

Leadership  
Round  
Table  
Speakers  
Left to  
Right: Mark  
Reed, Tom  
Brophy and  
Dr. Heather  
Duncan

Photo by Dr.  
Wendy  
McCallum



## Presidential Address Greetings Music Educators,

The end is finally within reach! With this third and final publication for the year, it is time to begin preparing for the future. The fourth and fifth years are busy finishing our courses and preparing for the field experience, some of us for the last time as undergraduate students. In this issue, I hope that there are some articles of interest to you that will assist with student teaching.

As the end draws near, I have begun to really think about how much one grows since beginning here at Brandon University. Thinking back to Professional Teacher when we

thought we could never be busier with school work then we were at that time, we soon realized the busiest days were yet to come. I personally had no real idea of what it would be like to complete a student teaching placement. However, we learned a great deal and lived to see another day. It was after that first placement that I truly felt like I belonged in this profession. I knew that I had made the right choice in coming to Brandon University to study music education.

My involvement with BUSMEA has steadily increased over the years. I started out in my

second year, helping with different fundraising activities as part of the "Bling Committee." And then there was no turning back. I found that I loved to help bring professional development opportunities to my fellow music educators. I was really excited about all the possibilities that being a member of BUSMEA could bring. And I am very thankful that I have been able to be a part of this wonderful organization for so long. The skills learned on the BUSMEA Council are invaluable to my future teaching career.

# Presidential Address Cont.

It has been a combination of my time in classes, during student teaching, and serving BUSMEA that I have come to realize the importance of professional development and networking. Before coming to university, I would have never dreamed that there was actually a conference once a year that all music educators in the province were encouraged to attend; and now I wouldn't miss it. I have discovered the thrill and desire of learning. I understand that not every answer will be given to me and when I graduate, I will not magically know everything. But I have discovered how I can and must continue to educate myself so that I can be the very best teacher possible for my future students. Even though I may not have all of the answers, I have made so many different connections with people that I can ask for help; I feel prepared for all the new situations that may come my way.

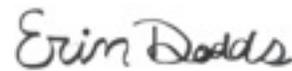
I would like to thank my fellow council members: Matt, Sara, Laura, Kelsey, Emily, Stevie, Jocelyn and Madeline. Without your help, there is no way that this year would have gone so well. It was your dedication and independence that allowed this council to work efficiently and productively. But we still had fun while planning for the year and for that, I thank you. Dr. McCallum, without your help and guidance, with BUSMEA and in my degree, my time here would not have been as wonderful and

memorable as it has been. I am truly grateful for all the support. I have greatly enjoyed my time as President of BUSMEA and my time at Brandon University.

If there is one piece of advice that I can offer you about what I have learned at Brandon University it is this - Remember to take the time to enjoy what you are doing. Things may not go the way you would like and it can make the road seem very difficult. But if you can remember why you love music and why you want to teach music, then that can help you continue down your path. Do not be afraid to ask for help. There is a reason we are all here together. Consider the memorable times you have had with your friends. Remember we are all in this together. With everyone's help and support, we can make a difference.

All the Best,

Erin Dodds



BUSMEA President 2013-2014

## Da Capo 2014

Attendees of Da Capo 2014 enjoy Lunch at Brandon University. This years participants included students from Brandon University, University of Manitoba, and Service teachers from all over Manitoba.



**El Sistema**  
Students of El Sistema  
perform their final  
concert in Moncton  
New Brunswick



## Making a Difference Through Music

### My Experience as a Sistema Teaching Artist

By Chelsey Hiebert

I was first introduced to Sistema New Brunswick by one of the oboe professors at Wilfrid Laurier University in November 2012. He sent me a simple email with the following content: “New Brunswick has a Sistema program. They are looking for an oboe teacher. This program originated in Venezuela and involves learning music in an ensemble-based process. It sounds like an exciting opportunity. If you’re interested, write to them.” Even though I had never heard of Sistema before, the idea of having a musically relevant job was enough information to grab my attention.

