

An Overview of the History and Development of String Teaching and Orchestral Training in Canada

Ninette Babineau

Introduction

James Ehnes, Scott St. John, Mark Fewer, Denise Djokic, Jasper Wood, Corey Cerovsek, Judy Kang, Lara St. John, Erika Raum, the St. Lawrence String Quartet, and the Gryphon Trio. These are the names of just some of the Canadian string players who currently enjoy international status. In 1996 the National Youth Orchestra of Canada had the distinction of being named the finest youth orchestra in the world by the delegates of the World Youth Orchestra Conference Festival. The hiring rate of Canadian musicians in Canada's professional orchestras rose from 40% in the late 1980s to 95% by the year 2000. Orchestras Canada, the national service organization for all Canadian orchestras and ensembles, lists more than 220 professional, semiprofessional, university, youth, and community orchestras and string ensembles among its members. And this doesn't include the many musicians who play in amateur groups across the country. How are all of these string players trained?

To examine the current state of string teaching and orchestral training in Canada, it is necessary to examine both the school system and the many opportunities for string instruction, ensemble training, and orchestral training offered outside of school-based programs. As school music is brought under pressure and sections of programs are discontinued, parents who wish to include a quality instrumental music experience in their children's education increasingly are turning to alternate programs that are funded through fees and other financial sources. This is especially true in the areas of string teaching and orchestral training. The information discussed

Babineau, N. (2007). An overview of the history and development of string teaching and orchestral training in Canada to 2005. 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/>

in this chapter was gathered through direct communication, e-mail and mail correspondence, individual websites, and a survey of various published materials.

Situations Vary

Very few Canadian schools continue to offer string programs. Where these programs do exist, though, students may learn to play through a Ministry-, Board-, or District-funded program, in homogeneous or heterogeneous classes that number from one student to 60, and begin instruction in Grades K–3, or 3 and 4, or 5 and 6, or 7, 8, and 9. Scheduling may be co-curricular during school time or in an extended school day, or may be totally outside of school time. The programs may be taught by board certified specialists or by non-specialist teachers, or by itinerant specialists paid hourly by the Board. Fee-based “enrichment” programs may be organized through the district office in partnership with a music school or local orchestra, or even through a university and corporate sponsored program offered in the school. Class levels may be grouped by ability or they may be all-level inclusive. Classes may be offered in the school, in a centrally located district-wide program, or in a combination of in and out of school classes; they may continue to Grade 12, or they may only continue to Grade 3. Secondary school string students may play in a graded or multi-level string ensemble or orchestra that is based in their school, or in a district-wide ensemble or orchestra, or in a school-located but fee-based youth orchestra led by a separately contracted professional conductor working in collaboration with the school’s music teacher. In some districts, in order to receive a music credit string players must be enrolled in a band class. One could argue that almost every instance of a string program in Canada is unique.

While public, school-based string programs have suffered a period of decline in recent

years, interest in individual instruction has increased. Privately taught students may study with an independent private teacher, a fiddle teacher, or through a Suzuki or Talent Education program, through a conservatory, academy, or university preparatory program, or an orchestra-supported music school. They may begin as early as three years of age. Then, they may play in an ensemble or orchestra in their own school, and/or in a conservatory, talent education, independent community, or a university preparatory, university, or regional youth orchestra or ensemble. Many string students play with several such groups at the same time, as there is serious competition for advanced players among these groups.

Background to the Present

From the onset, the emergence of instrumental music in the schools differed for stringed and band instruments. Among the earliest efforts to introduce instrumental instruction to students in the public schools were the fee-based violin classes offered as an after-school program during the early part of the twentieth century. Such classes appeared in several urban centres, usually initiated by an enthusiastic musician or music supervisor. For example, In Ottawa, the director of the local conservatory introduced Saturday morning classes for classroom teachers interested in learning to play and teach violin in 1918. Three years later, a number of the resulting students had progressed sufficiently for a public school orchestra to be organized that featured a violin section made up entirely of public school trained players. In 1924 Fred Dyke, supervisor of music in the Vancouver schools, organized an after-school, fee-based violin program that involved 300 BC students taught in 11 schools by a staff of 11. His brother, George Dyke, later initiated a similar program in Victoria to support a long-standing high school orchestra which had been organized by a math teacher in 1914 and augmented by privately taught string players

up to that point.

After WWII, the strong presence of military and community bands had a profound influence on the development of instrumental music programs in the schools. String players for Canadian orchestras came mainly from Europe and the United States, bringing their teaching and orchestral traditions to the world of private instruction and youth orchestras. At the time, although fiddling was an integral part of the Canadian tradition, it was not considered to be an educational experience.

