

UNITING THE VOICES

Manitoba's Music Educators Speak With One Voice

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How can our professional music associations best serve music students and music educators? What aspects of service to the music education profession are best done collectively? What services are best provided by the distinct organizations dedicated to supporting their discipline? (i.e. band, choral, string, guitar etc.) These were the questions that Manitoba music teachers addressed when they began the process of restructuring over a decade ago.

The result is a Manitoba Music Educators' Association (MMEA) that is an effective, unified and authentic advocacy voice for 750+ music educators in Manitoba. A strong relationship with government (Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning), many discipline-specific partner organizations, as well as the broader arts community, has given the MMEA a voice for encouraging and nurturing music education across the province. The effectiveness of this approach, some times referred to as the "Manitoba Model", has generated interest and inquiries from other regions of Canada. This article will recount the genesis of this approach, the process involved, the challenges and the rewards of this type of structure.

IN THE BEGINNING

Manitoba in 2006 consisted of 6 music educator support associations which had a loose relationship. These organizations were:

1. "Manitoba Music Educators Association (MMEA) Founded in 1959 in to provide a liaison among music-education groups in Manitoba and between Manitoba groups and those elsewhere in Canada, and to assist in curriculum revision, teacher training, and music-education research."¹
2. The Manitoba Band Association (MBA) - Founded in 1977
3. The Manitoba Choral Association (MCA) - Founded in 1976
4. The Manitoba Classroom Guitar Association (MCGA) - Founded in 2001.
5. The Manitoba Orff Chapter (MOC) - Founded in 1975.
6. Manitoba Registered Music Teachers' Association. (MRMTA) "Founded in 1919 as the Winnipeg Music Teachers' Association."² This organization is currently a professional association for private teachers not always connected to the school system.

IDENTIFYING A NEED

As far back as the 1980's, there emerged an awareness among some Manitoba music education leaders, that despite important and very strong work from each of these organizations, there was a lack of cohesiveness and collaboration amongst Manitoba music educators. Under the leadership of successive MMEA Presidents including, Dr. Garry Froese, Muriel Milgrom, Ed Reynolds, Carolyn O'Neil and Marla Fontaine, a series of meetings and conversations with each of the groups were initiated. This manifested itself in a group called the MMEA Council which was comprised of members of the MMEA executive, and a representative from each of the following stakeholders: Band (MBA), Orff (MOC), Choral (MCA), Guitar (MCGA), MB Registered Music Teacher's Association (MRMTA), Music Faculties from local universities, Music for Young Children, Manitoba Conservatory of Music and the Arts (MCMA), Association of Manitoba Arts Festivals (AMAF), Association of Music Administrators of Manitoba (AMAM), as well as a

representative from music industry. While the MMEA Council was proving useful as a platform for dialogue, it was informal, not well attended and had no decision making or voting authority.

Outside of MMEA there was growing dialogue from the leaders of other music associations that it was critical and timely to begin the difficult and challenging road to substantial change. Their concerns centred largely around advocacy issues and the organization and delivery of the provincial music conference. In 2005, a group of educators began the process to provide a more cohesive and unified voice for music educators in Manitoba.³ Ken Epp (Executive Director of the MBA), and Marla Fontaine (President, MMEA) were primary participants and drivers of this early process.

On February 1st 2006, a group of music educators and stakeholders gathered in a think tank to explore these ideas with Bill Kristjanson (local music consultant) as facilitator. One of the first tasks was identification and articulation of the concerns regarding the existing structure of MMEA and concerns surrounding overall support for music education.

In defining the challenge facing MMEA this group came to the conclusion that, “[while] the current configuration of Music Education organizations in Manitoba has resulted in a diverse and responsive collection of associations that meet the needs of their individual constituents,”⁴ several opportunities and potential for growth were identified:

Collaboration and Communication

While there was a level of communication among these organizations, it was un-structured and informal. It was desirable to have a mechanism to allow these organizations to communicate on issues of shared concern and interest and to be able to present their concerns as a united front. In

2005, this became essential as Manitoba Education was initiating the process of revamping Manitoba Music Curricula. It was considered vital that music educators have an effective and efficient vehicle to network with and support MB Education in curricular development.

