

impromptu

ARMTA Calgary Branch

Member Newsletter ■ September 2021

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



RACHEL MCLELLAN

BACK TO
SCHOOL!

I remember being so excited for the first day of school back when I was a kid! I don't think I'm alone when I say that September still feels as much (if not more) of a 'New Year' than January. To me, September smells of leaves and pencil shavings, looks like fall colours and smiling faces, feels like a sturdy chair, and sounds like an exciting new piece of music you've never heard before and can't wait to explore.

September still excites me with its promise of new ideas, even though I'm no longer a student walking into a classroom. I encourage you all to

think not only of what your students can learn as we start this 'New Year,' but what you can learn, too. Whether you attend conferences online or in person, explore a new method book, or simply read and reflect on an article, I hope you all walk into this season with an open heart and mind, ready to learn and grow along with your students.

Impromptu is learning and growing as well, and I am excited to contribute to that in my role as editor. Thank you as well to Maryellen Pankratz and Barb Robertson for their invaluable help putting together this issue. We are giving Impromptu an extreme makeover, and we're excited to see where we go as a newsletter for the people of Calgary ARMTA.

In this issue of Impromptu we have reflections on the CFMTA

conference recently held online, inspiring ideas from local teachers on what they've been doing the past year, and much more.

I thank you for letting me learn and grow with you in Calgary ARMTA as I step into this role of editor here at Impromptu. Please do share your feedback with me, and with all of us on the board. Happy September to you all! ■



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President, The Royal Conservatory



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Table of Contents

Greeting from the Branch Chair.....	Page 4
Calendar of Events.....	Page 5
Why I Give Everything Two Eyes and a Mouth.....	Pages 6 - 7
by Bronwyn Schuman	
Provincial Piano Competition Winners.....	Page 8
Asynchronous Teaching Resource.....	Page 9
by Leila MacKenzie	
Anything You Can do, I Can do Better!.....	Pages 10 - 11
by Nathen Arthur	
In Memory of Roberta Stephen.....	Pages 12 - 13
by Barbara Robertson	
Treasured Memory with Roberta Stephen.....	Page 14
Asylum for Art.....	Page 15
by Josée Robitaille	
CFMTA Conference Musings.....	Page 16 - 17
by Nathene Arthur	
Review of PROPer Piano Pedagogy Session.....	Page 17 - 18
by Regina Thomas	
Rotary Calgary Concerto Competition.....	Page 19
by Barbara Robertson	
Perspectives from Virtual 2021 CFMTA Conference.....	Pages 20 - 21
by Barbara Robertson	
Board and Convener Contacts.....	Pages 22 - 23

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GREETING FROM THE BRANCH CHAIR



... a month of promise for new beginnings, for renewed relationships and renewed enthusiasm.

As I move toward retiring from teaching, I am looking for new ways to serve in community, maybe a new community to serve with, and new ways to provide value and to feel valued. How will I add value to community during the next decade? How will I determine where to use my skills and energy?

I have spent much of the past three decades caught up in minding my studio, my children and their activities, busy with church music and teacher association business. It's easy to become tied up with

the day to day hectic activity and never ask why, what purpose is being served with all this activity?

Music teachers claim that making beautiful (or at least interesting) sound with voice, speech, or instruments enhances life. We believe that learning to read music by ear or by sight enhances brain development and sustains critical thinking skills, that music stirs memory. Sadly, often children who could most benefit from music experiences are least likely to have access to them.

So for this September I am turning to new ventures that may include volunteering with Keyboards for Kids (or other), Indigenous studies, returning to Education for Ministry.

As you think about this September, may you be enriched and fulfilled in what you do and may those you collaborate with also be enriched and fulfilled. I hope that ARMTA will play a role in whatever gives you a purpose and richness. ■

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

For the most updated information, visit the events page of our website <http://armta-calgary.com/>