In researching the program, I quickly learned that my professor’s brief description did not even scratch the surface of what the program really is. I was pretty quickly brought up to speed, learning that what was going on in New Brunswick was something far more significant than I could have imagined. Sistema NB is a social program of the New Brunswick Youth Orchestra (NBYO) that provides free music instruction to disadvantaged children from grades one to six for three hours per day, every day after school. It is an intensive orchestral music program where social change is fostered through playing music together; a direct counter to the corrosive impact of perpetually being left out. Based on the internationally renowned El Sistema in Venezuela, Sistema NB brings about transformative change for children by creating the motivation required to keep children in school. It also promotes the tools needed for success including improved academic achievement, behavior, respect, dedication, hard work, cooperation, and teamwork and by promoting a strong sense of identity and belonging. This instills confidence and self-esteem through the joy and sense of accomplishment that is achieved through playing and performing music together as an orchestra.

After learning more about what Sistema was, I quickly realized there was nothing more that I wanted than to be a part of it. After a series of interviews I was hired to teach in Sistema NB’s Saint John Centre starting September 2013. In preparation for my contract I was to complete an internship at the flagship Centre in Moncton in May so that I would be prepared to start a new oboe class in Saint John in September.

Due to a unique situation in Moncton, my internship became a teaching contract where I was to teach the oboes until the end of the academic year. After a whirlwind few days of completing my course work at Laurier, I packed up my Waterloo life and hopped on a plane to Moncton. For some reason I wasn’t worried, not about the fact that I didn’t actually know how to go about teaching a group of young oboists, not that I would be staying with a complete stranger, and not that I didn’t even really know where Moncton was...

My first day in Moncton was surreal. It was one of those experiences that you really can’t believe until you see it. Due to the size of the Moncton Centre it is split into two schools, the strings teaching at one and the winds at another. I started out by watching my roommate Ana’s cello class. Being familiar with Suzuki programs, it was not strange to see such young kids playing the cello. What did surprise me was the level at which the class played.

One of the unique aspects of the Moncton Centre is that there are four Venezuelan teaching artists on staff, Ana being one of them. As teachers they bring in a style and passion unique to Venezuela, which is directly translated into the success of their students.

After spending half a day with the strings, I went over to observe the winds. It was there that I was really caught off guard. The Suzuki string program is well known across North America, but I was unaware of a comparable program for wind players. Before being introduced to Sistema I wasn’t even aware that it existed. I observed for only two days before I was thrown in to teach my own class. A week before I was studying amidst an oboe studio of 9, now just a few days later I was given my own class of 10. If the idea of a studio of ten wasn’t enough to make me a bit worried, the fact that my oldest student was 12 years old certainly was.

The Sistema NB wind program is structured with a beginner group and a returning group of students for each instrument. Each day one class is with their teacher in sectionals while the other is in tutti rehearsal. On my first day I had the returning oboe class of 7 students.

Luckily I have experience group teaching Woodwind Techniques at BU, but a group of 12 year olds is somehow much more overwhelming than a group of university trained musicians. Due to the situation in Moncton I had the additional challenge of playing catch up with students who had been playing without an oboe teacher for 6 months.

The transition to teaching in the Sistema group method was pretty natural for me. Maybe it was because I had so much catching up to do with my class and I didn't really have the chance to worry or think about what I was doing. After a few weeks my students were beginning to make obvious progress, and I was becoming much more effective with my group teaching method. I learned very quickly that the most important quality of a Sistema teaching artist is to believe in the philosophy. As a teacher this means we never make our students believe that what they are doing is unusual, instead that it is completely attainable and expected. This may sound like common sense, but the standard to which the students of Sistema NB are held to is something unprecedented across the country. Typically we receive a lot of speculation from other musicians, saying that what we are doing is impossible. To be fair, when I was told that I was responsible for having my students prepared to play an arrangement of Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture by June, I myself thought that it was unrealistic. However, after working with these kids everyday for two months, I realized that it was my way of thinking that was unrealistic.

Too many children live crowded below the poverty line, and social scientists sometimes describe poor children as 'at risk' when in fact, the risk has already happened. Mother Therese once said that the tragedy of poverty is not the lack of a roof or bread, but the sense of being nobody. When kids are left out there is no engagement, no achievement, no hope or sense of opportunity. Being left out of so many

activities and opportunities shreds their self-esteem, drains their confidence, and deflates their dreams. That is unless someone finds the key to a different door and Sistema has discovered that music is that one such key. Through the orchestra, children learn how to interact with others and develop a sense of community. It is a wonderful thing when children can concentrate on what inspires them. There is nothing more important than access to beauty and it is important that all children have this experience.

