

ENSEMBLE

MUSIC EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA'S SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

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ADVOCACY

Reflections on Five Years of the US SupportMusic Coalition

Michael Blakeslee, National Association for Music Education, USA, 1 June 2008

Advocacy is one of those things that we in music education really shouldn't have to deal with, because the benefits of music as a part of the education of every student are so obvious.

Advocacy is also one of those things that nobody really has the time to deal with: music teachers are far too busy, our colleagues in the music business have to look after business, and our many, many supporters in the wider community have concerns and challenges of their own.

And when individuals stand up and do the work of advocates, they don't often face real antagonism to the value of music education - just conflicting priorities.

We don't face unwillingness to allocate resources for music education - just an inability to understand how and why scarce funding can be spread across the entire curriculum and how to structure schools to educate the whole child.

So advocacy for music education is a task undertaken by people who don't have time, and they are fighting a poorly defined enemy that is not really an enemy.

That's a prospect to make well-meaning activists turn away from advocacy and back to their daily tasks.

But we still must advocate for music education.

We must do so because we live and work in a time when those concerned with an issue must speak up, or the issue will die from lack of attention.

And we must advocate for music education in the schools precisely because we know that our issue can't be ignored. The benefits of music as a part of the education of every student are not only obvious - they are essential to our children.

The importance and the seriousness of advocacy efforts are one major reason why we have formed associations and coalitions to put muscle behind those efforts. After all, associations and coalitions grow up when groups of individuals face common challenges, share common goals, and determine their goals will be best achieved when they develop common strategies.

Read more at <http://www.supportmusic.com/drjohn/archive/2008-06-01.mhtml>

The SupportMusic Coalition was formed in 2003 in the US by the National Association for Music Education and the International Music Products Association, bringing together American music teachers and music merchants, as well as music performers and music lovers, to promote the cause - and secure the future - of music education.

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RESOURCES

The Song Room: Lessons with a different beat

Margaret Cook, The Age, June 23, 2008

Students from East Melbourne's St John the Evangelist School are taking part in a free program run by The Song Room, a not-for-profit organisation that offers music and creative arts - taught by professional artists such as Ms Carr - to disadvantaged children across Australia.

"An estimated three out of four students in government primary schools don't have a specialist music teacher," says Song Room spokesman Paul Curran. "Often those same kids don't have any music or creative arts in their (outside) lives.

"However, there is strong international research that access to them improves academic outcomes and strengthens social and communication skills, self-esteem and teamwork."

Ms Carr, a singer-dancer-actor who also plays the piano, has worked with The Song Room for four years at schools across Melbourne.

"I enjoy it because I get to use my skills and pass what I know onto the students," she says. "I aim to bring them out of their shells, to give them confidence to perform in front of people, and also to improve their English and language skills."

She works with each grade over two terms, adjusting the weekly lessons to their level and ability. At St John, the culmination will be the school concert at the end of term three, with an audience of up to 200 proud relatives.

Principal Phil Cachia says about three-quarters of St John students live in housing commission flats and 99% come from non-English-speaking backgrounds.

"We want to give them a cross-section of education and we knew we needed to enhance music, dance and drama," he says. "But the only way we could have afforded this program would have been at the expense of a librarian or PE teacher. This is the fourth year with Natalie and it's amazing how far the children have come."

Read more at <http://www.theage.com.au/education/lessons-with-a-different-beat-20080622-2uw0.html>

Read more about the Song Room at <http://www.songroom.org.au>

Musica Viva in Schools

David Hobson takes on role of Music Ambassador to Schools

Musica Viva announced in March that it has appointed one of Australia's best-known and favourite opera singers, tenor David Hobson, to the newly created role of Musica Viva In Schools Ambassador.

The singer, musician and composer has agreed to be the public face of Musica Viva In Schools with the aim of raising awareness of the importance of music education in Australia. As Ambassador, he will endorse the Musica Viva In Schools program and undertake a strong advocacy role for music education.