SUMMER	WALK AND TALK SOCIAL GATHERINGS TBD	BETH SOUNDISOFMUSIC@SHAW.CA BARB BARBROB@TELUS.NET
AUGUST 27-28	MUSIC CONFERENCE ALBERTA PART 1 ONLINE SESSIONS WITH BACK-TO-TEACHING FOCUS	WWW.MUSICCONFERENCEAB.CA
SEPTEMBER 1	TEACHERS' MUSIC EXCHANGE	LOOI INFO@MUSICACADEMY.COM
SEPTEMBER 10	DEREK CHUI OF ROYAL CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC: ZOOM DISCUSSION OF CURRICULUM	LOOI INFO@MUSICACADEMY.COM
SEPTEMBER 13	CALGARY BRANCH BOARD MEETING: OPEN TO BRANCH MEMBERS TO ATTEND WITHOUT VOTING PRIVILEGES	BETH SOUNDISOFMUSIC@SHAW.CA MARYELLEN ARMTAOFFICERS@GMAIL.COM
SEPTEMBER 24	APTA THE LAUNCH 2.0 AND AGM	APTAONLINE.NET/APTA-CONFERENCE/
OCTOBER	GENERAL MEETING TBD	BETH SOUNDISOFMUSIC@SHAW.CA MARYELLEN ARMTAOFFICERS@GMAIL.COM
OCTOBER 15	DEADLINE FOR REGISTRATION CONTEMPORARY SHOWCASE CALGARY	WWW.CSCALGARY.COM
NOVEMBER 6	STUDENT RECITAL 1PM St DAVID'S UNITED CHURCH	JOSÉE ROBITAILLE STUDIOJOSEEROBITAILLE@GMAIL.COM
NOVEMBER 15	CALGARY BRANCH BOARD MEETING: OPEN TO BRANCH MEMBERS TO ATTEND WITHOUT VOTING PRIVILEGES	BETH SOUNDISOFMUSIC@SHAW.CA MARYELLEN ARMTAOFFICERS@GMAIL.COM
NOVEMBER 18-20	CONTEMPORARY SHOWCASE CALGARY FESTIVAL	WWW.CSCALGARY.COM
JANUARY 17	CALGARY BRANCH BOARD MEETING: OPEN TO BRANCH MEMBERS TO ATTEND WITHOUT VOTING PRIVILEGES	BETH SOUNDISOFMUSIC@SHAW.CA MARYELLEN ARMTAOFFICERS@GMAIL.COM
JANUARY 29	ACRA	TANYA TANYARGATES@HOTMAIL.COM
FEBRUARY 14	CALGARY BRANCH BOARD MEETING: OPEN TO BRANCH MEMBERS TO ATTEND WITHOUT VOTING PRIVILEGES	BETH SOUNDISOFMUSIC@SHAW.CA MARYELLEN ARMTAOFFICERS@GMAIL.COM
MARCH 5	STUDENT RECITAL 1PM St DAVID'S UNITED CHURCH	JOSÉE ROBITAILLE STUDIOJOSEEROBITAILLE@GMAIL.COM
APRIL 22-23	MUSIC CONFERENCE ALBERTA PART 2 IN PERSON BANFF CENTER FOR THE ARTS	WWW.MUSICCONFERENCEAB.CA
MAY 7	STUDENT RECITAL 1PM St DAVID'S UNITED CHURCH	JOSÉE ROBITAILLE STUDIOJOSEEROBITAILLE@GMAIL.COM

Why I Give Everything Two Eyes and a Mouth: Teaching Music with Faces

By Bronwyn Schuman

As a child, I loved my teddy bears.

I sewed clothes for them, I made cardboard furniture for them, I beaded jewelry for them, and when I was old enough, I spent all of my babysitting money on their belongings. As many children do, I slept beside my teddy bears, holding onto them, even clutching them straight through the night! I loved to set up their space, organize their



Music and faces work well together to provide our students with a deepening understanding of human emotions.

belongings, and look at their lives. Would I have done this for a stuffed being with no face? Perhaps not. Would I have done this for an old piece of scrap fabric with a face? I probably did.

What is it about inanimate beings with faces that appealed to me as a child? We know that humans recognize faces from infancy. We recognize our mother, our father; we see the faces of others, who may be friends or foes. We are wired to look for faces early on, to analyze the expressions of potential friends. And for children, these friends need not be people. These friends need not even be animate beings, such as living animals. The main attribute to these friends is that they simply have emotional features. While children can give emotional attributes to nearly anything, they especially do so to beings that have a face. These beings have eyes to look (and to cry), and they have a mouth to talk (and to smile).

These beings with faces are committed friends, present through thick and thin, experiencing a child's life with him. Just as children see and talk to their inanimate friends, these inanimate friends see and talk to them. Children can care for their inanimate friends, feed them, tuck them in at night, try to bathe them, even make bandages for them. Children can also throw them, colour on them with a permanent marker, neglect them for days, even

shove them in a box. These beings with faces never leave. They accept their child owners unconditionally. These inanimate friends are crucial to children's emotional health as children work through the ups and downs of each day.

Musical education is also a significant aid in healthy emotional



development. To some extent, music is like a stuffed animal. It comforts us, it talks to us, it accepts us, and it never leaves us. Music and faces work well together to provide our students with a deepening understanding of human emotions.

This deepening understanding, over time, will help our students interpret their own emotions, find emotional stability, and explore ways to sympathize and empathize with others. By incorporating faces into my teaching as often as possible, I am working toward my goal of helping my students connect their music to a variety of emotions; emotions which they may or may not have seen before.

To incorporate faces into my teaching, I run what I have often called a "multiple personality studio." I have stuffed animals, large puppets, finger puppets, egg shakers with eyes, and more. These objects have voices, attitudes, and personalities that have developed over time and that my students have come to know and expect. I attribute certain characters to specific activities, which helps to ease transitions from one activity to another, and which helps to make each activity more memorable. These characters can be used as props for games and activities. They can also be audience members for in-lesson performances. If I don't find a face on an object, I give it one. I often draw faces in my students' notebooks and on their music. I am also a bit of a dramatist; I act out and improvise extreme and subtle emotions in music, and I have my students try to do the same.