It is was this realization by maestro Jose Abreau that made Sistema Venezuela so successful, and the same philosophy that was brought to NB by Sistema NB CEO Ken MacLeod that has made this program so successful. Our students have found inspiration in orchestral music, which is why they are so driven to be successful within the program. An epiphany moment for me was when I sarcastically said to my beginner class "It's everyone's favorite time of the day, scale time." My youngest student, 8 years old, quickly responded to me by saying "Scales really are my favorite time of the day because I'm awesome at them." It took everything in me not to let my jaw drop to the ground. As someone who learned to dislike scales, and who admittedly does not play them as much as I should, I felt like I was in some sort of alternate universe.

Equally as shocking to me was when my students said or did things that reminded me of their demographic. When our students are playing together on new instruments provided by the program, it is easy to forget that they come from low-income families, and social situations that are far from ideal. For a while I couldn't understand why my students would insist on telling me the most irrelevant, ridiculous things. Part of it is just because they are kids, but one of my colleagues explained to me that it is also because often we are the most important adults these children interact with in a day. For a child who never sees

their parents, or is abused at home, or does poorly in school, or is exposed to any combination of those things, coming to Sistema to successfully play their instrument and talk to someone who cares is often a highlight of their day. It is also eye opening to realize that the granola bar we provide our students with at break time is often a significant contribution to what they are given to eat.

After a whirlwind two months it was the day of the final concert. The day itself was chaos. Coordinating 300 students under that age of 12 is a challenge in itself. To then get them fed, performance ready, and on stage with instruments is another can of worms. Despite the chaotic nature of the day, it was one of the most inspirational concerts I have ever attended. With a 110 member children's orchestra, joined by a 200 member children's choir, the stage was overflowing (see photo). Together they performed Hymn to Joy from Beethoven's 9<sup>th</sup> Symphony in both English and French. The grand finale was the orchestra performing Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture. Never in my life was I so worried about an oboe solo than the one in this piece. Likewise, I never have I been more proud than when my two students played the solo together in perfect unison. At the end of the concert the entire audience of 1800 people was on their feet in standing ovation. The stage full of children who typically would have never been given an instrument, and an audience full of parents and community members who most likely have never attended an orchestra concert celebrating together, that's the magic of Sistema.

For more information, please check out Sistema NB's website at [www.sistemanb.ca](http://www.sistemanb.ca)

**Chelsey Hiebert is a Brandon University Graduate with a Bachelor of Music in Performance 2012.**

## The Journey to Mid-West Band and Orchestra Conference By Melissa Ballard

Mid-West is an annual Band and Orchestra Conference held in Chicago, Illinois. This was my first year attending and I was amazed at how large the conference was and, in my travels, how much Amtrak trains can be delayed. There were over 17,000 people in attendance this year. Even in the midst of all the people I saw some familiar Manitoba faces.

At Mid-West there were rehearsal labs and ensemble performances as well as sessions about instrument pedagogy, financial planning for ensembles, tuning, music

technology, and repertoire. There were so many sessions to choose from. I found that it was helpful to read the descriptions of the sessions in advance so that I knew where I was going before I got to the conference. In addition to all the sessions there was also an Exhibition Hall, where you can find different vendors for instruments, chairs and equipment, print music, tour companies, fundraising, and booths representing different universities.

Some of the things I saw and experienced in the Exhibition Hall include trying Bach trumpets, seeing all the different

instrument manufacturers, trying different instruments by different instrument manufacturers, and looking at music by different publishers. Walking around the exhibit hall was eye opening; I had no idea there were plastic trumpets and trombones and I had only heard of a few instrument manufacturers prior to attending Mid-West.