In Ontario, a 1945-revised system of government grants for education gave impetus to the development of instrumental programs in the schools. By 1949, all of Toronto's secondary schools offered band and/or orchestral programs. Recognizing the need to begin string instruction early in order to successfully implement full orchestral instrumentation at the high school level, the board contracted Leonard Dunelyk, a Bornoff-trained violinist and teacher from Winnipeg, to teach Grade 5 students in a pilot project. In 1951 he joined the staff at North Toronto Collegiate to become the first string specialist for the high school instrumental program. Brian McCool, provincial music inspector, encouraged the orchestra to tour the province along with the Barrie Collegiate Band to promote secondary music. He invited George Bornoff to conduct intensive string workshops in the province, principally to enable band teachers to develop string programs.

In *Music Education in Canada: A Historical Account*, Green and Vogan (1991) note that school music expanded on the strength of demonstrable achievements and the determination of dedicated individuals. An example of this is found in the expansion of string programs that took place in the Maritimes in the 1960s and 1970s.¹ Elsewhere, opportunities

¹ In 1963, Dunelyk took his Toronto school orchestra to perform at the Canadian Music Educators Association (CMEA) conference held in Halifax. J. Chalmers Doane, then a young teacher, determined that he, too, would Babineau, N. (2007). An overview of the history and development of string teaching and orchestral training in Canada to 2005. 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/>

for string instruction developed in both the private sector and in the schools through a variety of influences. The Suzuki movement of the mid-1960s greatly influenced string teaching both in and out of the schools. Thomas Ralston initiated a Society for Talent Education in Alberta in 1964. Suzuki and Talent Education Associations provided a network of support and advice, opportunities for teacher-training and development, information for parents, and special programs for youth. By 1988 nearly 50% of all elementary age string players were Suzuki trained.

Although youth orchestras have been in existence since 1925, the majority appeared between 1958 and 1968, usually under the aegis of a professional orchestra whose staff and board recognized a need for training future orchestral players. The National Youth Orchestra (NYO) was initiated in 1960 to provide pre-entry professional training for Canadian musicians. Today, one in three musicians in Canadian orchestras are NYO alumni. Over the years, the Canada Council for the Arts has funded resident professional chamber groups to bring classical music to regions outside of urban centres; some of these ensembles have developed into fully professional orchestras. Today, both the Canada Council for the Arts and provincial Arts Councils continue to fund resident professional musicians for community orchestras in smaller centres. As the contracts for these professional musicians often include an education component,

develop such an orchestral program and approached Dunelyk, who advised him to contact George Bornoff, then on the Faculty of Music at Boston University. Doane enrolled in a degree program and there met Ninette Babineau, who after hearing a recording of Dunelyk's orchestra, had decided to study with Bornoff and by then, was teaching in a Bornoff-directed pilot string program near Boston. When it became apparent that Doane would be named Supervisor of Instrumental Music in Halifax, he invited Babineau to come to Halifax to develop the string program; strings were be at the core of an instrumental program.

As interest in the fledgling program grew, demand for string programs spread to other areas of the Maritimes. The neighbouring city of Dartmouth invited Halifax string teachers to assist in developing a program for its schools, and the County Board shared the services of a Halifax string teacher to initiate a program in the county schools. When the Charlottetown (PEI) Board engaged John Clement as a string specialist, he was given released time to investigate the structure of programs in Halifax and Toronto. An editorial in the New Brunswick Music Educators' News Journal questioned why the New Brunswick Youth Orchestra was totally dependent upon private teachers while Halifax was developing an orchestra program through the schools. In 1979, after teaching for a time in Halifax, Fran Dearin set off for Hampton, New Brunswick to initiate and establish a successful string program

Babineau, N. (2007). An overview of the history and development of string teaching and orchestral training in Canada to 2005. 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/>

several such orchestras have now established music schools or have partnered with the public schools to enhance music education in their respective communities.

A survey of the provinces indicates a great variety of teaching situations that are the result of schools and arts organizations seeking to develop string and orchestral programs to meet the interests and needs of their respective communities. This chapter offers a province-by-province overview of a representative sample of string and orchestral programs in order to illustrate of the state of string and orchestral music education in Canada.²

Responses from the Provinces

British Columbia

The British Columbia Ministry of Education does not recognize nor fund elementary school instrumental programs; the funding for these programs is a result of decisions made by individual districts. When provincial funding for education was decreased in 1982, many string programs were cut. Existing programs reflect a disparity in implementation, as can be seen by comparing the programs in Vancouver and Victoria.

In some Vancouver schools, string programs are offered in heterogeneous classes and ensembles beginning in Grade 4. Classes number from 20 to 50 with ensembles numbering up to 60 participants. Itinerant specialists teach the elementary classes in one district, while classes in other districts are taught by school staff with some string, choral, band or piano experience. Secondary school levels range from beginner to advanced; only one or two schools have a full orchestra for which students would receive a credit. Depending on the school, from 1% to 25% of the string players study privately. Generally, support for the programs has been either

there; a similar program was soon underway in Saint John.

² The Provincial Departments of Education who responded to the survey were unable to provide statistics for the Babineau, N. (2007). An overview of the history and development of string teaching and orchestral training in Canada to 2005. 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/>

sustained or is gradually increasing throughout the city.

