Maxwell's Music House and Wilfrid Laurier University's Faculty of Music: A Study in Contrasting Commonality

Lee Willingham with Graham Finlay, Matt Honsberger, Sarah House, Eric Marcotte, and Ruby Minhas
Wilfrid Laurier University
Rationale for Study

• Gain insights into a relationship between a traditional university music program and a spunky little “for-profit” business that claims to offer similar services to its clients and patrons
• Enlarge our understanding of music education
• Gather feedback from community on impact
• Develop collaborative models between Laurier Music and Maxwell’s Music House
• Research experience for future music educators as they develop a culture of inquiry leading into their chosen profession
Social Relativity of Experience: culture vs CULTURE (Froehlich)

• Little tradition vs. grand tradition (*Music in Everyday Life*, DeNora)

• Meaning construction: Small’s *Musicking* result of the social interactions of music making itself within defined roles of performer and listener

• Lucy Green’s study *How Popular Musicians Learn* with spotlight on self-conceptions through skills and knowledge development: formal vs. informal
Identifying the tensions between western art music and popular culture music

• “Schools must introduce their pupils to high culture and help them to escape the growing creed that sees no difference between Schubert and Blur...” Nicholas Tate, 1996
• “we teach classical music because it requires disciplined study. Expertise in pop, on the other hand, can be acquired by osmosis.” Roger Scruton, 1996
• “I will not play for such swine.” Beethoven in response to talkers during his performance, resulting in a de-contextualizing of an elevated high art object for contemplation
• 300+ auditionned undergraduates

• Performance, Education, Music Therapy, Composition, History and Literature, Theory, and Comprehensive Majors

• Western Art Music genre (some jazz)

• Strong improvisation program (ICE)

• Traditional large and chamber ensembles
Our Mission Statement

The Faculty of Music provides a creative and collegial environment for education and research that fosters artistic and scholarly development of the highest calibre, and enriches the cultural life of the community.
Laurier Music VALUES:
Performance Standards in High Art Tradition
and Academic Scholarship
Cultural Contribution to Waterloo Community and
beyond
Who is Paul Maxwell?

- 26 yr old Business Economics and Music Minor graduate
- Winner of several civic and entrepreneurial awards
- Winner of Laurier Centre for Music in the Community Award, 2011 (June 4)
Concert Venue
Rock Star Camp
Studio Instruction

Want to Play FOR "REAL"?

Guitar (Acoustic & electric)  Bass  Drums  Piano  Voice

MUSIC LESSONS
@ MAXWELL’S MUSIC HOUSE
Jam Space and Workshops
Waterloo Spring Music Kick-off brought to you by Mano A Mano
Submitted by DJ Steel on 2011, April 1 - 18:07
Wax Mannequin, Cyanide Kiss, The Trepid house closing concert series, Down the Alley and Sam Coffey and the Iron Lungs.
Formal and informal music sit side by side. They are siblings, yet there has been little communication between them. What can be learned by bringing both practices into contact with each other?

The main objective of this project is to broaden the interpretation of the term *composer* and bridge classical and pop/rock conventions so that they can be understood as parallel under the general terms *music & composition*. 
Monster Bash with Edwin Outwater, Conductor, Chris Sharpe, Assoc Principal Cellist, and Andrea, KWYouth Symphony Player (http://www.vimeo.com/19343703)
Research
Focus Interviews with two families and young teenagers

• 14 and 15 year olds (one girl, one boy) study guitar, keyboard, voice, and participate in Rock Star Camps
• Both take music in local high schools and find it out of touch-boring-not encouraging their creative interests, nor developing their musical skills
“went to sign up a xxxx-school (local conservatory type studio school) and they were too formal and not very interested in the music we were already doing.” — parent

“walked in Maxwell’s Music House and within 15 minutes I was in a studio playing electric guitar.” — student

“MMH did not put up the usual hurdles to get into music study.” — parent

“MMH encourages our kids to grow their skills, be critical of quality, refine and polish their work...seek a professional quality in performance, and the great thing is that I can enjoy a beverage of choice while watching my kids become creative musicians!” — parent
• “I want to be a composer and performer. I’ve already had songs on the 100.3FM radio station and I’m now a “CIT” in Rockstar Camp. This is my life passion now.” student

• “I think I’ve developed a singing style that you might call new country, and I’ve learned basically how to build a song and perform it. Being pretty shy, I found that my confidence is strengthened in my singing voice.” student
Research: Surveys

• MMH Clients and Patrons  91% rated the atmosphere, services, and contribution to the community as good-excellent

• 90% WLU Faculty of Music Students surveyed strongly believe that a relationship between FofMusic and MMH is desired and important

• 60% of students surveyed on Laurier Campus had never heard of MMH.
Conclusions and Next Steps

• Research continues with larger survey samples (MMH clients/WLU Music/WLU Campus at large)
• Focus interviews
• Scheduled collaborative events, such as Laurier recitals, improv nights, mixed genre concerts
Research Informed Practice in Music Education

How can music educators be prepared for 21\textsuperscript{st} C. classroom?

– A. teachers must become familiar with current popular genres and practice informal music learning themselves

– B. realize that validating current musical practices and passions of students serves to open doors to many other musical practices and genres

– C. incorporate multiple ways to acquire skills and knowledge in music

– D. acknowledge a larger proportion of the student population as “being musical.”