The sessions that I found most informative were those for starting students on instruments and those on intonation and tuning. The instrument pedagogy sessions tied in well with what we learn in the instrumental techniques classes. These sessions allow you to learn about other approaches for starting beginning players and expand your ways of explaining playing techniques and solutions for issues students might encounter. From the perspective of a percussionist the sessions on intonation were very helpful. I learned about the tuning tendencies of instruments and the tuning of chords in an ensemble. This was something that has been confusing for me up until recently because percussion instruments are tuned using equal temperament. The demonstrations that were part of the presentations really enhanced the content being presented. One of the most amazing things was that a large number of sessions ended up being standing room only once the chairs were filled. So make sure you can handle being in a place with that many people for multiple sessions in a row!

Some of the top performances I attended were Japan Ground Self-Defense Force Central Band Saxophone Quartet, Traugher Junior High School French Horn

Section, Chicago Jazz Philharmonic, and Canadian Brass. I had never heard a professional level saxophone quartet or a horn ensemble before and it allowed me to experience what those instruments can sound as their own ensemble. These performances acted as excellent examples of characteristic sound for these particular instruments. The ensembles played some interesting selections ranging from classical to popular pieces. The Japan Ground Self-Defense Force Central Band Saxophone Quartet played selections from the Lion King, and it was a captivating performance.

There are also a lot of jazz clubs in down town Chicago that would have been fun to attend. If my time in Chicago hadn't been so compressed I definitely would have gone., Next time I go to Chicago I plan to experience jazz in these environments. I also plan to visit the Sousa Archives and Center for American Music.

This entire adventure was inspirational and educational. I would recommend it to other students in the music program. It reinforced the knowledge and skills we learn in the Music Education program and allowed me to explore other areas of musical interest.

For additional information about the International Band and Orchestra Clinic in 2014, visit [www.midwestclinic.org](http://www.midwestclinic.org). Conference registration is \$110 and only \$60 for students. This year's conference will be held from Tuesday, December 16 to Saturday, December 20.

## The Mid-west Band and Orchestra Clinic

### The Info You Need to Know

#### What is The Mid-West Band Clinic?

In 1946, a group of 120 music directors came together to share their knowledge of music and develop new ways to teach it. This gathering quickly grew and expanded into one of the best music conferences in the country.

#### Why should I go?

The Midwest Clinic exists for educational purposes exclusively; to raise the standards of music education; to develop new teaching techniques; to disseminate to school music teachers, directors and supervisors and others interested in music education, information to assist in their professional work; to examine, analyze and appraise literature dealing with music; to hold clinics, lectures and demonstrations for the betterment of music education; and in general to assist teachers and others interested in music education in better pursuing their profession.

#### Where is the The Mid-West Clinic?

The Midwest Clinic is held each December at McCormick Place West in Chicago, IL.

This year's conference will be held from Tuesday, December 16 to Saturday, December 20.

#### Who Attends The Mid-West Clinic?

School Instrumental Music Teachers and Students, Fine Arts Administrators, School Administrators, Professional Musicians, Military Musicians, College Administrators, Teachers, and Students, Music Industry Representatives, Music Parent Boosters Representatives, Composers and Arrangers. Numbers include: 16,000 Annual Participants representing 50 states and 30 countries, 350 Exhibitors, 650 Exhibit Booths, 40 Concerts  
80 Clinics Sessions.

#### Where can I find out more information about The Mid-West Clinic?

All this information was taken from the Mid-West Clinic website. For more information please visit:

<http://www.midwestclinic.org/> and [http://www.midwestclinic.org/user\\_files\\_1/pdfs/adminletter.pdf](http://www.midwestclinic.org/user_files_1/pdfs/adminletter.pdf)

# Da Capo Review

## By Matt Careless - University of Manitoba

It was a long, cold drive out to Brandon, but the Da Capo conference, held in the Queen Elizabeth II building on January 18<sup>th</sup>, was well worth the trip. This conference, put on by BUSMEA for music educators, was a well organized and well planned event. Not only was I, and my University of Manitoba companion Josh Bater, treated to wonderful hospitalities (snacks included) by some BUSMEA members the night before, but we learned a ton throughout the next day, and developed some great friendships.