Musica Viva General Manager, Mary Jo Capps, says: "It is well documented that active participation in music from an early age can help children optimise their potential by improving capabilities in a number of key learning areas - such as reasoning and problem solving, maths and language, lateral thinking and memory, time management and eloquence, social and team skills - not to mention the transformative impact music can have on a child for the rest of their life. [1]

Musica Viva In Schools helps achieve these outcomes in over 400,000 Australian children every year.

"We are delighted that David Hobson has agreed to be the face of Musica Viva in Schools. His versatility and experience as a composer as well as a performer align perfectly with the principle of Musica Viva In Schools - of experiencing music by performing, listening, moving and creating."

About Musica Viva In Schools

Musica Viva In Schools is an interactive music education program that has been working in schools throughout Australia since 1981, with subsequent expansion into Singapore (1998).

It reaches 400,000 children annually and is regularly cited as a model program linking professional musicians, classroom teachers and the student community leading to achievement of curriculum priorities.

It is based on three core principles:

- offering professional development courses and curriculum-based resources to enable teachers to deliver music education successfully in their school;
- providing students with unique live interactive music experiences that enhance and affirm the learning process; and
- developing the skills of professional performers to become true educational collaborators with teachers.

In 2006, Musica Viva In Schools was awarded the Australian Classical Music Award for Outstanding Contribution to Australian Music in Education.

Read more at http://musicaviva.com.au/in_schools

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OPINION

Music & Arts Education is Essential to Development of Creative Economy & 21st Century Skills

Fred Behning, 3 June 2007

There is a great deal of concern and debate regarding America's continued leadership and competitiveness in an increasingly flat global marketplace. In today's post-industrial economy, a high premium is placed on math and science skills. Boards of education around the country are attempting to respond with more rigorous graduation requirements focused on achievement in the math and science curricula.

This approach, often at the expense of music, art, dance, and drama studies, unfortunately overlooks the critical linkage between the creative arts and the application of creativity in the workplace.

I absolutely endorse and support more effective learning in the areas of math and science whether through additional coursework or improvements to the current curricula. The most attractive opportunities for today's graduates will be as knowledge workers, where math and science skills are "jacks or better." They get you in the game. Further, we as a nation must develop new generations with these skills to maintain our competitiveness in the global marketplace.

While math and science skills are fundamental to 21st Century business, the success factors for any individual or organization are far greater. Arguably one of the great success stories of the tech sector, Microsoft®, has built a "competency wheel" that defines 37 workplace skills that the corporation values.

Only three of these competencies are related to technology, a dramatic illustration that math and science skills alone are not enough.

Students must also learn teamwork, organization, time management, group problem solving, and leadership, but where and how do they acquire such important but intangible skills? Most people recognize team sports as one source for the experiences that build those competencies. Another is participation in collaborative fine arts such as band, drama, chorus, dance and orchestra. In a 1995 article in the Chicago Music Alliance newsletter, management expert Peter Drucker is quoted as saying, "your student orchestras and bands are ... teaching your students to be valued performers in the organizations of the future."

The fine arts carry additional developmental benefits. Whether it's music or dance notation, sculpture or painting, or translation of written word to emotion and action, all fine arts experience is built on conversion of the abstract into reality. This is Creativity 101 as taught in no other academic setting. According to Grant Venerable, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Lincoln University, in Teaching Music, April 1997 "the very best engineers and technical designers in the Silicon Valley industry are, nearly without exception, practicing musicians."

Read more at <http://www.supportmusic.com/drjohn/archive/2007-06-03.mhtml>

Fred Behning retired from IBM Corporation after a 32-year career that included assignments in systems engineering, product development, management, and customer technology briefings, and is still an IBM consultant. A life-long musician, Fred plays oboe and English horn in the Williamson County Symphony Orchestra and the Austin Symphonic Band.

Let music lead Rudd's revolution

Stephen Crabbe Online Opinion 22 February 2008

Quality teaching of music in all Australian schools must become a high priority in the education revolution Kevin Rudd promises. If it does not, he will disappoint a great many citizens and condemn the nation's children to a second-rate education.