The situation is different in District 61, in Victoria. String programs are offered in 50% of the schools in District 61, and are taught by specialists in elementary, secondary, and some middle schools. Classes are offered from Grades 5 to 12 in heterogeneous groupings of 25 and ensembles are offered in middle and secondary schools (Grades 6 to 12). Some ensembles are made up only of strings while others are full orchestras. In middle schools, the average group size is 60, while at the secondary level groups might number up to 90 students; all playing levels are combined in the high school ensembles and students receive credit for their participation. Five percent of the strings students study privately and the proficiency level is on the rise. After a strong community effort—driven by students and supported by local visual artists, sustained the program when it was threatened with closure in 2000—administrative support is now good.

Silence of the Strings, a video by Sher Morgan documents this community movement.

The British Columbia Association of Community Music Schools provides a network for its 16-member conservatory-type music schools across the province. Funding is provided in part by the BC Arts Council. All member organizations offer string instruction and ensemble; some add orchestra and fiddle classes.

However, despite these two cases in British Columbia there are few performance opportunities for string players at the secondary school level throughout the province as a whole, although some districts now include string players in concert band classes and receive a music credit.

Alberta

In Calgary, string programs and orchestras were discontinued in the public schools in the late

number of students enrolled in orchestral programs; some do, however, have figures for band and choral programs. Babinéau, N. (2007). An overview of the history and development of string teaching and orchestral training in Canada to 2005. 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/>

1970s, although the instruments still remain as board property. In 1998–99, the Catholic board initiated a single high school string program, which did not continue.

The Calgary Youth Orchestra (CYO) is a non-profit society supported, in part, by Mount Royal College Conservatory and is the most advanced of the Conservatory's 11 orchestras. Strings for all of the orchestras are trained through the Conservatory's strong string program. Winds and brass tend to be less advanced; here school band classes do help, as most of the wind players also play in local wind ensembles, symphonic bands, or jazz bands. Although interest in the youth orchestra remains high and corporate financial support remains, the actual numbers of participating musicians has declined, due in part to rising fees and despite scholarship and bursary programs available to help defray these costs. In addition, the University of Calgary and the Diploma Program at Mount Royal College offer credit for participation.

As we have seen, the situation of string classes can be vastly different between not just provinces, but between cities in the same province. In Edmonton string classes are now taught through the Public School Enrichment Program, a division of the Victoria School of Performing and Visual Arts. Homogeneous classes are offered in some schools during out-of-school time beginning in Grade 3. Groups include up to 15 members, and age is not a requirement; adults may also join for a fee. String ensemble experience begins in Grade 4 and continues to Grade 12. Ensembles number between 10 to 60 members, but unlike in other school districts in Canada, no high school credit is given. Ten to twenty percent of the string students in Edmonton study privately. Although strings once were included in the school program, they are now considered to be an enrichment experience. This change in perspective has led to a decrease in participants; numbers have dropped from 1,500 to approximately 700, and only a small number of instructors

are board-certified. The program is not offered in the Catholic schools.

In both the intermediate and senior groups of the Edmonton Youth Orchestra (EYO), all strings are privately taught; none are taught through the school programs. However, 5% of the wind players are from school band programs. The EYO services over 150 students aged 11–24.

In Grande Prairie, Alberta, string programs are offered in all public schools, but none are offered in the Catholic or county schools. Enrollment in string programs currently stands at approximately 300 students, and string orchestra is offered for credit at the high school level. Interest in strings is increasing throughout the city, but the area suffers from a lack of qualified string teachers.

Few school string programs are offered in Lethbridge but there are several youth orchestras and interest in strings is increasing. A parent response to the survey noted that a significant majority of the string players are schooled at home or online. As in other areas, the conservatory orchestra and local symphony appear to compete for advanced string players from the small number who are trained to the appropriate level.

The Alberta String Association provides a network for its more than 20 members, including conservatories, academies of music, and Suzuki and Talent Education schools.

Saskatchewan

A response from the Department of Education indicated that although the student population in Saskatchewan has declined over the past six years, enrollment in band and choral programs has increased. Because there are no longer any high school orchestras, string students may receive a music credit only through participation in a band or general music program. In some case, however, a credit may be awarded through a locally developed program option. All

students in Grades K–9 must study Arts Education³ (dance, drama, music, and visual art) as a required area of study; individual school divisions determine if the music program in their schools will include instrumental instruction.

Regina public schools offer a co-curricular string program as a bridge to private instruction. Classes are organized through the school division office; students pay a fee directly to the instructor and most rent their instruments independently. Two out-of-school programs—one in the north end of the city and one in the south—are offered to all students from Grades K-8. Violin and cello classes number four to five students and are taught by string specialists. In addition, the Regina Symphony personnel conduct string ensembles. There are no orchestras in the secondary schools, but the band program, available in all of the secondary schools, remains strong.