BUSMEA brought in excellent clinicians for the conference, with many qualified and experienced presenters who gave great sessions on various aspects of music education. The day kicked off with the keynote address by Mark Reid, an extremely successful teacher of over 600 hundred students at Vancouver Technical Secondary School, and the current president of the Canadian Music Educators Association. Reid combined an easy going personality with a driven leadership style to drive home the importance of empowering students, and networking with others to achieve success in music education. Many of the time slots following the keynote provided a difficult decision, with several quality sessions happening at once, but I was fortunate to make it out to what I believe were some of the best. This included “Be Seen, Be Heard,” by sound and lighting expert Carl Bittner. With over 35 years of experience, Bittner, the general manager of StageLite Manitoba Ltd, provided excellent insight into ways that music educators can use sound and lighting to enhance concerts and provide optimum experiences for students and parents alike. The only negative of this session was that it lasted a very brief 50 minutes, as Bittner, despite good time management, seemed to only scratch the surface of the often neglected field. This session was followed by everyone rejoining for an insightful round table on the qualities of good leaders, put on by Mark Reid, Tom Brophy, and Dr. Heather Duncan. All three provided unique perspectives on various questions put forth by the audience, and the collective experience of the trio spoke volumes as they used their wisdom to better equip the young educators who were present. While the next session likewise provided intriguing options, I chose to attend “What to Expect at a Job Interview” by Kevin Doell, a former music teacher who is currently a principal and music consultant with Sunrise School Division. Doell grilled three

volunteers in mock interviews, all the while providing valuable feedback for the audience. The three candidates did an excellent job, and Doell gave out well deserved praise frequently while continually dishing out difficult questions collected from his administrative colleagues. The afternoon was also host to several good sessions, including “Experiencing Collective Joy in the Middle School Band Room” by Darryl Crisp, who spoke from experience as she gave advice on teaching middle years. Even further, she suggested ways to truly enjoy teaching the age group, which gave heart warming relief to the many stressed candidates about to hit the job market come spring. Brandon University jazz drum set professor Eric Platz also gave a helpful clinic on “Drumset Basics for Music Educators.” Even as a private drum teacher myself, I still took away many good ideas that I can incorporate into private teaching and general music instruction. Platz combined a witty sense of humour with practical advice as he engaged the audience in direct hands-on exercises.

Unfortunately there were many clinics that I could not attend that both looked good and got great reviews. Some of the presenters for these included Victoria Sparks, Rob Monson, Cynthia Peyson Wahl, Dr. Wendy McCallum, Kathie Gordon, Anna Penno, and Rhonda McRorie. Throughout the day there were several nutrition breaks that allowed all Da Capo attendees to grab a snack and mingle, which allowed for ample conversation and networking opportunities between everyone involved. In addition, those of us who attended the lunch were not disappointed, as we were treated to a buffet of soup, salad, many different sandwiches, and dessert.

While the clinics and sessions at Da Capo were outstanding, and BUSMEA did a marvellous job bringing in an all star cast of presenters, one of the best things about the day was the warm atmosphere that Brandon University provided. Right from the beginning, we “U of M’ers” were welcomed and made to feel right at home. It was truly a joy seeing the music education community, from experienced teacher to student, and from all across the province, come together to enjoy the wonderful day that was the Da Capo Conference. We only hope the roads are clear when we make a guaranteed, and highly anticipated, return trip to Da Capo 2015.



### Da Capo 2014

University Students Josh Bater (far left) and Matt Careless (far right) enjoy lunch with Brandon University students and Graduates (L-R) Jocelyn Bruce, Bryan Myskiw, Sara Dziver, Megan Pokrant, Emily Turcott, Jack Hodge, and Claire Powell.

# Seven Keys to Unlock Autism: Making Miracles in the Classroom. Book Review

By Laura Chartrand

Many educators' worst nightmare is to have a student in their class with whom they cannot connect. This is the unfortunate reality for many teachers when they have a child on the autism spectrum enter their classroom. Elaine Hall and Diane Isaacs have come to the aid of both the student with autism and the teacher in their book *Seven Keys to Unlock Autism: Making Miracles in the Classroom*.