Why is this so? And what is necessary to deliver universal, effective music education?

As the Prime Minister stands there at the helm and Julia Gillard formulates her education policy, the answers are right there under their noses. And the two previous Ministers for Education, now Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition, would do well to remind them of this.

In 2004-05 the then Minister for Education, Brendan Nelson, initiated the National Review of Music Education in Schools. It attracted about 6,000 submissions - an unprecedented response to a government enquiry. There was obviously a lot of passion among the public about giving all school students access to quality music teaching.

The Government funded a report by Professor Margaret Seares based on the findings of the Review. In her introduction she wrote: "Raising the quality and status of music education will have a positive impact on the breadth and depth of aesthetic, cognitive, social and experiential learning for all Australian students and, ultimately, for our society at large."

The broad thrust of the report was summarised thus:

- music education is valuable and essential for all Australian school students;
- students miss out on effective music education;
- high priority action is needed in a number of particular areas;
- quality teaching is the key;
- effective teacher education is essential;
- the partners in effective music education need to take leadership and action roles; and raising the status of music in schools will improve the quality of music in schools.

For substantial reform along these lines to occur, Seares pointed out, required "collaborative action and a leadership role for the Australian government". The report made 99 recommendations in all.

The Seares' Report led to a national summit convention of music educators and organisations. The result was a blueprint for government action.

Read more at <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=7014&page=0>

Languages and Music: natural partners in education

Stephen Crabbe, Online Opinion, 29 May 2008

Of course students in Australian schools should be learning languages other than English (LOTE). Other writers have presented a number of excellent reasons for making it mandatory. But it seems that nobody has raised another crucial point: languages (including English) should be studied together with music.

As I have argued (above), music should urgently be slotted into the national curriculum and adequately funded. This applies especially in primary schools. One reason music education is so essential is that it is a powerful facilitator of language development. Advocates for languages in education should combine with their music counterparts to campaign for both to be taught to all students in Australian schools. This would give the Rudd Government's "revolution in education" some real punch.

Language as music

In antiquity music held a much more important place in public life than it does today. In ancient Greece, for instance, it was integrated with all important occasions to the extent that the language had no word just for music. The concept of mousike (literally the business of the Muses) united melody, language and dance. Furthermore, the nine Muses used their music to inspire spoken language in poetry, comedy, tragedy, and history, as well as knowledge of astronomy and choral song and dance. Perhaps, unlike contemporary humans, the Ancient Greeks understood the fundamental symbiosis of language and music.

Language development of infants depends on music

In the pre-natal environment the fetus hears the mother's voice but not the consonants. Her body and amniotic fluid allow only perception of the vowel sounds with all their ordered intonations. In early post-natal life the child, without saying any words, reproduces these tonal variations as well as the rhythm, stress, phrasing and timbre of language. Into these essentially musical aspects the infant later learns to embed the phonemes that comprise speech. So crucial is the pre-linguistic "singing" of the infant that analysis of it can indicate the likelihood of speech pathology.

Music, language and the brain

Scans tracing the flow of blood through the brain have led to confirmation that, more than any other combination of cognitive capacities, music and language work closely together.

While pitch and phonemes are processed by separate parts of the brain, these two regions collaborate intimately. This allows children to learn precisely the musical component of their mother tongue - subtle changes in tone and rhythm - and to know without instruction when someone else's speech has a foreign accent. By the same token, people with musical training are better able to learn a new language through a heightened ability to process its musical components.

Popular use of right-brain and left-brain classification of learning and thinking is over-simplified. Music is not a right-brain activity as often asserted. In a complex way the processing of music occurs in both the left and right brain. Both hemispheres combine. Thus music can be such a powerful medium for learning language, enabling gains in such areas as comprehension of word stress, attention span and memory.

Read more at <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=7429>

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MAKING NEWS OVERSEAS

UK: Unprecedented Investment in Music Education Has the Power to Change Children's Lives

Department for Children, Schools and Families, 20 June 2008

Schools Minister Andrew Adonis will today call on local areas to make the government's aim of giving every child the opportunity to learn an instrument a reality by 2011.