A number of opportunities are available to students in Regina beyond the classroom. The Regina Symphony sponsors the South Saskatchewan Youth Orchestra, which involves players from both the conservatory and the university music department. The Regina Community Orchestra is open to youth and adults for a member fee. The Moose Jaw Youth String Orchestra offers three levels of instruction: Beginners (one-on-one), Juniors (beginning ensemble), and Seniors (intermediate level). Earlybird Ensembles offer small ensemble and mentor teaching experiences for more advanced players. The University of Regina's Department of Music provides a chamber orchestra for qualified string students.

Although there is interest in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, there are no school-based string programs and there are currently too few private teachers to meet the demand. Opportunities for string students do exist outside of school, however. For example, in addition to the 47-piece full orchestra, the Saskatoon Youth Orchestra program offers preparatory string group classes

³ See chapter 4 in this book for a more detailed discussion of the current music curriculum in Saskatchewan. Babin, N. (2007). An overview of the history and development of string teaching and orchestral training in Canada to 2005. 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/>

and instruction on string bass. Individuals in these classes range in age from 9 to 20. Some wind students come from school band programs but 90% of the wind players and all of string players study privately. More advanced players are often recruited by the Saskatoon Symphony, which is now discussing plans for initiating a training program for strings.

The Saskatchewan Orchestral Association provides workshops and assistance for its 16 members, including private training programs, youth, community, university, and professional orchestras.⁴

Manitoba

String programs once were strong in Manitoba, but have now almost completely disappeared while band programs continue to flourish. In Winnipeg, school-based string programs were discontinued 10 years ago; however, there now appears to be momentum building towards recreating these school-based programs. High levels of parent demand have led to the inclusion of private Suzuki-type instruction in a few schools throughout the city. One collegiate school offers a string orchestra for students who are studying privately. The University of Manitoba's Faculty of Music spearheaded the development of string programs in three elementary schools, with support from Yamaha Canada, for the 2004–5 school year. The Faculty of Music also plans to offer a string pedagogy class. Illustrating additional growth in string education, a designated arts middle school has begun a violin program, and plans to continue to develop this area. There are strong, privately operated Suzuki programs throughout the city.

The Winnipeg Youth Orchestra, established in 1925, offers opportunities for three

⁴ Other promising programs in Saskatchewan include the Prince Albert Strings. Based in the Prince Albert School, a private Catholic high school, this program offers both adult and youth ensembles; it began in 2004–5. Babineau, N. (2007). An overview of the history and development of string teaching and orchestral training in Canada to 2005. 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/>

levels of experience for youth aged 9–19: the Junior Strings (55 players), the Concert Orchestra (65 players), and the Youth Symphony (35 players). All string players study privately; the wind players, however, generally audition from school programs. The senior group is presently suffering from a lack of advanced string players.

Ontario

In Ontario, changes to education made by the provincial government in the 1990s, funding cuts, and the 2003 double cohort (a result of the elimination of Grade 13) have greatly affected both school programs and youth orchestras. Several schools that once had full instrumental programs are no longer able to offer both band and orchestral programs. Consequently, youth orchestras have fewer advanced players. Throughout the province there are several Suzuki and Talent Education programs, and the Ontario Federation of Symphony Orchestras (OFSO) has long encouraged orchestras to develop education programs in partnership with the schools to complement programs or provide experiences in instrumental music.

In London, Ontario, string instruction in the schools begins at Grades 7 and 8, but only in those schools that feed into the four high schools with orchestras. A privately organized Saturday morning program called Forest City School for Talent Education offers group and ensemble experience for over 200 London-area, privately taught string students. Student range in age from pre-school through to high school, and the repertoire levels extend from ‘Pre-twinkle’ to the Shostakovich String Quartet. The London Youth Symphony offers two levels of ensemble experience: Youth Strings (40 players) and a full Youth Symphony (40 players). Many of the string and wind players study privately.

In the Niagara Region, only a few secondary schools continue to offer string programs. In the past, the Niagara Symphony collaborated with the schools in offering a string program, but this collaboration has been discontinued. The Niagara Youth Orchestra seeks to complement both the school and private study programs by providing two levels of full orchestras: Junior (65 players) and Senior (55 players); participants range in age from 8 to 20. With fewer advanced players, interest at the senior level is on the decline. The Symphony offers summer music camps for beginning strings, percussion, and for advanced players on all instruments.

There are few string and orchestral programs in the Ottawa schools. Orchestre De La Salle Marthe Charlebois is a public school-based orchestra of 15 players aged 12 to 18; all members of the orchestra study privately and student-paid fees cover the cost of a contracted conductor from Montreal. The Ottawa Youth Orchestra Academy provides ensemble training for strings, winds, brass, and harp through two full orchestras and eight instrumental ensembles. They also offer a choir, a beginner's and pre-school program, and instruction in music theory and history. Over the past three years, enrollment in these various programs has increased.

With assistance from the Ontario Arts Council, the Sudbury Symphony Orchestra (SSO) engages a resident string quartet whose members are guaranteed 15 hours of teaching in addition to their performance mandate. As a result, the SSO has recently instituted a Conservatory of Music in order to offer—in both French and English—individual and group lessons on violin, viola, cello, and piano. In addition, the quartet members have initiated string programs in seven schools; individual lessons are offered during noon hours. The schools provide the space and are asked for a donation to help defray the costs; students pay a nominal fee and the orchestra absorbs the costs for those who cannot afford to pay anything at all. Students who participate in the music program of the SSO for a minimum of two years are

eligible to receive credit at either Laurentian University or Cambrian College.