Hall and Isaacs come from strong backgrounds in Autism Spectrum Disorder as both are mothers of children with autism. The Miracle Project, a creation of Hall's where children with autism come together and use their personal strengths to create and perform a musical, adds to the knowledge and depth of the authors. Their first-hand experiences have shaped their views of children with autism and the struggles and blessing that come with the disorder. Throughout the book an emphasis is placed on seeing through the disorder to the child inside. The extensive life experience of the authors leads the practical guidance that they provide to educators. Hall and Isaacs truly embrace the individuality of each and every child in their book. They encourage readers to look inside themselves. They state, "The hope and belief is that in these pages you will find the courage and fortitude to begin to see the world through the eyes of a child with autism." Throughout the book there are exercises for the reader to perform that allow them to gain experiences inside the autistic realm. Each key outlined in this book opens the educator's world to the world of an autistic child and provides the reader with strategies to gain a stronger relationship with an autistic child in the classroom.

## Key 1: Set an Intention

This first key focuses on the mindset of the educator. Hall and Isaac point out the difference between this and setting goals by saying that "A goal is doing; an intention is about being". They suggest that the teacher sets up the intention to always be the reliable constant for the child in the classroom. As we all know, the classroom is an ever changing unpredictable environment, but the one variable that an educator can always control is their own intention. The focus on this chapter is to allow the educator to see the value that they can bring to a relationship with an autistic child if the teacher always remains the calm within the storm, no matter what situation occurs.

## Key 2: Develop Acceptance and Appreciation

Acceptance and appreciation are often missing in our society. When a child with autism is stimming or unresponsive it can be difficult for an educator not to judge the child. It is the tendency of teachers to focus on fixing behaviours that do not fit into our expected norm. Hall and Isaac debunk these ideas as they suggest accepting the student and focusing on his or her strengths as the most effective way to help the child grow in learning and self-approval. By accepting all parts of the child we allow him/her to value the person he/she is.

## Key 3: Understand Sensory Profile

Sensory stimulation is a large factor in an autistic student's interaction with the world. Many stimuli that others do not notice can be overwhelming for the child with autism. Outstanding behaviours displayed by children with autism are their way of interpreting and dealing with the overwhelming sensory stimulation. The exercises provided in this chapter can be extremely effective in helping an educator understand what sensory overload can be like. Hall and Isaac understand that the classroom has a great variety of uncontrollable stimuli, but they provide many suggestions on how to decrease sensory stimuli and how to help children deal with uncontrollable factors.

## Key 4: Follow the Leader

This key encourages the educator to give up control. We are constantly having children come into our realm and meet our expectations. Hall and Isaacs suggest that the teacher needs to join the student's world rather than if they wish to understand the behaviours of the child. It is essential that the teacher join the student's world without trying to control the outcome if they wish to understand the student's experience. Once the teacher has gained understanding of the student's world then they are able to better create plans for this child and his or her learning.

## Key 5: Include the Child

This key may seem a little self-explanatory, but it is surprising how often students with autism are left out of school activities because educators fear they are unable to participate. Each and every child deserves to be treated with respect and kindness, no matter the challenges they face. The use of aides, sensory accommodations, augmentative communication systems, breaks, and encouragement of strengths all help to create a community where the child is included.

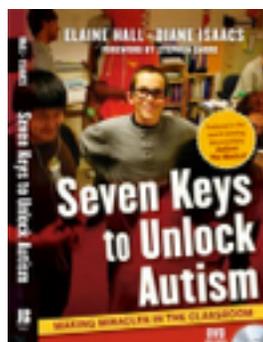
## Key 6: Practice and Preparation Make Progress

Transitions are one of the most difficult parts of activities for students with autism. There is a significant amount of anxiety for children with autism in transitions because of the great amount of unknown factors. Teachers can help to decrease this fear by exposing students to smaller parts of a new activity beforehand. This preparation work helps the student to gain experience in the upcoming activity and makes the transition easier to handle.

## Key 7: Live Miracle Minded

The focus of this key is something that we all need to be reminded of a little more often. This key expresses the importance of appreciating the goodness and progress in every situation. Celebration of each and every step, both small and large, is essential to a successful education plan. Appreciate the strengths of your students and take the time to enjoy the blessing that each and every student is in your classroom.

At the end of the day it is essential that the teacher is able to see the world from the eyes of the autistic student. Seeing the person through the disability will allow for a stronger relationship with the student and allows for a more comprehensive educational community for everyone involved in the education process. The educator's state of mind and how he or she chooses to interact with the student in the classroom is the greatest factor that can affect the relationships and exchanges in our teaching lives.