Speaking to an audience of heads of music services he will unveil a radical new orchestral programme called In Harmony. Inspired by the hugely successful Venezuelan project El Sistema and chaired by world renowned cellist Julian Lloyd-Webber, children from the most deprived parts of the country will be taught musical instruments by charismatic, high quality music teachers.

They will then be brought into full scale orchestras and encouraged to play live in front of audiences from an early age. Children as young as four might play concerts as part of these orchestras. Three or four areas will be chosen to launch initial pilots in the autumn.

He will also announce five new music partnership projects. World famous orchestras including the London Symphony Orchestra and the Halle Orchestra will work with schools across the country. The partnerships will see major music venues become after-school clubs with master classes from professional musicians, free concerts for children and opportunities to record music on to CD.

Read more at http://www.dfes.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn_id=2008_0121

New Zealand: National Music Education Research Database

National Centre for Research in Music Education and Sound Arts, June 2008

Part of the original MENZA vision was to develop a database of research. The purpose of the database was envisioned to create a repository of resources, research, publications and information on the whole range of music education and sound arts in New Zealand.

MERC took on the responsibility for this and, thanks to a 2007 grant from the College of Arts of the University of Canterbury, work progressed steadily during the year with a comprehensive database created for publication.

A network of correspondents has been set up to help gather details of research that has been, is being and intended to be carried out.

The database will be web-enabled by June 2008.

Read more at <http://www.merc.canterbury.ac.nz/>

USA: Arts education described as vital: State work force needs creativity

Dani McClain, March 29, 2008

Wisconsin needs to cultivate an innovative, entrepreneurial work force, and arts education is the key, Lt. Gov. Barbara Lawton said Friday.

A new task force on arts and creativity, co-chaired by Lawton and state schools Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster, plans to survey arts offerings in Wisconsin schools, hold public hearings around the state, and issue a list of recommendations by the end of the year.

"I see artists imagining solutions to 21st-century problems," Lawton said at a meeting of arts advocates at the Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design. "Creativity is important to every sector of Wisconsin's economy."

The event kicked off a day-long meeting of the Wisconsin Arts Board, which Lawton chairs.

The task force is expected to include members of the state's business, arts and education communities. The list of participants will be finalized within the next week, officials said.

The group's goal will be to position arts education as a way to teach critical-thinking skills and encourage Wisconsin's students to become visionaries who can propel the state to the forefront of the green economy and other emerging industries, Lawton said.

"The Silicon Valley wasn't brought in on semi trucks," she said, citing Apple CEO Steve Jobs as someone who combines technical know-how with an artist's touch.

Officials said the task force will address how to move arts education from the fringes of low-income school districts' enrichment offerings to their core curricula, which will mean involving arts advocates in the state budget process.

"The arts are not a luxury," said Burmaster, a former music teacher and drama director. "The arts are essential."

Read more at <http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=733379>

Canada: MusiCan Continues to Fund Musical Instrument Supply to Schools

Coalition for Music Education in Canada, 29 April 2008

Today MusiCan celebrates a recent survey that proves with a fistful of money and a lot of heart, significant growth in music education is possible.

The survey reported that recipient school students have been given the ability to explore different genres of music, seen the creation of new musical ensembles and many recipient schools have indicated an increased number of public performances since being awarded a grant.

MusiCan, the charitable arm of the Canadian Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (CARAS), plans to continue its mission to elevate music education in Canadian schools, and is now accepting applications for 2008-2009 Band Aid grants of up to \$10,000 for the supply of musical instruments.

Read more at http://coalitionformusiced.ca/html/sec1-about/news.php?news_id=97&start=0&category_id=&parent_id=&rcyear=&rcmonth=

USA: Voters Value the Imagination

League of American Orchestras, 1 February 2008

A new national poll of 1,000 likely voters finds that, "30% of American voters are not only dissatisfied with public education's narrow focus on the 'so-called' basics but that they also believe developing the imagination is a critical, but missing, ingredient to student success in 21st century schools and moving students beyond average."