As part of a restructuring process in the city of Thunder Bay, the School Board has announced the closure of Fort William Collegiate, the only school offering a full orchestral and band program in the area. The school provided 75% of the string players for the Thunder Bay Youth Orchestra, with the remainder of the players coming from the studios of private teachers. The youth orchestra of more than 50 players, aged 10 to 25, rehearsed at the school under an independently contracted conductor. The future of the string program is uncertain, and the collegiate students are being relocated to other area schools.

In the mid-1980s, the Timmins Symphony Orchestra offered to provide instrumental instruction in the schools in exchange for in-school concerts. Students paid a fee and the schools contributed space. To meet a growing demand, the orchestra then established a separate Symphony Music School that now services more than 300 students through a Youth Orchestra, Chamber Music, Symphony Choir, and Summer Music Camp program. Throughout the city, school music programs continue to be cut by the area school boards and with the demise of the local Arts Council music awareness appears to be on the decline. The orchestra is, however, currently developing a public relations plan for increased community awareness, as well as a formal music curriculum for their music school.

In the province's largest city, Toronto, instrumental music is taught by itinerant teacher-performers who have had some education training. Teachers are paid an hourly fee through a separate, but board funded, music division budget. Half of the elementary schools offer the itinerant-taught string classes, which begin at the Grade 5 and 6 levels. Other schools offer string classes, ranging in size from 15 to 35, with on-site teachers who have an interest in string teaching; ensemble and orchestra experiences generally begin at Grade 8. Citywide orchestras

and string orchestras are open to students up to Grade 8, and for secondary school students by audition. Of the 102 high schools in Toronto, 48 schools offer a string class and orchestral program, most of which are taught by specialists. In-service instruction is provided for both board-contracted and itinerant teachers. Music students may also attend board-funded summer resident and day camps. Since the elimination of Grade 13, more of the private-study students at the secondary school level are choosing to not participate in school instrumental ensembles in order to take other academic courses.⁵

Quebec

Public school programs in Quebec are governed by the Ministry of Education, while the Ministry of Culture and Communication has funded conservatories and private schools of music since 1942. Public school arts programs have been subject to funding restrictions since the early 1980s, and as a result, interest in the private music schools has grown, particularly for strings. Larger centres have school band programs and may offer strings or an orchestra in one of the schools. In the Quebec system, primary and secondary school continue to Grade 11, followed by CEGEP (colleges d'enseignement general et professionnel). CEGEP schools were initiated in 1967 to serve as an orientation to university or to a profession. There are presently 48 CEGEP schools in the province; some are dedicated to the arts.

⁵ There is a range of activity in smaller cities as well as the ones cited. In Kitchener-Waterloo string classes are now offered in fewer schools and begin later than in the past. The Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony Youth Orchestra Programme is a division of the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony and provides three levels of playing experience for youth aged 6 to 24: Junior Strings (18 players), Youth Sinfonia (35 players, strings only), and the Youth Orchestra (50 players), as well as the Valhalla Brass Ensemble and Chamber Music. All string players, and 80% of the wind players, study privately. Eighty percent of the youth orchestra string players also play in the university orchestra. In Mississauga, string classes are found in only a few schools. The Mississauga Youth Orchestra has 85 players with an age range of 12 to 22. As can be seen in many cities, all the string players and 90% of the wind players study privately; two junior string groups offer preparatory experience. The city of Oakville also has few school-based string programs, and no high school orchestras. The Halton Youth Orchestra provides two levels of experience, a Chamber Orchestra (32 players) and the Youth Symphony (over 40 players), with ages ranging from 9 to 19. All strings study privately, many through the Oakville Suzuki Association. There is competition for

Babineau, N. (2007). An overview of the history and development of string teaching and orchestral training in Canada to 2005. 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/>

The programs offered through the Quebec Conservatory system offer several levels of instruction from beginner to professional. Some conservatories collaborate with area CEGEP or secondary schools to offer a full academic, partially fee-based music enrichment experience culminating in a college diploma. As a result, music students may begin their professional training as early as age 16.

There are a few string programs in Montreal public schools, which are offered from Grades 7 to 11. On the island of Montreal, six schools offer strings. One elementary program begins at Grade 4 and then feeds into a secondary school that offers two streams: a music option open to all, and a music concentration that requires an entrance exam. Students in the music concentration stream receive private instruction as part of the curriculum, participate in an ensemble, and are allowed school practice time. Pierre Laporte High School accepts 700 students by examination, and it offers a highly specialized program with private instruction for everyone; this provides differing levels of orchestral training. Although funding has recently been under question, the program has now been extended in response to community pressure. The West Island English School Board High School offers heterogeneous string classes as a music option for students in Grades 7 to –11; however, semestering causes a number of continuity difficulties. Furthermore, two of the CEGEP schools offer small string programs, but no orchestra.

