

Music Education in Canada: What is the State of the Art? A Reflection

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With excitement and anticipation, I was pleased to attend the recent symposium entitled *Music Education in Canada: What is the State of the Art?* held at the University of Western Ontario, May 2005. Although this event was not my first academic conference, it was my first music education conference as a doctoral student. Added to the excitement, was the fact that this was an occasion for me to meet many scholars in the field of music education that I had only met through their writings. It was wonderful to be able to put faces with names of these authors. Since it is not very frequent that so many Canadian music education scholars are in one location simultaneously, it was an excellent opportunity!

Now that it is approximately three months after the conference, I am revisiting my informal notes that I formulated during the two days of presentations. The ponderings that I am offering now are re/conceptualized as I reflect back upon the thoughts that I had during the following various stages: preparation for my conference presentations, perceptions during the symposium, and the personal reflection that occurred immediately after the conference. As I revisit my conference notes, I see places on my pages where there are single words. Some of these words resonate, while others now only have a vague purpose. At times, there are a few words joined together to make a phrase, yet at

other times, a number of words join together to formulate a question. Most prevalent, is the latter category, the category of questions.

The central thread of *knowing* and *not-knowing* appears to link the questions together that I formulated. As a doctoral student amidst the transition into academia, I have become intrigued by what it might mean to be a *knower* or a *not-knower*. While I continue to conceptualize the meaning of these words, I realize that both words embrace a shift in perception, a shift in place. Perhaps then, a *knower* is one who moves toward the “expert” role and appears to be one who *knows*. As a doctoral student, I am learning that it is a process of transition to move into the role of *knowing*. What then, is a *knower*? Does one move from being a *not-knower* to a *knower*? Perhaps one might move from being a *knower* to a *not-knower*. What determines the transition?

As I sat and listened to the conference presentations, I remember thinking about *knowing*. Is a *knower* someone who appears to have knowledge and expertise in music, in education, or maybe in both? Where do I fit? I must stand up and share what I *know* when it is my turn to present. Does this make me a *knower*? I am not so sure that I feel comfortable in being a *knower*. Are *knowers* those that are “written down” and have their names attached to their words? Are *knowers* those that appear to be controversial and challenge viewpoints? So many thoughts. . .

What then, might it mean to be a *not-knower*? Is a *not-knower* the listener, the questioner, the one who seeks to acquire *knowing*? Maybe this is where I fit. Perhaps a *not-knower* is one who attends and embraces the ideas and perceptions of others while recognizing oneself. *Not-knowing*, therefore, is not simultaneous with ignorance since *not-knowers* must admit that others *know* that which they do not. There is humility in *not-*

knowing. Maybe a *not-knower* does not necessarily move toward a path of *knowing*. So many thoughts. . .

As I continue to think about the roles of *knowing* and *not-knowing* in the context of the music education symposium, I realize that the distinctions between these two places may not always be that clear. There were times when I moved between the frames of *knowing* and *not-knowing*. There were times when I subconsciously felt the presence of both. Regardless of the place of *knowing* I encountered, the symposium offered a place of empowerment which evolved from the presence of those with similar interests. It was excellent to have been afforded the opportunity to meet so many Canadians who possess passion for what I believe in—educating children musically.