Advocacy voice

Important issues of advocacy had arisen in the past and would continue to arise in the future. It was incumbent upon each organization to be aware of and advocate for issues affecting their area of provenance. This sometimes resulted in a duplication of effort, or worse, no effort at all. When advocating, each group could only speak for their constituents - a number considerably less than the total number of music educators across the province.

Conference (TEMPO)

Co-ordinated by the Manitoba Teachers' Society, this single day provincial conference allowed music educators to plan shared music professional development. Each organization was responsible for professional development for its members, and for a period of time instrumental music educators held a separate conference. Although reunited, the TEMPO conference was under much scrutiny in regard to the allocation of clinician funds to the different disciplines.

Professional Development

Outstanding professional development was organized and delivered by each organization. There was no one responsible for professional development opportunities relevant to all music educators that would provide the big picture conversations and interactions.

Fragmentation of Membership

Many music educators are not just a band teacher or a choir teacher. Many educators will wear multiple hats in their schools. A music educator may be band teacher and guitar teacher, an early years music specialist and a string teacher. The direction, focus and work was important and vital within the context of the mandates of each of these groups, but it was important to allow our teachers to identify as music educators, not just a choral teacher or band instructor.

From this meeting, a smaller group of educators consisting of Bill Kristjanson, Joan Linklater (MOC) Ken Epp (MMEA), Marla Fontaine (MMEA), and Kim Goerzen(MCA) was formed to craft the first proposals for change. After considerable dialogue and revision, proposals went back and forth between this group and the major stakeholders, especially the MMEA. After 21 months of negotiation, a proposal was brought to the MMEA board and passed with unanimous support of the MMEA board. At the November 24th 2007 Annual General Meeting this proposal was brought to the full membership of MMEA and accepted with 98% in favour. The new board held their first meeting in January of 2008 marking the beginning of the new mandate for the Manitoba Music Educators' Association. Essentially, MMEA had ceased to exist in its old format and had redefined, refocused and rebranded itself.

MMEA TODAY

Simply, MMEA is now responsible for advocacy and professional development that is relevant to the entire population of music educators while at the same time staying removed from grassroots interaction with specific disciplines. Conversely, the four partner organizations (MBA, MCA, MCGA, MOC) are responsible for professional development, and student support specific to their own areas and defer those issues that are of global interest and responsibility to the MMEA.

In the new organization, music educators and music organizations in Manitoba would first join one of the partner organizations. While memberships can be taken out at any time, the majority of memberships are initiated with registration for TEMPO: The Manitoba Music Conference. MMEA then forwards all membership fees to the partners with the exception of one dollar (\$1) that is retained by MMEA as their membership fee. Having joined one of the partner organizations the music educator automatically becomes a member of MMEA.

The MMEA Board consists of 9 members.

Past-President,

4 Members-at-Large (Elected by the membership)

1 representative from each of the four partner groups (MBA, MCA, MCGA, MOC).

The positions of President, Secretary, Treasurer and Advocacy Chair are appointed from the board. It is requested, but not required, that the past-president from the partner groups be appointed as the representative to the MMEA.

In addition there are numerous portfolio positions established for ongoing needs or for specific projects such as: Bookkeeper, Newsletter editor, Membership Secretary, Music Month, Archives, Music Monday, Webmaster, Poster Project, TEMPO Conference Chairperson, AMAM liaison, MB Teachers Society Representative, CMEA National Conference Co-chair, and MB Arts Steering Committee representative.

CHALLENGES

Throughout the process and on an ongoing basis there were a few challenges:

1. **Membership Fees** - The fee for MMEA was set at \$1 while all partner groups retained their existing membership fees. Individual membership in CMEA would be advertised and encouraged by all partner groups, but not be compulsory. MMEA desires a strong connection with CMEA but realized that the proposal for a new MMEA, would not have been successful had the CMEA fee been compulsory.
2. **Relationship with MTS** - Since the Manitoba Teachers' Society recognized the MMEA as the association representing school music teachers, it was required that 60% of the MMEA membership be active members of MTS. Several partner organizations had significant numbers of non-MTS members in their members. The MRMTA had very few school teachers in their organization and were not included in the final restructuring proposal.
3. **Historical Contribution of MMEA** - In order to facilitate the new structure, it became apparent that MMEA itself would need to change significantly. This was extremely difficult for the organization as there was a long history of service and projects associated with the organization. The services provided by MMEA were absorbed by other groups, while some were continued and others abandoned.
4. **Support for the All Music Educators** - In 2007, MMEA provided service to 214 members, mostly Early Years music teachers, many who were not part of the Manitoba Orff Chapter. In restructuring, specific support for this group was lost. However, the MOC has done considerable outreach to all early years music educators in an effort to provide them with needed services and relevant professional development. As well, the TEMPO conference continues to provide clinics and workshops geared towards this group.

OPPORTUNITIES

During restructuring, the committee sought to determine which responsibilities could be best done collectively and which were best left to the partner groups.

Here are the areas of responsibility for MMEA and it's partners.

Activity	MMEA	Partners (MBA, MCA, MCGA, MOC)
ACTIVITY	What is best done together	What is best done separately
Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provincial Music Conference (TEMPO) for all music educators. Cross discipline PD. i.e. Leadership, Curriculum, Assessment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target member needs. i.e. MBA dedicates resources to PD for band teachers, MCA dedicates resources to choral educators.
Student Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Honour ensembles, festivals, workshops etc.
Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Represent all Music Educators to stakeholders Official voice to Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning. Hold a seat on the MB Education Arts Steering Committee Promote music education on a provincial and cross disciplinary basis. Collaboration with Manitoba Education on Music Month Concert Series at the Manitoba Legislature. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote own activities and specialties.
National Affiliations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canadian Music Educators' Association Coalition for Music Education in Canada (informal) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canadian Band Association Choral Canada (ACCC) Carl Orff Canada
Provincial Affiliations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manitoba Teachers Society Association of Music Administrators of Manitoba Alliance for Arts Education in Manitoba (informal) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional branches of each organization.

Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with Arts Consultants at MB Education • Communicate with all music educators • Provide a shared calendar of events of all partners. • Keep membership aware of provincial issues surrounding music education. • Electronic Journal/Newsletter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate with members of their organization. Access to all music educators through MMEA • Provides calendars of their own events including concerts • Newsletters
Scholarships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholarships for teachers and students within their discipline area.
Recognition Awards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administer the CMEA Builder Awards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific to each area

Since restructuring, the MMEA has been able to move forward in its mandate on several fronts:

Relationship with the Ministry of Education. MMEA nurtures the positive relationship with our provincial government through an annual meeting with the Minister of Education and Advanced Learning. Items of celebration and of concern to music educators are brought to the attention of government. As well, the Minister of Education hosts the April Music Month initiative - a series of 4 concerts at the Manitoba Legislature featuring a diverse cross section of school music groups from around Manitoba.

Advocacy. With its collective voice MMEA has been a proactive advocate for music education. This is done through our April Music Month partnership with Manitoba Government, our Music Monday partnership with the Coalition for Music Education in Canada and our Music Poster Project. MMEA has a united advocacy voice surrounding curriculum development and implementation, the Manitoba provincial report cards and class size initiatives by government. Dialoguing and networking with our government, union, and policy makers in a collaborative, supportive environment has been strengthened by the unified voice of over 700 music educators.

Philosophy Statement. Integral to restructuring was defining the purpose and values of Manitoba music educators. Led and authored by Dr. Janet Brenneman, Dean of the School of Music at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, the process to create a made in Manitoba philosophy for music education included a workshop with large groups of music educators at the 2010 and 2011 annual Music Leadership Conferences. The philosophy statement was accepted by the MMEA board in 2012 and is posted on the MMEA website. As the introduction to the statement articulates:

A philosophical statement establishes a foundation for the nature and value of music education for the members of MMEA, confirming what they already do as active music educators and offering ways of critically reflecting upon their music education practices as a means of keeping current with the discipline.⁵

Mission and Value Statements. Arising from the philosophy statement were the mission and value statements. Input was provided through a workshop at the Music Leadership Conference (2011) and a full day workshop in June of 2012. Participants in this workshop consisted of identified music leaders from the partner affiliates as well as the Association of Music Administrators in Manitoba (AMAM). This led to the Mission and Value statement, presented below.