With an enrollment of 1,700 students, the Fine Arts Core Education (FACE) School provides a comprehensive music program from kindergarten to Grade 11, with an emphasis on strings. In the late 1990s the school was destined for closure, but a newly appointed head of strings changed the curriculum in 2000 to offer a Suzuki string program for students in kindergarten to Grade 3, and four levels of orchestras in an extra-curricular program. The string

advanced strings from the adult orchestra in the area.
Babincaud, N. (2007). An overview of the history and development of string teaching and orchestral training in Canada to 2005. 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/>

program tripled in size in only four years. The senior level symphony orchestra now offers an apprenticeship program that involves its principal players as tutors for younger string students.

The Atlantic Provinces

String programs in the Atlantic Provinces are found mainly in urban schools and they are largely the result of a small group of dedicated individuals. As these string specialists begin to leave the area or retire, these programs are increasingly in jeopardy. There are few string specialists available to replace them, or to expand the programs in areas where interest is high.

New Brunswick

In New Brunswick, strings are largely dependent upon private teaching, except in the principal cities. In Hampton, New Brunswick, Fran Dearin, who was teaching strings in Halifax, was invited to initiate a string program in the Hampton schools in 1979. Presently, 2.5 teachers are on staff and violin classes are offered in some schools; these classes begin in Grade 4. Cello, bass, and string ensembles are offered through a district-wide out-of-school program. String classes continue to Grade 12, but by Grade 9 or 10 students are encouraged to study privately. Private study involves considerable cost, as the students must travel to Saint John; there are few private teachers in the immediate Hampton area. The intermediate ensemble (65 players) is a “workshop orchestra” which meets for a full day seven or eight times a year. The senior ensemble (36 players), an advanced repertoire group, meets weekly; several of the players are also in the New Brunswick Youth Orchestra. Community support is strong, but administrative budget and staffing decisions has threatened the program and

left its future uncertain.

The string program in Saint John involves 250–300 students and is currently taught by string specialists who are separately board-contracted for a total of 1.4 positions. Homogeneous classes are offered from Grades 3 to 12; some elementary classes are co-curricular in school time. An additional after-school district-wide program offers classes for all levels. Some students must travel from the far reaches of the district to participate; fewer than half study privately. String ensembles are ability-grouped as junior, intermediate, and senior, with an additional ensemble offered at Saint John High School. A district-wide school symphony orchestra is soon to be discontinued because of a lack of advanced wind players. A high percentage of the New Brunswick Youth Orchestra strings are from the Saint John program. In addition, the New Brunswick Youth Orchestra draws participants from all areas of the province and offers concerts in representative centres. Support has grown substantially for the group, and the playing level is now considerably more advanced.⁶

Nova Scotia

String programs in Nova Scotia are mainly centred in the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), an amalgamation of Halifax, Dartmouth, and the former county. District supplementary funding plans for the arts were in place in Halifax and Dartmouth before amalgamation, and each had a centrally located music centre. String programs and the music centre continue to be supported in these two areas but they are continually under threat from budget cutbacks. Parental support is strong in both communities.

In Halifax more than 900 students are involved in an extended day school program for

⁶ In 2004 the orchestra was recommended for a Carnegie Hall performance. Then, in 2005 and with provincial support, they travelled to Italy; the province invested \$35,000 toward “Virtuoso Italia 2005”.

Babineau, N. (2007). An overview of the history and development of string teaching and orchestral training in Canada to 2005. 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/>

string instruction. All classes are homogeneous and partially co-curricular at the elementary level where violin and cello are introduced at Grade 3. Junior high and high school students participate in skill development and repertoire classes offered through in-school and all-city honours classes. For the latter, classes are ability grouped, and viola and string bass instruction is made available. Ensemble instruction is introduced at Grade 6 through half-day workshops. Students then continue in school, regional, or all-city ensembles. Secondary school credit is offered, but semestering causes difficulties in scheduling in-school programs. The Halifax Schools Symphony Orchestra is fully instrumentated; students must audition. Most of the string players study privately, several are in the Nova Scotia Youth Orchestra, and some have been accepted into the National Youth Orchestra.

More than 600 students participate in the Dartmouth program. Violin classes are offered from Grades 4 to 6 in half of the elementary schools; the remainder of the program is centralized as an after-school all-city program. Classes continue in homogeneous groupings to Grade 12. String ensembles begin at Grade 7 and continue to high school; only two students study privately, and secondary school credit is given for class and ensemble participation. A small chamber ensemble is selected from the senior string ensemble.

The Nova Scotia Youth Orchestra (NSYO) draws its string players mainly from the HRM, while the wind section is filled from band programs across the province. The NSYO is a fully instrumentated ensemble with 60 players, all of whom study privately. Half the string players also participate in a public school orchestra. Interest in and support for the youth orchestra is growing.