If you are unsure how to begin bringing more faces into your music

lessons, I would recommend starting with one stuffed animal, and going from there. Give your animal a name. Have the animal sit within arm's reach in lessons. Have the animal ask your students lots of questions, and have him answer your students' questions. Move the animal so that he is looking at you, then at the student. Tilt his head down when he is sad; move his paws to wipe his tears. Tilt his head sideways when he is confused. Press in between his eyes to see concern or anger. Quickly tuck in his chin to show surprise. Lift a paw to its mouth to double that effect! If the animal loved something, move his paws to his heart. If he's hungry, move his paws to his tummy. Quicker movements and dancing can show his excitement. If the animal has manipulable ears, tilt them in the direction of sound. Have the animal move his paws and head regularly

when he speaks. Allow your students to make the animal talk and express, too!

Our students don't have to be children to benefit from faces; we can all connect faces to music to expand our emotional vocabulary. For those of us who may think that we teachers and our students are, or should be, above stuffed animals, puppets, and cartoon faces, I encourage you to just experiment with incorporating more faces in your teaching. If you find yourself in a studio with mostly teenaged, young adult, or even older adult students, it is not too late! We humans are experts at analyzing faces! One way to start with older students is by searching "facial expressions chart" on Google Images. There are many more facial expressions than just "happy" and "sad"—why not print

out a chart and have a student try to assign a different emotion, or facial expression, to each different section of their piece? This exercise would be beneficial for students of all ages and levels.

Utilizing faces in our music lessons shows our students that we see life in inanimate beings, that we can make inanimate beings come alive, and that we can help inanimate beings reflect human emotions and experiences. This work in music lessons will help our students develop their emotional understanding and vocabulary so that they can attribute emotional meaning and depth to their music from day one! This way, our students can strive to create music that will be sincere, vibrant, and truly alive, reflecting human life as it reaches their audiences. ■



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to the Winners of the Provincial Piano Competition!



1st Place:
Jerry Li

ARMTA Recognition Fund Prize of \$1000 with another \$1000 awarded after participation in the semi-final round of the CFMTA Competition where he played superbly
Teacher, Colleen Athparia

2nd Place:
Elly Hung

ARMTA Recognition Fund Prize of \$1000
Best Performance of a Romantic work \$500
Teacher, Alexandra Andrievsky



3rd Place:
Caroline Dratnal

ARMTA Recognition Fund Prize of \$500
Dorothy Buckley Prize for Best Performance of a Canadian Work \$250
Teacher, Colleen Athparia



ARMTA Calgary donated four \$25 Long & McQuade gift certificates for a draw among all of the participants at the May 8 online Student Recitals.

Long & McQuade responded in kind by donating a \$100 gift certificate. Pictured is Simon Kent, the grand prize winner of the \$100 Long & McQuade gift certificate.



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Asynchronous Teaching Resource

By Leila MacKenzie

While adapting to online teaching and overcoming some of the hurdles connected with the transition, I discovered that preparing videos for students to refer to between lessons was valuable in reinforcing elements covered at lesson time.

project. Short videos are best, which means that organization is significant before beginning to shoot. Covering one idea or topic at a time is helpful in staying within a three to six minute range. Explain clearly and effectively without rambling.

scales and arpeggios, and articulation examples. It became very satisfying when on occasion a video could be used for more than one student.

The use of videos opened up another means of communicating a love of music. It is helpful in maintaining



The use of videos opened up another means of communicating a love of music.

My iPhone could easily be positioned at an angle to show clearly what we had focused on at the lesson and the microphone and camera were adequate for the

The topics chosen for demos included: teaching a single scale, trill realizations, small drills for ‘thumb under’ or ‘finger over’ passing for

focus through the week, and is another pedagogical resource that will remain in my studio when we return to real-life lessons again. ■

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Anything You Can do, I Can do Better!

By Nathene Arthur

There is something about springtime, as the weather gets warmer and warmer, that makes the final two months of teaching each year a little bit of a challenge. And this year, with no in-person year end recitals or events at the local Seniors' Lodges, and with lessons bouncing between in-studio or online, this "make this an inspiring and fun year end" looked almost impossible.

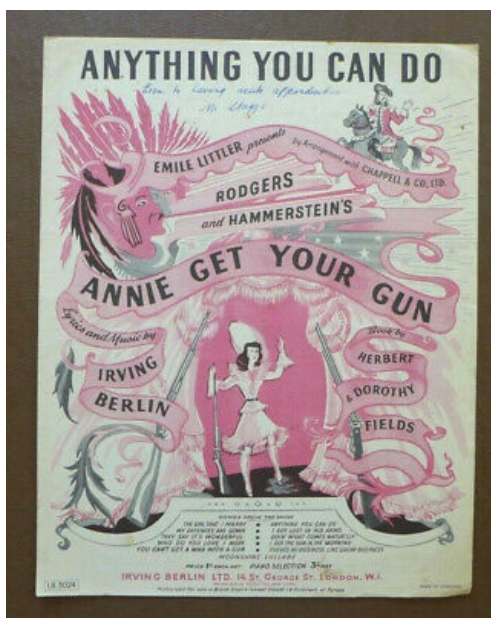
So, over the final 8 weeks of "normal lessons", I scheduled eight Challenges. I split my students into two even groups: Team RADD and Team MARS (acronyms) and each week they had opportunity to win points for their team. The goal? I had purchased amazing prizes for them to compete for: and the winning team had first crack at those awards.

