration, school music in Manitoba is—at least presently and by conventional standards—reasonably healthy. *It is intriguing to speculate what might be achieved if we were to coordinate our efforts and bring our resources to bear on common goals or future directions.*

The preparation of future music educators in Manitoba needs to become a much more rigorous process, one that effectively *integrates* superior musical and educational practices.<sup>64</sup> The nature of music education is not well served where musical and educational ends are conceived as mutually exclusive—a conception deeply institutionalized in existing university programs.

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<sup>64</sup> This integration is among the concerns to which so-called praxial approaches to music education have devoted considerable attention and made considerable progress.

Music education organizations need to assume responsibility for collecting hard data on trends and developments in their respective areas, and in formats conducive to sharing with each other, and non-musical others.

MMEA needs to become the umbrella music education organization for the province, to which everyone belongs as a function of his/her membership in any other music education organization. Deterrents to this (other than the unfortunate parochialism I have repeatedly lamented—and which is more likely a symptom than a cause) include MMEA's current membership fee structure and its difficulty assuming the kind of overall leadership clearly required by the status recommended here.

Music educators need to become much more involved in exploring options for teacher training and certification practices, with a view to assuring music educators are better prepared. This is, for better or worse, a fundamentally political process.

### **Reasons?**

The reasons for the generally healthy state of affairs described above are many: Manitoba's history as a province of immigrants determined to take responsibility for their own cultural endeavors; the fact Manitoba is a province with the majority of the population and its resources concentrated in one geographical area;<sup>65</sup> enlightened school administrators with strong beliefs in the importance of music to the school community; ongoing efforts not just to explain but to demonstrate the ways musical involvements enrich students' lives; the passion and enthusiasm of individual music educators, whose remarkable achievements have helped assure that the public expects and appreciates high caliber music making—and many more.

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<sup>65</sup> The "down side" to this state of affairs is a temptation for people to attribute what may be generally true of Winnipeg to the province as a whole.

Notably, what does *not* appear to have been a contributing factor is the existence of networks that ensure communication and collaboration among all groups with a stake in the success of music education in the province. The music education community in Manitoba is, and has long been, a highly fragmented one.

Nor do the province's certification and professional development provisions appear to have contributed substantially to the present state of affairs. It may be argued that Manitoba's reluctance to confer specialist teaching certificates to music educators has suppressed the quality of the "product" by preventing potential music educators from devoting more time to the unique demands of musical instruction in their pre-service education, and by discouraging meaningful, ongoing in-service professional development.<sup>66</sup>

### **Looking Ahead**

Manitoba music educators must not take for granted or neglect their many assets; nor should they underestimate the potential fragility of their current circumstances. Strategic, collective, and critically informed action is imperative if the current good fortunes of music education are to serve as a foundation for future prosperity. The precipitous demise of music education in places where it formerly thrived is a lesson that should be studied carefully if the trend is not to be continued or replicated in Manitoba.

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<sup>66</sup> What constitutes *disciplinary knowledge and expertise in music education* (as distinct from music alone) is a *pressing issue for Manitoba* – or at any rate, it should be. The nature of the music education discipline is very poorly understood, both in the field generally, and within the academy by those whose decisions and actions create the curricular and economic confines within which music education is currently forced to operate. *The unexamined belief that what is good for music and musicians (or, alternatively, what is good for general education and educators) is good for music education is alarmingly pervasive: a profound impediment to the health of the discipline and, therefore, to the musical education of the province.* This state of affairs leads me to believe that the long-term viability of the music education profession would be much more effectively served by advocacy and educational efforts directed at administrators and decision makers – broad, energetic advocacy for *musical education*, as distinct from a mere presence for music in the schools, generally. Of course, such efforts would require that music educators adopt a far more critical and proactive stance than they do at present.

The challenges that lie just ahead will require skills, attitudes, and dispositions that embrace and facilitate change. They will require a broader, more comprehensive vision of music education than the one to which we have grown accustomed and in which many of us currently find comfort. They will require that we make paramount among our habits as musician-educators the habit of changing habits when warranted.<sup>67</sup> While none of these challenges exceed our capabilities, neither have we given them the attention and the priority they demand. The choice before us is, from my perspective, a fairly simple one: a choice between shaping the future on the one hand, and being shaped by it on the other. Since there is little reason to think the latter will yield the kind of musical society to which we aspire, it is time we undertook serious pursuit of the former.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> I have written more extensively on this pragmatic theme in “More Inquiring Minds, More Cogent Questions, More Provisional Answers: The Need to Theorize Music Education—and its Research.” *Music Education Research*, Vol.7, no.2 (July 2005) pp.153-168. Citations for other essays that may help contextualize some of the other themes advanced in this report can be found on my web page, <http://www.brandonu.ca/Music/People/FacultyPages/bowman/publications.asp>.

<sup>68</sup> Perhaps there is a third option – extinction. As I see it, though, that is simply the most adverse of the potential consequences of allowing the future to shape us.