

Music Education in Prince Edward Island: A View Beyond the Bridge

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Growing up in Prince Edward Island, I was fortunate to encounter numerous opportunities in music education, all of which have helped to formulate my perceptions of music education in the province. My music education activities included music instruction in public schools, private piano, a Bachelor of Music Degree, Grades 1 to 9 public school teaching, and post-secondary teaching at the University of Prince Edward Island spanning a period of 25 years. As I reflect on my past experiences in PEI, it may be of interest to note that I am doing so while immersed in a doctoral program at the Department of Elementary Education at the University of Alberta. Therefore, the thoughts and reflections that I share in relation to music education in PEI are from a distance, viewed through new and ever-expanding lenses. Now that I am beyond the bridge, I am looking back and reconceptualizing my thoughts about music education in PEI. Alongside my personal understandings, I have formulated a view of the current status of music education by speaking with colleagues in PEI. Their perceptions have expanded and shaped the status that I am able to share about the elementary, intermediate, and senior high programs in the province. In addition, I will discuss the options for post-secondary music training and the process of teacher certification in the province. Finally, I conclude with some thoughts that are relevant to the future direction of music education in the province of Prince Edward Island.

School Districts

With a population of less than 140,000 (Prince Edward Island Government, 2004, p. 12), the province of Prince Edward Island is comprised of three public school districts: Western,

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Eastern, and French. Within each of the respective jurisdictions, there are a variety of elementary, junior high, and senior high schools. Various combinations of grades are present across the province including schools of grades one to three, one to six, one to eight, one to nine, four to six, seven to twelve, nine to twelve, or ten to twelve. These varied combinations total 21 schools in the Western district, 43 schools in the Eastern district, and six schools in the French district (Prince Edward Island Government, 2005). In addition to the public school districts in PEI, there are four private schools and one Band Operated First Nations School (V. Allen-Cook, personal communication, June 17, 2005).

Unlike some other areas across Canada, Prince Edward Island is fortunate to have maintained specialists in all its schools to guide students in music education instruction. It is obvious that over the years, a priority has been established for music educators with musical training and pedagogical expertise to guide PEI students in musical instruction. In the more heavily populated areas, music specialists teach music full-time at one school. In less populated areas, there are situations where a music specialist may travel between two or more schools in order to facilitate full-time music teaching. In both elementary and secondary schools, there are also instances where a music teacher may teach music for a portion of the day and have a teaching assignment in a subject other than music for the remainder of the day.

Programs Offered

Across the province, elementary general music is a required subject for Grades 1 to 6 and the recommended minimal instructional time is 90 minutes per six-day cycle (V. Allen-Cook, personal communication, June 16, 2005). The instructional time varies, however, from school to school, as timetabling is a school-based decision. For example, factors such as staffing and

student enrollment affect how much music instructional time is actually realized in practice. Nonetheless, the majority of elementary schools offer at least 60 to 90 minutes of instructional time in general music over the course of a six-day cycle. Some schools offer as much as 120 minutes of instruction during a six-day cycle.

Unlike the elementary programs, which focus on general music, the optional secondary music programs at the intermediate and senior high levels offer instrumental music. The secondary programs tend to be guided by a semester system where all of the instruction occurs over a five-month period. In such formats, students primarily receive concentrated instruction from September to January and February to June. The recommended instructional time for intermediate students is 160 to 180 minutes per six-day cycle (Prince Edward Island Department of Education, 1997, p. 63). For senior high students, the recommendation is 75 minutes per day, for a total of 375 minutes per week (V. Allen-Cook, personal communication, June 16, 2005). Similar to the elementary programs, the amount of teaching time varies from school to school.

Curriculum Guides

The September 2002 revision of the Elementary Music Curriculum Guide is the current document being used for music instruction in Grades 1 to 6. The primary resource used to support the elementary curriculum document is the *Share the Music* (2000) series. As outlined by the curriculum, the goals of the elementary music program include the following five areas:

1. to develop competency in problem solving, critical thinking and decision-making through experiences with music,
2. to develop literacy in music including listening, singing and/or playing instruments,

- reading and writing music,
3. to develop a positive attitude towards music,
 4. to develop an appreciation of music and the importance of music in our own cultures and others through participation and reflection, and
 5. to contribute to the general development of the learner (Prince Edward Island Department of Education, 2002, p. 19)

Based on these goals, the focus of the curriculum centres around the areas of *Musical Participation* (experiences in creating, listening, and performing), *Musical Awareness and Appreciation* (experiences in valuing the contribution of musicians in the past and present in various cultures), *Musical Understanding* (experiences in understanding musical concepts), and *Musical Technology* (experiences in using and applying technologies) (p. 19). These four areas were identified as general outcomes that would nurture and foster musical thinking within elementary children. In these areas, the Curriculum Guide provides a variety of helpful instructional strategies to assist teachers in guiding children in their music making. Younker (2000) made reference to the comprehensiveness of the Elementary Music Curriculum Guide when she indicated that the range of activities in which the students can experience music and gain knowledge about music within a larger context is admirable. Artistic, cultural, historical, functional, gender, social, technological, and career-related topics are covered. The guide, plus the tradition of hiring music specialists in Prince Edward Island to realize a curriculum, has fortified the strong music programs in the province (p. 189).