Here were our 8 challenges:

Week One: Write a letter to a famous and/or published composer. They gave me the names, I found the addresses, and gave each student a stamped and addressed envelope. I required "proof" of mailing (ie a picture of the envelope going into a mail box). Out of the eight letters sent, we received replies from Frank Mills and Christopher Norton. One parent said that the highlight of her daughter's entire year was receiving her letter from Frank Mills, who she had met around 8 years ago on one of his final concerts. His letter was so supportive, and so from the heart. And Christopher Norton, likewise, had some personal comments and encouragements,

saying how wonderful it was to hear from students who like his music and played them during the lock downs.

Week Two: Music Poetry. Each student would write a four line (or more) Music Poem. And yes, I did give extra points for those who mentioned piano, had pictures drawn, or who said how much they liked lessons with me! This is a sample from an 11 year old student, called "Hungry Piano": "Pianos get hungry too, They don't eat toast or cereal like you, Stickers are what they like best, Especially those earned from a test!". And yes, my grand piano does tend to "eat" stickers fairly often....sigh.



Week Three: New Technique Week. Each student could choose to either play one of their exam technicals at a much faster speed than required OR they could pick something from the next grade level up that they had never tried before (ie: arpeggios) and play it.

Week Four: National Anthems. Back in October I had students all choose a National Anthem. Everyone had "O Canada", because of course as pianists this is a not unreasonable assumption that someday they may be asked to play our anthem. Or they could choose any other nation that they may like to travel to (nice to dream). By April of this year, everyone had one National Anthem which they played for me during this week. My favourite was when we had workmen in downstairs, and a student was doing their best with "Russia". After the student left, I went downstairs. I made a comment about the national anthems, and in a strong Russian accent, the craftsman said "they need to practice a little bit more!" Proving my point that it is good to try to learn about other countries and their anthems. If we want to aim for the ever elusive "world peace", it would be more likely to achieve if we do not destroy each others' national anthems. Just saying.

Week Five: Duet Challenge Week. Each student was given a simple duet at their level and we played it (luckily it was during an in-studio lessons week). My backup plan was to record my half of the duet, and send it to them online to play with. Most students were surprised how much they liked trying this challenge.

Week Six: Piano Battles! I had two Judges and each student prepared TWO pieces: one to "Challenge" with, and one to "Respond" with. I showed them online clips of piano

battles between Mozart and Salieri, Beethoven and Steibelt, and more modern ones at schools. This was amazingly fun, even if it was online. Each student was teamed up with another student at a similar level on the other team, and they were shown what their competitor was playing a few weeks in advance. Then they would choose a portion of one of their songs (around one page) that would be “impressive”, they could add in trills, massive tempo or dynamic thrills, and present their “Challenge”. Their team opponent then would often repeat a bar or two of what they just heard, and then morph it into their selection (basically saying: “huh, I can take what you did, and make it better!”). Then they would reverse and the responder became the competitor, etc. They could have other members of their family help out (i.e. one student while playing “A Whole New World” had her younger sister walk in front of the camera carrying a map of the world). The Judges were having a grand time and the comments were excellent. At the final, top level,

drew pictures to accompany their songs. This week had a challenge for me: over the summer, I am to take the eight compositions, and the eight poems, and make it into one new composition. Wish me luck!

Week Eight: Videos of Piano Solos. Students chose their “best” or “favourite” piano piece of the entire year and made a solo video. Costumes were encouraged. My



two Judges returned to look at these online. The top three were: First Place: a Chopin Nocturne, filmed at midnight, beginning with the student playing the first two lines under a spotlight on his cello, then moving to his grand piano under another spot light. Sublime! Second place was a

the piano bench. The lights began to switch on and off - and then - on a pipe organ setting - we heard the “Toccatà” from Bach’s Toccatà and Fugue in D minor. Suddenly the entire room goes pitch black at the highest note! Then he finishes, lights come on, and he removes his mask and takes a bow. Awesome stuff. And the other videos were also equally creative and fun! (Okay, one more: one of the level one students played the “William Tell Overture” while riding on a rocking horse!) I could never have imagined these things. What great kids!!!

What I learned was that my students not only rose to the challenges, but they loved the chances to do something different and new each week. Yes we still covered our ear and sight, technicals, and our regular CC or RCM pieces. Much of the prep for these challenges was done at home.

And when the final tally was made for the winning team, I had a YouTube video of “Anything You Can Do, I Can Do Better” playing in



What I learned was that my students not only rose to the challenges, but they loved the chances to do something different and new each week.

Grade 9ish, they played their full songs. This is an excellent challenge, and will come in handy for them in the future. I look forward to doing this in person with two keyboards in the future.

