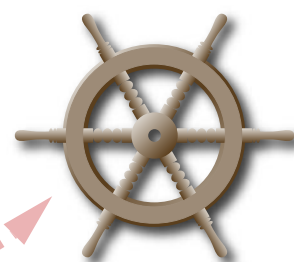


Charting Your Course FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



NSMEA - Promoting music education for over 50 years

By Allan Gaskin

The Nova Scotia Music Educators' Association (NSMEA) is an organization of professional music education specialists who believe that music is an integral part of the core curriculum and who promote the concept that music is one of the most basic elements in educating the whole person. Furthermore, NSMEA members are dedicated to continually improving the quality of music education for all Nova Scotians.

The Nova Scotia Music Educators' Association was founded by a dedicated group of music educators who saw the need to support and develop public school music education and provide professional development for teachers. According to archival records, discussions took place as early as 1956 to begin conferences for school music educators. As a result, the first conference of school music teachers was held on Saturday, June 1, 1957 at St. Patrick's High School in Halifax and was sponsored by the NSTU. On Saturday, Nov. 1, 1959, approximately 50 public school and private music teachers met at the Normal College in Truro (later known as the Nova Scotia Teachers College). The gathering was chaired by Catherine Allison with guest speakers Dr. Richard Johnston, Mr. B. C. Silver, and Irene MacQuillan Murphy. It was unanimously agreed that the provincial teachers of school music would form a chapter of Canadian Music Educators' Association. At that time, charter members of NSMEA were: Catherine Allison, Shirley Blakeley, Vivian Brand, Mae Cameron, Marion Hockey (formerly Mader), Marion Lightfoot, Betty Murray, Irene Murphy,

Edith Rowlings, Marie Smyth, Frances Tyrrell, Eveline Vogler and Annie Wallace. Each person who attended paid \$1 to defray costs for the coming year.

The 1960s was a decade of unprecedented change in public school music education. The music educators of that time worked tirelessly to raise the standards of curriculum delivery through intensive professional development offerings to teachers across the entire province. They also broadened offerings in all areas of delivery including choral, instrumental, and classroom music. The structure of the newly formed NSMEA provided these music educators with a strong unified voice supporting high quality music education for all. Fifty years later, the role of NSMEA is remarkably similar.



Since its inception, NSMEA has operated under a constitution with elected executive officers. The officers oversee administration of awards, publication of newsletters and journals, association finances and special projects. They also ensure that an annual conference committee is created for each Provincial Professional Development Day conference in October. NSMEA has also been linked with the Canadian Music Educators' Association (CMEA) since 1959 and Nova Scotia was one of the first provinces to become officially affiliated during the 1970s. The fee structure includes membership in the national organization. NSMEA also operates as a professional association of the NSTU.

NSMEA has been promoting music education for 50 years. Our educators have worked closely with CMEA as well as the Coalition for Music Education in Canada to support learning through music and the arts. As Coalition documents succinctly state, "More

than ever, music education is a vital contributor to the success of our children—both in school and in life. Our young people must be able to think and analyze, to question and innovate and we need them to work together in a spirit of collaboration and respect. Music nourishes creativity, confidence, self-expression, intellectual development and more. M u s i c

programs also help communities share ideas and values among cultures and generations. Music is a disciplined human endeavor with intrinsic value to society."

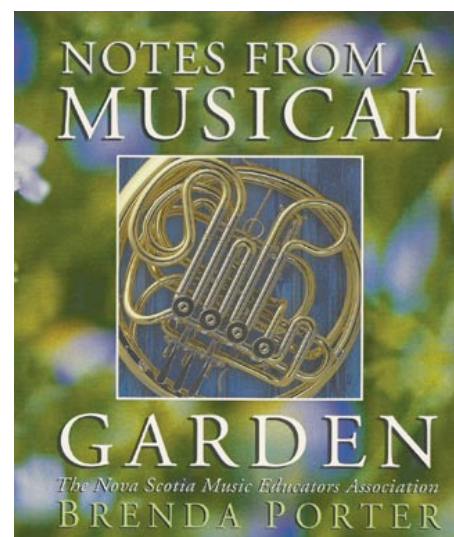
Furthermore, "Participating in the arts helps people develop...creativity. Creativity involves imagination and the ability to visualize. 'Seeing' situations as they might be in the future is a valuable tool for solving problems and changing situations."

—Voluntary Arts Network, 2005

NSMEA advocates for music programs as they provide opportunities for students to:

- express themselves in verbal and non-verbal ways;
- appreciate diverse perspectives, openness and flexibility in thinking;
- develop a high level of self-awareness and self-confidence;
- take risks and solve problems creatively;
- embrace a variety of unique ways to gain insights about cultural and historical issues;
- develop a rich and healthy sense of beauty and imagination.

NSMEA offers a wide range of annual awards. Each October one (or more) music educator is recognized with an Honourary Life Membership. At the same time an individual or organization is recognized for contributions to music education "beyond the walls of the classroom" with the "Music Viva Award." The NSMEA also offers financial assistance for members of the association and those entering the profession through the Catherine Allison Memorial Scholarship (professional development), NSMEA Development Grant (for special projects), workshop funding, the Fran Tyrrell Scholarship and summer study bursaries. Finally, the Elizabeth & Forest Fyfe Memorial Bursary is offered annually for musical development to a Nova Scotian (up to age 21) who functions with a physical disability.



Over the years there have been many notable achievements and special projects. The most notable achievement is the ongoing success of conferences and workshops aimed specifically at professional development. Membership continues to be strong with over 200 full members. Also, just a few years ago Brenda Porter was enlisted to research and write a book celebrating some of the "pioneer" music educators in Nova Scotia. Brenda created a beautiful book titled *Notes from a Musical Garden*. The book features stories celebrating the careers of Mae Cameron, Edith Rowlings, Paul Murray, Wilf Harvey, Mederic LeFort, Sister Rita Clare, Robert Angel, Sister Blanche Gillis, Chalmers Doane, Marlene Jackson, and Ron MacKay.

The Nova Scotia Music Educators' Association continues to provide music educators with important benefits including professional development opportunities and support, newsletters and other professional publications, access to arts advocacy initiatives as well as social and professional music education networks. As NSMEA moves into its second "half-century" both the executive and membership are committed to maintaining strong provincial professional development networks to ensure continuing high standards of music education.

Allan Gaskin is a former NSMEA president and retired school principal.

NSMEA Executive (2009-2010)



Sean McLennon, Presi-



Donalda Westcott,
Vice-President/
Professional Development



Tammy Landry,
Secretary/Webmaster



Steve Hartlen, Treasurer



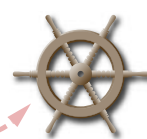
Marg Kristie,
Membership Secretary



Belinda Fraser,
Newsletter/Communications



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Email your name, home address, and school or campus name with PD in the subject line to theteacher@nstu.ca by February 5 to be eligible for the draw.

This month's PD giveaway is *Beyond Monet: The Artful Science of Instructional Integration* by Barrie Bennett and Carol Rolheiser.

This book focuses on how to integrate a variety of instructional skills and strategies based on knowledge of how students learn. It provides numerous sample lessons by teachers at all Grade levels.

Other books by Bennett and Rolheiser are *Cooperative Learning: Where Heart Meets Mind* and *Classroom Management: A Thinking and Caring Approach*.