The Intermediate and Senior Instrumental Music Curriculum Guide (June 1997) was designed for Grades 7 to 12; a revision for the Curriculum Guide is underway (V. Allen-Cook,

personal communication, June 16, 2005). The two primary goals of the 1997 document are focused on *Musical Development* and *Personal Development* (Prince Edward Island Department of Education, 1997, p. 4). As opposed to being seen in isolation of one another, it is noted that these two goals are to be seen in relation to each other. The *Musical Development* goals include providing experiences to enable the student to:

1. develop a love and enjoyment of music as a lifelong activity [Appreciate],
2. respond intellectually and emotionally to music [Respond],
3. develop creative skills through such activities as musical arrangement, composition, improvisation, and interpretation [Create],
4. develop the ability to make intellectual and aesthetic judgments based on critical listening and analysis of music [Listen],
5. recognize, interpret, and perform the elements of music (*Rhythm, Pitch, Harmony, Form, Expression*) as they appear in musical notation [Read], and
6. develop, and reinforce through practice, correct techniques and skills of playing an instrument [Perform] explore and develop an understanding of cultural, historical, and stylistic perspectives in music [Understand Context] (1997, p. 4).

Through the *Personal Development* goals in music, the overall aim is to enable students to develop positive attitudes and effective learning strategies through the ability to:

1. enhance self-esteem and self-confidence through one's own musical involvement,
2. develop respect for the abilities and efforts of self and others,

3. develop a sense of dedication and commitment,
4. demonstrate motivation both individually and collectively,
5. develop abilities to cooperate and work responsibly with others in group activities and performances,
6. develop self-expression and communication through music,
7. develop skills of concentration,
8. develop skills of self-evaluation and peer-evaluation,
9. develop organizational skills,
10. develop skills of effective leadership, and
11. develop fine psycho-motor skills (p. 5).

In order to attain these outlined goals of *Musical Development* and *Personal Development*, the Intermediate and Senior Instrumental Music Curriculum Guide provides direction by suggesting a variety of instructional strategies. Through performance, these strategies are categorized into the three areas of creating, listening, and reading (p. 43). Although the document recommends an instructional resource list, in practice, the resources used in intermediate and senior high schools tend to vary from school to school.

Unfortunately, there is no curriculum document designed for general music or choral music at the intermediate or senior high school levels. The focus is solely on instrumental music and there is only one instance of a choral program offered at the senior high level (V. Allen-Cook, personal communication, June 17, 2005). This is a cause of concern for elementary music educators who focus a large part of their efforts toward choral instruction. It often appears that after children leave Grade 6, there are no opportunities for continuing choral instruction. In

schools where any other musical instruction is offered at the intermediate or senior level, the course content is ultimately at the discretion of the instructor.

Interestingly, Donagh Regional School (Grades 1 to 9) is an example of a school that offers musical instruction other than the instrumental band program. For many generations, traditional music has been prevalent in communities such as Donagh, Prince Edward Island. In 2002, a fiddling program was approved for Grades 7 to 9 and has since extended to involve children in upper elementary levels (V. Allen-Cook, personal communication, June 17, 2005). The integration of community music into the school context is an example of a vibrant partnership between school and community. In this geographical area, maintaining the historical traditions of Irish music has been an integral component of the relationship between school and community culture.

Post-Secondary Education

The University of Prince Edward Island in Charlottetown offers a variety of options at the post-secondary level for those students who are interested in pursuing further study in music; however, the four-year Bachelor of Music and the five-year Bachelor of Music Education are the two most common degrees sought from the Department of Music. The first two years of study for these degrees are common, but during the third and fourth years of the Bachelor of Music students may focus on areas such as Theory, History, or Applied Music. Upon completion of this degree, students often pursue further studies at the graduate level.