In both Halifax and Dartmouth, a shortage of qualified staff has made it difficult to expand the programs or to replace retiring teachers. Current hiring practices also make it

difficult to continue engaging certified string specialists.⁷ Several of the younger teachers studied in the Halifax teacher education program but did not have access to string methods or pedagogy courses at university. Acadia University, however, has recently added a string pedagogy class to their music education program.

Prince Edward Island

String instruction in Prince Edward Island is offered only in a few areas. The Charlottetown school program, which began in the early 1970s under the supervision of the Clement husband–wife team, soon became a model of excellence. However, as difficulties with scheduling, restrictions regarding in-school class time, school policies affecting student participation, and additional subject teaching assignments began to adversely affect their program and teaching, the Clements initiated a private program of individual, group, and ensemble experience that continues today. The Clements have now retired from the school system and part-time teachers now in the schools are working to revive the string program. Violin classes are offered from Grades 4 to 6 in two of the schools that feed into a junior high ensemble/orchestra program. Another school offers a traditional music violin class. At present there is no program at the secondary school level. Meanwhile, the Clements *Singing Strings* program continues to create a demand for additional string programs, public and private, both in the Charlottetown area and across the province. Qualified teachers, however, are in short supply throughout the province. There is no youth orchestra in PEI; advanced student string players are invited to play in the PEI Symphony.

⁷For a discussion of teacher training in Nova Scotia, see chapter 9 of this book. Babinreau, N. (2007). An overview of the history and development of string teaching and orchestral training in Canada to 2005. 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/>

Newfoundland and Labrador

Since 1995, when church-denominated schools became government-funded public school entities, instrumental music has been on the decline in the province. Remnants of former programs are scattered across the province, creating a diverse situation of availability. The churches had supported a tradition of music education in their schools and to this end they provided both equipment and well-qualified teachers. Catholic schools had developed strong string programs, Salvation Army schools focused on brass instruction, and so forth. With the restructuring, the government became financially responsible for all curricular offerings, and core subject teachers, who are not necessarily music specialists, are now being asked to teach music.

A Suzuki program in Saint John's has somewhat filled the gap for some string students, and one school stream has been able to continue a program toward a high school credit program; 98% of the orchestra members study privately, however. The Suzuki program is supported by the Newfoundland Symphony Orchestra (NSO) as part of a youth orchestra program, and junior through senior ensembles and orchestras are conducted by symphony musicians; more advanced players are invited to join the chamber orchestra at Memorial University. The symphony offers a work-grant program for qualified university instrumentalists to assist with the youth orchestras and Memorial University offers an in-depth teacher-training program for music education students, which includes string methods and substantial field experience.

Recently, with a new infusion of government monies for the arts, there is promise that school string programs will again be initiated throughout the province. The government is also providing funding for the preservation of traditional music, and school-based Celtic and fiddling classes are on the rise in some areas.

The Territories

For many years, the northern regions of Canada enjoyed a tradition of Arctic fiddling. While nineteenth-century whalers, sealers, and Hudson Bay workers from the British Isles were ice-locked during the winter months, they taught their traditional music to the Native groups. The seamen exchanged fiddles for fur pelts, and the Inuit adopted the fiddle music as their own. Gradually, as times and circumstances changed, the fiddle music that had been passed down through the generations has begun to disappear.

Interest in playing the violin in many northern areas has been revived in large part through the efforts of Andrea Hansen, a versatile Toronto Symphony Orchestra (TSO) violinist. In 1987 the TSO undertook an Odyssey tour to six language groups in the High Arctic. When, after a performance, a young student asked if they would ever return, Hansen determined that she would find a way to revive fiddle music for these children. With funding assistance from the public and private sector, and donated instruments from a Toronto violin dealer, she established a nonprofit organization called Strings Across the Sky (SATS). When the program was announced in Inuvik later that year, 120 children signed up for lessons. Hansen returns as often as is possible with her busy professional schedule, and she enlists the assistance of volunteers to continue the program in her absence. A teacher-training program has been established and volunteer-taught summer schools have been held each year since 1989. Today SATS services 17 communities in the Canadian North; a First Nations High School offers a credit violin course, and a remote training program has now been made possible through the National Research Council, the Communications Research Council, and the Glenn Gould School.

In 1994, the children in SATS performed with the Edmonton Symphony in Inuvik; in

1997 the northern fiddlers performed with the Toronto Symphony at Toronto's Roy Thomson Hall, and in 1999 a group of the children accompanied Hansen on a trip to the Orkney Islands. *The Friends of Strings Across the Sky* has established "The Cross-Canada Fiddle," a performing program that offers northern fiddlers to opportunity to perform with Canadian orchestras. In recent years, the young performers have appeared with the Thunder Bay, Regina, and Saskatoon Symphonies, and at the Festival of the Sound in Ontario. A graduate of the Halifax strings program, who now is a principal in one of the schools in the North, has also initiated and developed a string program for the students in her district.