Week Seven: Written Compositions. (Do not groan!) The level one students had only to write 4-8 bars. By the Level 8’s they needed 16 bars. Some students used a 12 bar blues format, others free wrote it, some

student playing her keyboard, outside on a windy day, in a field. While she played “Colours of the Wind”, the sound of the wind was like a duet with the piano, her long hair blew, and in the nearby trees they had placed ribbons and tapestries which the camera also captured. Third place: the camera started on a table with decapitated horse heads, a skeleton, etc., then zoomed over to the staircase where a masked, caped figure swooped in and jumped to

the background as I made my video announcements. Fun stuff.

We all had a crazy, up and down year. But I will remember most of all the past eight weeks. And I will smile, and remember these great students, their talents and their creative, surprising moments. And so will they. It was a good year! ■

In Memory of Roberta Stephen

Compiled by Barbara Robertson

Roberta Stephen, well-known Calgary musician, composer, teacher, singer, and ardent promoter of contemporary Canadian music, passed away June 19, 2021.

Although Roberta's musical training began early, it was only after the births of her four children that she began pursuing her music career in earnest. She began voice lessons with Eileen Higgin, soon discovering a passion for composition. She received her Music Composition degree from the University of Calgary in 1973. Later, she pursued a MA in Voice Concentration from the University of North Texas, graduating in 1988.

Throughout her university education she maintained a successful private music studio. She continued to teach students into her 80's - some of whom were second generation students. Many went on to successful careers as performers and teachers. As part of the celebrations of Alberta's 75th Birthday, Roberta formed a partnership of music colleagues, receiving a grant in 1980 to publish a book of piano pieces by Alberta composers. This publication was the precursor to the Alberta Keys Music Publishing Company, which continued publishing until the company was sold in 2014.

Roberta will be remembered for being instrumental in establishing the first chapter of the National Association of Teachers of Singing in Canada and founder of the Contemporary Showcase Festival Calgary, as well as being a major supporter of New Works Calgary. She received three lifetime achievement awards from the Alberta Registered Music Teachers Association (2014), the Association of Canadian Women Composers (2019), and the Canadian Music Centre (2019).

In 2002, the Prairie Region of the Canadian Music Centre celebrated her music career, recognizing also her efforts to promote the work of other Canadian composers. In 2014, the Canadian Music Centre in conjunction with NATS and ARMTA (Calgary Chapters) held a tribute to Roberta, featuring several of her compositions.

Roberta made lasting impressions on many ARMTA members. Following are paraphrased comments from some of these teachers. ■



Roberta Stephen, pictured with John Reid, Prairie Regional Director of Canadian Music Centre



Margaret has a treasured memory with Roberta Stephen and was honoured to have known Roberta – “a gracious woman, a kind friend, generous with advice from her vast knowledge and experience in both music and teaching”. Look for Margaret's memory with Roberta in this newsletter.



Elaine has so many wonderful memories of Roberta. While studying with Elaine's mother, (Eileen Higgin), Roberta's young daughter Cathy, (a current ARMTA member), waited patiently on the living room sofa while her mother had her lesson. Elaine's mom encouraged Roberta to take her Masters degree and to pursue composition. Roberta was very modest and often undervalued her work. Twice Elaine found Roberta's compositions amongst her mother's music and both times Roberta had no recollection of having written them. When Roberta saw them, she was surprised by their quality and submitted them for publication. "The Monotony Song" is in the RCM voice syllabus and "Song for Naomi" remains one of Elaine's favorites. Roberta was a stalwart champion of Canadian music and particularly of Canadian women composers.



Colleen says "Roberta Stephen has done so much to encourage young composers and to promote Canadian music in Calgary. She has made a great contribution to Calgary composers by publishing their works."



Rita first met Roberta when she was 15 years old after moving from Brooks. As Rita started her first lesson with Eileen Higgin, she met Mrs. Roberta Stephen, just as Roberta was about to leave the Higgin residence. Roberta was very kind to Rita and very caring because this was Rita's first lesson in Calgary! Rita thought that it was incredible that a Mother was making time for herself to take lessons as well as taking care of children, a husband, and a home!" In Rita's words, "this strong, independent woman has left us with a tremendous legacy in the music world of today. Her energy, inspiration, and talent are overwhelming to us. She was a mentor to many of the music teachers in our city today. Her compositions are in the RCM and Conservatory Canada Syllabi for piano, violin & voice. Commissioned compositions were truly her niche." Roberta Stephen was a member of ARMTA, NATS, & CMC. Alberta Keys Publishing Co. was her brain child and it served her very well. Roberta, you were a truly amazing "Woman of Music!"



Lorna has fond memories of Roberta, like many others working in the music industry in Calgary and beyond. In the time that she knew her, she was a friendly, familiar face at many of the same events that Lorna attended/participated in. The beginning of her illustrious career long predates Lorna's teaching career in Calgary but she knows that Roberta spear-headed a number of initiatives in this region. These initiatives, especially the Southern Alberta chapter of NATS, benefited Lorna and colleagues a great deal. Many compositions of Roberta's have become regular repertoire in our studios and are found in numerous collections. Lorna will miss Roberta's presence in this community, as I'm sure all who knew her will.