The pollsters say that this voting cohort - which is being called the "Imagine Nation" - is of a scale rivaling "soccer moms."

This powerful affirmation of public support for arts education can be leveraged as orchestras act to strengthen the presence of music education in the schools.

Read more at http://www.americanorchestras.org/advocacy_and_government/music_education_news.html

CONFERENCES & EVENTS

Australian Band and Orchestra Directors Association Conference

3-6 July 2008, Adelaide, SA

Open to all musicians and music educators, the biennial Conference is rotated between states with the 2008 Conference taking the theme 'fine tuning the future' and focusing on key themes 'advocating benefits of music education' and 'building solid ensemble programs in schools and communities across a range of disciplines'.

An impressive line up of internationally renowned speakers is being secured and will include music educators, conductors, musicians and other influential personalities from the music industry.

For more information: Event Planners Australia Tel: 08 8422 8349 Fax: 08 8422 8399

Read more at <http://www.abodasa.com.au/>

28th ISME World Conference

20-25 July 2008, Bologna, Italy

Music at All Ages

The theme for this international Conference is "Music at All Ages", with strands focusing on the issues and opportunities relating to:

- Music and Infants
- Music and Children
- Music and Young People
- Music and Adults
- Music and Seniors

Read more at <http://www.isme.org/2008/>

12th World Congress of Music Therapy

22-26 July 2008, Buenos Aires, Argentina

Music, Culture, Sound & Health

Themes to be explored include:

- Music Therapy, Music and Culture
- Music in Community, Culture and Health
- Music Therapy within the Social Realm
- Music Therapy and Specific Procedures in: Medicine and Neurosciences, Mental Health, Pervasive Developmental Disorders and Autism Spectrum, Education and Special Educations Needs, Geriatrics, Quality of Life
- Training in Music Therapy
- Music Therapy Research
- Music Therapy and Professional Ethics
- The Music Therapist: Insertion and Legal issues

Read more at http://www.musicoterapia2008.com.ar/sede_eng.html

Australian Music Therapy Association National Conference 2008

20-21 September 2008, Mercure Hotel, North Quay, Brisbane Queensland

Gender, Age and Ethnicity in Music Therapy

In today's society, music therapists are exposed to situations where our own and our clients' gender, age, and ethnicity impact on personal, professional and therapeutic experiences.

Age, gender and ethnicity impact on therapist-client relationships, therapist-other team member relationships, therapist-student relationships and peer relationships, and the music that is created or recreated through these relationships.

This year's conference theme aims to tease out some of these issues as experienced and researched by music therapy practitioners.

The 2008 AMTA Professional Development Seminar is being held in Brisbane this year on the two days preceding the AMTA National Conference.

The PDS is a time to participate in interactive workshops and panel discussions, learn new skills and network with other RMTs. It is also an important time to address AMTA issues and attend to the development and future growth of our association.

Read more at <http://www.austmta.org.au/web/content/view/14/6/>

Musica Viva Festival 2008

8-12 October, Sydney, NSW

This October, Sydney comes alive with inspiring music. Immerse yourself in five days of concerts, masterclasses and seminars as the inaugural Musica Viva Festival turns the CBD into a chamber music hothouse.

The Festival is a rich program of masterworks and rare gems played by some of the world's finest practitioners, interwoven with music from different cultures in the late-night concert series. You can learn more about chamber music and engage with performers in the informative Exploring Music series and Masterclasses, or just relax and drink in the music.

Years in the planning, the Musica Viva Festival has close links to the Australian Youth Orchestra's 2008 Chamber Music Camp. Young musicians from around the country gather for a period of intense study with leading exponents, culminating in a stream of performances by the students adding further depth and variety to the Festival.

Events will be held at the City Recital Hall Angel Place, The Barnet Long Room at Customs House, St James' Anglican Church and the Justice & Police Museum.

Read more at http://musicaviva.com.au/musica_viva_festival_2008/about

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To unsubscribe from ACSSO mailings click here: <mailto:webmaster@ensemble.org.au?subject=unsubscribe>