Challenges and Considerations

We live in paradoxical times. While school boards are cutting arts programs, cities are exploring the critical role of the arts in building creative communities. While schools discontinue their string programs, the demand for learning a stringed instrument is increasing. While school and university string teachers question the validity of encouraging students to pursue a degree or career in music or music education, the playing level of Canadian string musicians has become world-class, often at a young age. Fran Dearin, a Hampton, New Brunswick string teacher explains:

There's the issue of teacher-training, or lack thereof, so finding young teachers to come in and take over is difficult. The sad thing is that I have a number of former students who would be in a position to do so, but the climate of support for music in public schools today is so difficult to deal with that I'm having a hard time convincing myself that I should be encouraging them to think about it!

The mandate of Canada's National Youth Orchestra (NYO) is to provide pre-professional training for future orchestra musicians. Many who qualify for the NYO program do not intend to pursue music as a career; some are already enrolled in other professional areas of study. In the past, costs for the summer program—including round trip transportation—were completely covered, but now students must fund their own transportation. Many students who qualify for the NYO program cannot afford to spend a summer without paid work. As a result, the NYO is currently examining its structure to investigate ways in which the program can remain accessible to all who have achieved a level of excellence in instrumental music.

Challenges

References in the analysis for changes in education are continually made to the changes brought about by Sputnik.⁸ Problems related to scheduling programs in the arts, in-school versus out-of-school classes for instrumental music, curricular versus extra-curricular programs, funding for arts programs, and a shortage of well-trained teachers began to appear as early as the 1950s.

Many different factors impact the success, or lack thereof, of string and orchestra programs. Some of these factors influence all music programs, but many primarily affect string and orchestra programs. Within the school system, such matters as variants in streams or feeders, separate administrative decisions regarding dual or single track immersion schools under the same board, decentralization, amalgamation, programming and scheduling decisions made by district boards or by individual schools, hiring restrictions, and school attitudes toward

⁸ There was a sharp increase in school funding in North America in the 1950s in response to the notion that Russian children were better educated and that "we" would never keep up in the arms race.

Babineau, N. (2007). An overview of the history and development of string teaching and orchestral training in Canada to 2005. 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/>

music classes during school time have had significant effects on the long-term success of string programs, particularly those that begin in the elementary schools.

As music educators we are faced with the realities of school budget cuts, increased costs, limited resources, scheduling restrictions, a growing number of mandated course requirements for both high school and university education students, changing expectations for educational outcomes, and the diversity of cultures represented in the schools. One must question what can be included in a school-based music program, the intent of the instrumental program, the long-term objectives for school-based string programs that begin at the elementary level, the expected level of proficiency for each level, and to what extent skill building should be exclusively pursued before the emphasis shifts to ensemble and orchestral repertoire performance.

Considerations

What is the purpose of the string program? What are the expected outcomes? Should expectations for class teaching be different from those for private study? What is an appropriate grade level for beginning string classes? The physiological challenges of playing a stringed instrument necessitate an early start if the student is to achieve a sufficient level of skill development to play orchestral repertoire but, for a variety of reasons, the drop-out rate is often higher when instruction begins at the elementary, or even junior high, level. On the other hand, a later start makes it more difficult to achieve a sufficient level of proficiency to continue beyond a basic school experience. What is an acceptable level of proficiency for the amateur string player?

All string teachers contacted over the course of this survey agreed that a combination of individual, group, and ensemble experiences is important if string players are to enjoy success.

They look for an approach or methods and materials that will be effective for class (as opposed to one-on-one) teaching at elementary and secondary school levels. Additionally, scheduling possibilities within or outside of school hours vary with individual school districts, as do the ramifications of out-of-school time scheduling. Schools and other community music organizations are examining the feasibility of developing cooperative relationships with each other in the interest of developing or enhancing string and orchestra training opportunities.

Other challenges to string and orchestra programs include the training and support of string teachers. Is there a need for a national network for public school string and orchestra programs? How do we train string teachers? Methods course offerings are often limited to those that address the general music class, bands, and choirs, and many music education programs now require proficiency in teaching another subject. String methods, when offered, are usually an optional course, as opposed to a requirement, and few universities offer a string pedagogy course for performance majors. Upon graduation, string players have a wide range of options as teachers and/or performers. What will attract them to teaching in the schools? Is it possible to be a string specialist within a school system without a need to teach other subject areas?

The Future

As I communicated with string teachers across the country in order to prepare this survey of string and orchestra education in Canada, I found that optimism remains high in most parts of the country. Each community is seeking ways in which they can maintain or re-institute string and orchestral programs in response to a growing interest in learning to play a stringed instrument.

References

Green, P. & Vogan, N. (1991). *Music education in Canada: A historical account*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Relevant Websites

Alberta String Association: <http://www.albertastringassociation.ca>

British Columbia Association of Community Music Schools: <http://www.bcacms.bc.ca>

Orchestras Canada: <http://www.oc.ca>

Saskatchewan Orchestral Association: <http://www.saskorchestras.com>

Strings Across the Sky: <http://www.stringsacrossthe sky.ca>

Suzuki Association of Ontario: <http://www.suzukiontario.org>