The Bachelor of Music degree does not qualify students for teacher certification in PEI; the five-year Bachelor of Music Education degree, however, does prepare students for teaching in the public school system. Beginning in the third year of the degree, students pursue study in

both elementary and secondary methodology, along with philosophy of music education. Courses also continue in choral and instrumental techniques. As part of this degree, students complete two six-week terms of student teaching, which qualifies them for a Prince Edward Island Teaching Certificate 5. Students who obtain this degree do not necessarily take a variety of courses in curriculum and instruction of other subject areas such as language arts, science, mathematics, or social studies. As a result, in order to acquire a broader teaching background, some students apply for a two-year post-degree Bachelor of Education within the Faculty of Education at UPEI. Having completed a five-year Bachelor of Music Education previously, these students can receive credit for one year's advanced standing and therefore complete the B.Ed. in just one year.

In addition to the Bachelor of Music and Bachelor of Music Education degrees, a Bachelor of Arts with a Major in Music is also offered at UPEI. This degree is designed primarily for those whose interest is in music within a more general arts curriculum. Students in this degree generally enter with some previous music background and often focus their music studies in the areas of Theory, Aural Skills, Keyboard Harmony, and History within the Department of Music.

Teacher Certification

There are four different classifications governing teacher certification in PEI (Prince Edward Island Government, 2005). None of the four different certificate classifications are grade specific; all encompass teaching Grades 1 to 12. To qualify for a *Certificate 4*, a teacher must have successfully completed an approved four-year Bachelor's Degree in Education or equivalent. A *Certificate 5* is granted to a teacher who has a four-year Bachelor's Degree or

equivalent and also a one-year Bachelor's Degree in Education or equivalent. A *Certificate 5A* is offered to a teacher who has completed an approved year of study (30 semester hours) beyond a *Certificate 5*. The highest level of teacher certification in PEI is a *Certificate 6*, which is granted upon completion of a Master's degree and a one-year Bachelor's Degree in Education or a Master's Degree in Education. In order to obtain this certification, a minimum of six years of post-secondary study is required.

Prior to obtaining a permanent, tenure-track teaching appointment in Prince Edward Island, a two-year probationary contract must be fulfilled. Probationary contracts are generally issued at the commencement of the school year and they terminate on June 30th of the school year in which the teacher was hired. Once a teacher has fulfilled the requirements of the probationary period, the permanent contract continues from school year to school year until the contract is terminated (Prince Edward Island Teachers' Federation Memorandum of Agreement, 2004, pp. 76–79).

Wonderings from Beyond the Bridge

As I reflect on the current status of music education in Prince Edward Island, I am also considering the future direction of the province's music education. Over the past five years, there has been a shift in elementary-level curriculum focus to move toward subject integration. Many of my colleagues have become keenly interested in this initiative and have been involved with integration committee work at the Department of Education provincial level. I have seen the excitement that both teachers and students share in classroom environments that embrace the philosophy of subject integration. Initially, the focus appeared to be toward the integration of a few subject areas including language arts, mathematics, and science. However, the

conceptualization of integration is continuing to broaden to include other subject areas such as music and the arts. The notion of subject integration causes me to reflect upon the role of the music educator within the larger context of the child's education. How might the music teacher offer input to the current conversation regarding integration? Beyond contributing to the planning for special performances, how might the classroom teacher offer insight into the possibilities of integrated music instruction? Do such ideas change the collaboration between classroom teachers and music teachers?

With the recent creation of two new programs in the Eastern School District, all of the high schools across the province of Prince Edward Island are offering instrumental band programs; instrumental music education is now accessible to every high school student in the province. Great efforts have been made, and continue to be made, in order to facilitate growth in these programs. With this growth and change there has also been recent interest across the province in facilitating curriculum in the area of popular music. At the high school level, a program entitled *Styles of Popular Music* has been created and initiated as a local pilot (V. Allen-Cook, personal communication, April 20, 2005). What might be the result at the secondary level of such endeavours? How does popular music align with current instrumental instruction? What resources will be needed to facilitate and support the program? How will the possibility of popular music influence students' interest in enrolling in music?

What about the children, as learners? While it is important and necessary to direct attention towards the needs of music educators within the province of Prince Edward Island, I also feel it is time that we began to focus more attention on the musical thoughts and sentiments of the students within our presence (Campbell, 1998). How do students experience music in PEI classrooms, in their homes, and in their communities? How do music educators begin to create

space for the students' voices in the living of curriculum? Regardless of their experiences, hopes, and dreams for their ways to musically know the world, do we keep on pushing our preconceived agendas of what we think it is to musically know? As I consider my own musical memories, I do not recall being asked by any of my teachers about my personal experiences of music or about how I musically knew the world. How might students feel if we begin to attend to their musical knowing?

The PEI view that I share in this paper is simply that: a view based upon personal opportunities and experiences in music education. By pondering the current state of music education in Prince Edward Island, I realize there is much to celebrate. Amidst the celebration, however, in order to foster growth, I think it is essential to continue to wonder. Fueled by wonder and by my continued interest in PEI music education, I look forward to what lies ahead.

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