Seven Keys to Unlock Autism:  
Making Miracles in the Classroom

ISBN: 978-0470644096

Image via [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)

# From The Canadian Prairies to The Middle East

By Emma Gordon, B.U. Grad 2013

In January 2013, I was completing my five-year B. Mus / B. Ed (A.D.) degree at Brandon University. One weekend, I travelled to Waterloo, Iowa to attend an International job fair. I was hoping to receive a job offer at the fair, but I was trying to be realistic, as International teaching is a highly competitive field. I was attending the fair as a university student with no years of formal teaching experience. After two incredibly busy and stressful days spent talking to recruiters, being interviewed, updating my parents, and Skyping to talk to potential colleagues, I was offered and accepted a two-year contract to teach Secondary Music at the Universal American School in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. I went from being born, raised, and educated in Brandon, Manitoba to moving across the world to teach in the Middle East.

## How I Was Hired

As a new teacher, I found it imperative to attend a job fair. It is possible to pay the conference fees for some fairs and have access to the information regarding school openings, but there is a lot to be said for having face-to-face contact. It is also difficult to be hired without at least 2 years of teaching experience. The fair I attended has this disclaimer on their website:

“Many schools prefer to hire teachers with at least two years of relevant teaching experience.

However, many international schools will hire new college graduates with the right qualifications. New teachers who are very FLEXIBLE about geographic location, have a strong academic background, and are committed to strong principles of teaching and learning are encouraged to register with our service. Over 60% of the new teachers participating in

last year's UNI Fair secured employment.” (source: UNI Recruiting Fair website)

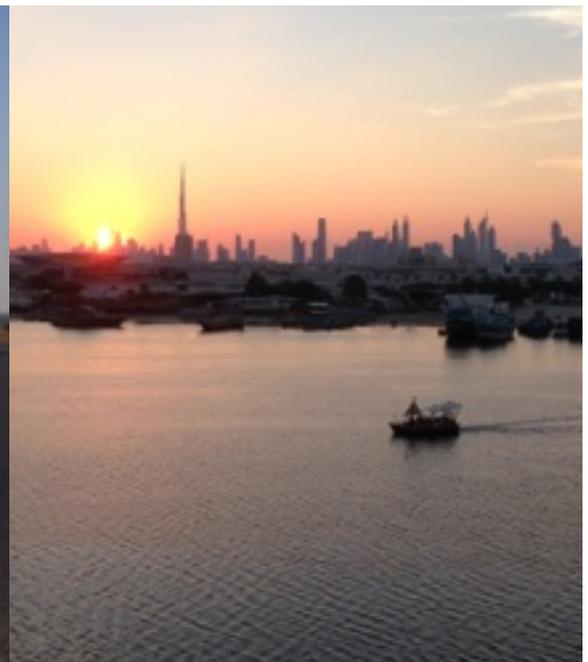
I personally felt as though I fit this description, and registered for the fair. Before the fair, I sent a cover letter and my resume to each school that had an opening I was interested in and told them that I would be at the fair. A few of them responded and asked me to stop by to sign up for an interview during the fair. The director of the school at which I currently work originally did not consider me for the job due to my lack of formal teaching experience. However, after a few emails, he agreed to interview me. When I met him at the fair, he had already looked through my documents and reference letters and had contacted my references. We had several interviews throughout the next few days, and I even had the opportunity to Skype with the principal and co-teacher I now work with. I accepted a two-year contract in Dubai!

I would highly recommend The University of Northern Iowa's Overseas Recruiting Fair for any teachers looking to teach overseas. In 2015, the fair will be held from **January 30 – February 1**. The registration deadline will be in the middle of January, but you have to complete several pieces of paperwork before you can pay and register for the conference, including a personal statement, filling out forms, and getting reference letters. All of your information is localized, and each recruiter can easily access the database. The conference is incredibly organized and it's easy to follow the directions to prepare, but I would recommend beginning the process in November or December. The website for the UNI Fair can be found here: <http://www.uni.edu/placement/overseas/>.