Treasured Memory with Roberta Stephen

By Margaret Brentnall

I am honoured to have known Roberta – a gracious woman, a kind friend, generous with advice from her vast knowledge and experience in both music and teaching. Today I'd like to tell a story of another side of Roberta - her playful, adventurous side.

true experience. I'll never forget hearing the flugelhorn reverberating off the mountains. Or the answering call of a loon to our choral piece. But not always peaceful! Our dusk concert was cut a little short when the mountains decided 'that was enough' and kicked up an enormous wind sending music and stands and

group headed off to the far side of the lake, we energetically did some vocal warm-ups, not only to wake up our voices but to let the bears know we were there! Dawn acoustics are keen, we could not see the choristers on the other side of the lake but could hear and respond. J L Bleau took to a canoe, rowing from one side of the lake to the other as part of the orchestration. A special moment for me was during the dusk concert, when I sang with Roberta – a lovely piece of her own composition entitled *The Birds*, a nature song imitating the calls of many different birds; perfect for such an idyllic setting. ■



In 2007, J L Bleau put together a most wonderful outdoor concert. It was held deep in Kananaskis and included a piece of R. Murray Schafer's that was to be sung at dusk and then concluded at dawn the next morning. It was a beautiful and secluded location. Seeing bears and other wildlife was not uncommon. The audience and musicians were mostly one and the same. Traffic in this location was intentionally limited and so the concert was planned during the week. We were a very happy group nonetheless!

Hearing the voices and instruments in such a picturesque scene was a

chairs all about! Roberta, me and my daughter took shelter in a hotel, making the drive back out to civilization.

We were up and out very early to trek back to our isolated spot and prepare for the dawn concert. The chorus was split into two groups, each one to perform on either side of a lake. As our

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As the ARMTA students' recital convener, I have been looking for a venue to hold our recitals and have found so much more. On Friday June 11th I had the pleasure of meeting Scott Arnold, the owner of The Asylum for Art. Scott has been an ARMTA member since 1996 and is offering his facility for rent to all ARMTA members at the rate of \$50/hour.

The Asylum for Art is located close to downtown in Bankview on 14th Street SW. There is parking at the back and free parking on the street during weekends.

Pictured above:
Scott Arnold, Owner of *Asylum for Art*

We'd love to publish more articles about other innovative members!

The Asylum for Art is a studio offering guitar, piano and singing lessons both privately and in groups. The facility can accommodate up to 70 people when sitting in rows. There is a Yamaha G1 5'3" 1986 grand piano at your disposal. The performance hall can also be set up as a café where people can sit two to four at the table with a catering service. Every teacher's dream is not to have to deal with food when organizing a recital!

They can also do video streaming and video productions; it is also a good venue for recording an audition.

The Asylum for Art also offers clinics with experts in their field from time to time

You can even come back on the weekend to enjoy some live music on Fridays and Saturdays and an open mic on Sundays.

I see The Asylum for Art is an innovative and winning concept. It is a place where you can learn, play and experience music in many ways. I wish Scott Arnold and his team great success with this new endeavor and have already booked the hall for my Christmas studio recital for Dec 2021! ■

If you would like to know more you can go on the website <https://asylumforart.ca>

Bonne chance!
Josée Robitaille

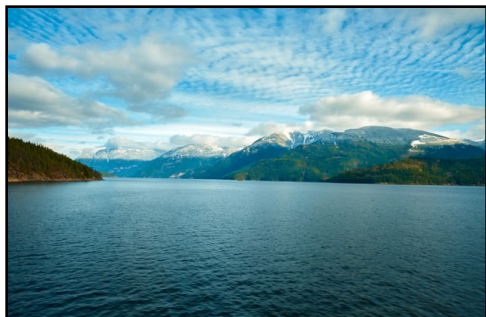


CFMTA Conference Musings

By Nathene Arthur

Myself and a few others in our Calgary ARMTA Branch have been asked to give a short reflection on the online CFMTA Summer Conference this year.

Can you say “Whovva”? That is the app which we were asked to use, although most sessions were also available with Zoom links. Our theme was: “Connecting Canada: Musical Diversity from Coast to Coast to Coast”.



British Columbia

For some background: The Canadian Federation of Music Teachers Association holds a National Music Conference every second summer. Included in these conferences are the National Voice Competition (our young soprano Aemilia Moser, won First Place this year, go Team Alberta!!) and the National Piano Competition (our pianist was Jerry Li from Calgary, who advanced to the Semi Final Round). You can view these performances at the <https://www.cfmta.org/> website if you look under “2021 CFMTA Conference”. There were numerous sessions (including a few in French), masterclasses, vendors, photos, speakers, and Facebook/Instagram/Twitter for the social media types. There were session Q & A’s, and every now and then I would be in a session and get a quick post from

someone saying “hi!”. I kind of liked that, it felt more friendly like our usual conferences. For the uber-competitive types, there was even a “Leaderboard” where attendees could win points by having people watch their talk, post messages, include others in events, etc., and a prize for the winner. It was fun to watch THAT competition also.