Mission Statement⁶

The purpose of the Manitoba Music Educator's Association (MMEA) is to support and promote music education and provide a unified voice for music educators in our communities.

Value Statements

Nature of Music - We value music as a unique discipline requiring specific knowledge and skills, the development of which is nurtured by pedagogically sound musical experiences.

Opportunity - We believe that every student has the right to a high quality music education that engages students of diverse backgrounds, abilities, and experiences in music making.

Music Making - We believe that active engagement in music making through singing, playing, listening, conducting, composing, arranging and improvising is central to music learning and the development of musicianship.

Relationship and Community - We believe music education helps students create meaningful relationships with others. Music education has the potential to build a sense of community within a school as well as create connections in the wider community.

Music for Life - We believe that the ultimate goal of music education is to foster independent and creative musicians, equipped for life-long engagement with music and music making.

Professionalism - We believe that music education should be taught by professionally trained music educators with proficient knowledge and skills in the areas of music performance, pedagogy and musicianship. We value, encourage, and promote ongoing professional development.

Research – We believe that students are best served through research-based practices that support Music Educators’ instructional decision-making, as well as historical and philosophical research that provides perspective in designing curriculum to meet the needs of students and communities.

Collaboration - We believe that collaborations among music educators and between educators, parents, music industry, educational leaders and other stakeholders are fundamental to the future advancement of music education initiatives.

Leadership - We believe our organization is most influential and effective when music educators speak with a united voice. We value cooperation with school divisions, provincial and national professional organizations and governments.

Advocacy – We believe that the best advocacy for music education is strong music programs. We believe it is the responsibility of MMEA to individually and collectively take all practical and appropriate action steps to promote the mission and values of the organization.

Building a National Community. MMEA believes in multi-level partnerships. To this end, MMEA has partnered with CMEA to help build a collaborative community of music educators at the national level through the sponsorship of a National Music Educators Conference. Such an event has not been held in Canada since the early 1990s. MMEA is pleased to be hosting, along with the CMEA, the 2015 Canadian Conference for Music Education – *Connecting the Community* – Winnipeg July 9th – 11th, 2015.

CONCLUSION and RECOMMENDATIONS

It is understood that all provinces face challenges surrounding advocacy and representation. Every journey will, by circumstances, be different. In Manitoba a model that is working was developed through decades of conversations and collaborations. Make no mistake; the road was not easy and there were many difficult conversations. The right people in the right place, at the right time, willing to give a little to gain more, were the key to success. MMEA acknowledges the terrific group of educators that continue to give of their time to all of our music educator associations. Together, in healthy positive relationship, we are stronger, greater than the sum of our parts.

With MMEA looking after music education in provincial and encompassing terms, and excellent partners taking care of the grassroots, music education in Manitoba continues to flourish. What is core to our current organizational success is the relationship and communication between MMEA and its partner groups. A relationship that through collaboration, focus and a united voice provides the highest possible quality music education to teachers and students in Manitoba.

¹ Manitoba Music Educators' Association. (n.d). In *The Canadian Encyclopedia online*. Retrieved from: <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/manitoba-music-educators-associationassociation-manitobaine-des-educateurs-de-musique-emc/>

² Manitoba Registered Music Teachers' Association - Retrieved from: http://mrmmta.org/?page_id=12

³ Educators involved in this process included: Marla Fontaine, Ken Epp, Liz Kristjanson, Bill Kristjanson, Carolyn O'Neil, Ian Crowson, Joan Linklater, Kim Goertzen, Rebecca Brown, Reno Gerl, Helen LaRue, Terry Welsh, Janet Brenneman, Karin Klassen, Jeff Hunter and Marlene Stephens.

⁴ Notes from MMEA sponsored think tank. February 1st, 2006.

⁵ Brenneman, J., (2012) *MMEA Philosophy Statement* p.2 Retrieved from: <http://mymmea.ca/about/philosophy-statement.html>

⁶ MMEA Mission and Value Statements (2012) Retrieved from: <http://mymmea.ca/about/mission-and-values.html>