Having attended the Manitoba CFMTA Conference “A Century of Sound Connections” in person just two years ago, there were of course differences. This time, there was no running to lunches or racing between different sessions. Then again, I did not miss sessions this time because I was chatting with an interesting vendor or an acquaintance/former student/long lost friend, as I did in 2019, either. Sigh.

I managed to see several sessions during the two days. Some sessions were live, and some were pre-recorded.

Some of the sessions I attended were:

- 1 “Performance: Brazilian/Portuguese with Newfoundland Influence” (such cool bossa nova and folk songs, check them out at anaericmusic.com)
- 2 Flutes from our diverse cultures of Canada
- 3 Invited speaker Pat Carrabre’s “Anything for Fifty Bucks” on finding your place in music
- 4 “What Students Can Do: A

Strength Based Approach to Special Music Education” which I quite enjoyed

5 “Teaching in the North” from a Yukon member, bringing back some of my experiences from teaching in northern Alberta for 15 years.

P.S. They are advertising for teachers up north, if you are up to the challenge!

6 “Piano Techniques - students with various needs/challenges”

7 I especially enjoyed seeing the session with our very own Calgary teacher Karen Gerelus and her creative ideas for motivation in the studio. Too much fun!

I dropped in on several other talks, and as we approach our “able to keep viewing online” deadline of July 31st, I am still hoping to see several more, or at least finish off the ones I missed the ends of. This Conference



Newfoundland



Yukon

was well worth the amazing price of only \$49. CFMTA did an excellent job.

Our next CFMTA Conference is already in the works. It was moved from 2021 to 2023 and will be held in Edmonton. The theme is “A Rhythm Runs Through It”. I

am remaining hopeful that that Conference will be once again in person. Until then, please continue to send your thoughts and ideas about further speakers, session ideas, research topics, etc. to CFMTA. This is our organization. Let us have fun! ■

Review of Karen Gerelus’ PROPer Piano Pedagogy Session

By Regina Thomas

This session at the CFMTA conference was very practical and helpful.

Karen talked about experiential learning and that lessons need to be customized to each student. Karen emphasized that learning can be made fun and memorable for the student by using simple teaching props. I like the quote she used from Albert Einstein which said, “Play is the highest form of research.”

For hand position, finger joints and arm weight, Karen talked about using Dollar Store silly putty. One of the examples given was using a called for finger and hand to make a proper indent with good hand position and nail joints into the silly putty. Another prop for teaching good nail joints was using a clothespin and squeezing it with the thumb and an asked for finger without the nail joint collapsing. A good nail joint equals more control of the sound.

For good hand position, Karen uses foam ladybugs or squishy foam balls. For smaller hands she suggested that a ping pong ball works well.

Using a washable marker on the fingertips of the student is a good visual of whether or not the student is playing with a good hand position and finger position as it leaves marks (or not) on the keys.

To make the student aware of sagging wrists, Karen puts a marker under their wrist while the student is playing. After the piece is played they check for marker marks on the wrist. A feather can also be used and the student feels the tickle.



Karen Gerelus

For teaching arm weight, Karen uses an elastic head band and makes a sling for the student to put their wrist in. The teacher controls the

band and the student has to let go of control. This is also great for teaching the release of sound with the wrist rather than the finger.

Another fun thing Karen talked about was getting the student to keep their feet flat on the floor. She puts coins under their feet. If they keep their feet on the floor for the whole piece or lesson, they get the coins.

Another topic covered was recognizing different touches and tone. Using fabric samples to demonstrate differences was demonstrated. An example was given of using a smooth rainbow coloured ribbon to demonstrate legato sound. Paint cards may help to create a certain colour in the piece. A rainbow picture can help with musical shaping of phrases. To help with voicing, Karen uses a feather in one hand and a weight in the other.

Music reading was another topic covered. A magnetic staff with magnets can be fun for note reading practice and beginning composition. Things like laser pointers, magic wands and a magnifying glass can be used instead of using a pencil or finger to make the lesson more engaging.

Learning and hearing rhythm and tempo is helped by using rhythm instruments. Using Lego blocks that are marked with various note values can help the student see the correlation between the various notes and their values. I loved the idea of a “speeding ticket” made out of card stock to alert the student that the tempo is too fast. The fine

on the ticket might be playing that particular section 10 times at the correct tempo. Another idea was using a stop sign to get the student to refocus when having trouble. Lock eyes on the object and count to 10.

Practicing aids were also covered. A treasure box was suggested. Students earn points and work



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for a treasure out of the box. Music money was another incentive. Have an auction at some point where students can bid on items and buy them with their music money. Karen has a Bingo game when there is a break to keep the students playing over the break, which earns them a prize if completed. To get the students to practice a passage or piece more than once, Karen uses dice or Uno cards to determine how many times to practice the section or piece.

There were many more ideas that would make lessons productive and fun. It was a very worthwhile session to listen to. ■

Rotary Calgary Concerto Competition

By Barbara Robertson

The participants of the Rotary Calgary Concerto Competition were able to have live performances, masked and without an audience, at Michael Lipnicki Fine Pianos. All performances were live streamed.

We are hoping that we will have a live competition, with an audience, in 2022 and that winners will be able to play with the Civic Symphony. Start preparing your students now.

The 2021 winners were given a recording opportunity rather than the normal opportunity to play with the Calgary Civic Symphony.

Thirty participants, ages 8-18 applied, with one withdrawal because of Covid isolation. Congratulations to all competitors and their teachers.

28% of the accompanists were ARMTA members



...38% of the teachers were ARMTA members

Winners, organizers, sponsors, were interviewed for the Civic Symphony Maestro Symphonic Sundays. I represented ARMTA Calgary and spoke on ARMTA and our involvement with C3. ■

Visit <https://www.rotaryc3.com/winners> to read about these talented musicians AND to hear their performance pieces.

WINNERS

Kathryn Fakeley, cello
Anita Hao piano
Tessa Nysetvold, cello
Dakota Perez, piano

RUNNERS UP

Chanan Ngo, violin
Jerry Li, piano
Daniel Kang, violin
Fiona Marchetto, violin



Perspectives from Virtual 2021 CFMTA Conference

“Connecting Canada: A Musical Diversity from Coast to Coast”

By Barbara Robertson

I was not overly keen on a virtual conference and more screen time, but when I realized that there was no hassle or expense of travel or accommodation, no planning what clothes to bring, no packing or remembering what to pack, and no leaving prepared meals for the family, I thought, why not.

with this conference is that I can watch the “reruns” until the end of July.

As I prepared for the first session (trying to figure out how to log in), I was looking forward to seeing and talking to colleagues at the conference.

the video, I had no idea how many people were watching the same thing as me, nor who they were. It was good that Karen Gerelus had so many awesome ideas about using props in teaching that I was too busy taking notes to worry about anyone else. Karen is such a pleasant, enthusiastic, articulate and organized presenter, as well as a Calgary teacher. She has so many ways to make learning fun, and at the same time, accomplish a difficult task. I hope that she can present to ARMTA Calgary in person in the future.

The next session was “live”. People were drinking coffee, eating breakfast, knitting, and even reading the newspaper. But at least, I could see some of the actual attendees. Other people had a portrait or just a name. Were they really there? (OK, I admit that I might have had some bad hair days or been making some meals, and was one of the black screen attendees from time to time.)



I soon found out that when you are at a conference “at home”, there is still laundry, shopping, meals, cleaning, and family to deal with. The benefit

The first session I watched was pre-recorded. This meant that except for the teacher in the chat who was obviously a few minutes ahead in

Dinuk Wijeratne, a composer/pianist/conductor, explored creative perspectives. He shared a story

about how many different ways people could fry 2 eggs and 2 pieces of toast. Just think of how many different ways we can explore and interpret music. We need to help our students be curious musicians while still respecting the “rules”.

Maggie Morrison looked at trends in the RCM Syllabi 1915-2011, remarking on the higher percentage of female composers that are now included in recent syllabi. It is so important to encourage a diverse group of composers, but our goal should be to enjoy all genres of music composed by whomever.

Amy Boyes says the brain activity of a jazz musician differs from a classical musician even when playing the same music.

Lorraine Chai, presenting from Australia, has published all sorts of ideas to help teaching theory through technology, many fun ideas on her website. <https://www.stringstastic.com/>

Jarred Dunn shared perspectives and detailed specifics about Chopin’s music in masterclasses with 2 outstanding piano competitors.

Pat Carrabre shared his diverse career path in music, often falling into situations that were available at the time. We should encourage our students to be open to knowledge and experiences. I certainly did not intend to be a piano teacher, but I am thankful that it worked out. He advises us to keep learning what you

are not good at, and find out what you enjoy. Musicians need core skills: the ability to write, to interact, and to organize.

There was well prepared research highlighting the Taubman technique, and many more sessions prepared by presenters from diverse backgrounds, talking about diverse subjects.

We could watch/listen from the comfort of our homes, or, yes, on the back deck, alone, or with a fellow teacher. We could have water, coffee, tea, spritzers, margaritas....I hope that all of you were also inspired by, “Connecting Canada: Musical Diversity from Coast to Coast to Coast”. ■

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*Not necessary to be ARMTA member

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would like to thank

THE CALGARY FOLK CLUB

The Calgary Folk Club donated the use of all equipment needed to livestream the Rotary Calgary Concerto Competition, (Rotary C3), in March.

If you would like to WIN a livestream ticket to a Calgary Folk Club concert, please answer the following question and send your answer to Barb Robertson at barbrob@telus.net.

QUESTION: Who was the teacher of the winner of the ARMTA Provincial Piano Competition?



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to the following members who wrote articles for this issue

Nathene Arthur
Margaret Brentnall
Leila MacKenzie
Rachel McLellan
Beth Olver
Barbara Robertson
Josée Robitaille
Bronwyn Schuman
Regina Thomas

Articles by members are welcomed and encouraged! Attended a great workshop or concert? Read an inspiring book? Share your thoughts with ARMTA Calgary members. Inquiries and submissions can be made to the editor at impromptu@armta.ca.

Submissions must be in Word file format (no pdf files) and corresponding photographs will be greatly appreciated.

Rachel McLellan
Impromptu Editor