### From the Canadian Prairies to the Middle East

Left: Camels on the Highway

Right: Sunset overlooking the Dubai Skyline



There is also a Teachers' Overseas Recruiting Fair held each January at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. I have heard good things about this fair, and a few of my colleagues were hired through it. It's smaller than the UNI fair, but more geared toward Canadian educators, especially those with certification through the Ontario College of Teachers. Their website can be found here: <http://educ.queensu.ca/services/careers>.

### The Experience Thus Far

The past six months have simultaneously been the most rewarding and most difficult of my life. I have always known that my first year of teaching would be hard, but moving across the world to a brand-new country definitely added to the difficulty. Fortunately, Dubai has been a great place to have my first teaching job overseas. The country has a large Western influence, English is predominantly spoken, and in general, my life is fairly similar to back home.

Teaching in an international school has really opened my eyes to different cultures. My school has over 75 nationalities represented, and I teach students of various nationalities and backgrounds. I have had the opportunity to learn about Arab culture, and frequently use basic Arabic phrases such as "yalla" (hurry up, or let's go!). One of my students played his Iranian tar at our last recital (similar to a lute), and several students play the tabla (an Arabic drum).

I currently teach Grade 7 – 11 General Music. The curriculum aligns more with a British program than an American one, which has definitely taken me outside of my comfort zone. My time at Brandon University and completing my student teaching placements definitely gave me the skills and confidence to teach general music. I am currently running my small Grade 7 class as a first-year concert band, which is proving to be successful thus far. Grade 11 is the first year of the International Baccalaureate (IB) program. I would eventually prefer to teach more large ensembles such as band and choir; however, I have a fantastic job,



**"I have always known that my first year of teaching would be hard, but moving across the world to a brand-new country definitely added to the difficulty. Fortunately, Dubai has been a great place to have my first teaching job overseas."**

**Emma Gordon**

Left: Pillars at the Temple of Karnak in Luxor, Egypt

and I'm learning so much along the way. Some of the more notable "learning" moments have included report cards, parent-teacher interviews, chaperoning school trips, and our school's annual government inspection.

My colleagues have also been fantastic. International teaching promotes a special bond between colleagues, especially if you are living in the same building. It can be a little overwhelming at times to work, live, and socialize with the same people, but in general, it's great to have that type of familial bond. The Creative Arts Curriculum Leader has been a wonderful and supportive mentor to me, and my co-teacher has provided guidance and advice along the way. My administration is active and very supportive of the Arts.

Lastly, I have had the opportunity to have many travel and life experiences while living in Dubai that I would not have been able to experience if I had stayed in Manitoba. For example, so far this academic year, I snorkelled in Oman; I learned to scuba dive; I danced with locals in Ethiopia; I explored ancient

ruins in Egypt; I took a hot-air balloon ride over Luxor, Egypt; I visited my family in England; I hiked over sand dunes in the U.A.E. with my students; I've seen wild camels on the highway, watched the sun rise in the desert, and so much more. I have plans to visit several more countries in the Middle East and the surrounding area soon!

If you would like more information about teaching overseas, please do not hesitate to contact me. It has been an incredibly rewarding experience thus far, and I cannot wait to see what the last few months of the school year bring. If you would like to read more about my experiences as a first-year teacher in Dubai, please feel free to visit my blog: <http://www.emmaindubai.blogspot.ca>.

**Emma Gordon is a Brandon University Graduate, with a Bachelor of Music Education and a Bachelor of Education 2013 as well as a past member of the BUSMEA Executive Council.**

# Tips for a Successful Placement

## Compiled by Kelsey Brown

Your first student-teaching placement can be overwhelming. At BUSMEA's annual Student-Teaching Debriefing we compiled a list of tips from "veteran" student teachers about how to succeed at your first placement. Read on to find out how to have an enjoyable and stress-free placement!

### Before You Go:

1. Make sure your cooperating teacher/ faculty supervisor knows it's your first placement
  - This might seem obvious, but a lot of cooperating teachers don't know where you are in your degree.
2. Make sure you are registered for the course
  - Again, this might seem obvious, but it's easy to overlook. I have done it myself!
3. Make sure you are an MTS member
  - They do not always send you a card, so make sure you applied. You can do this by going to and registering using your address. If you are a member your information will be stored on their system and you can set up an account.
4. Bring your resume, child abuse check, and criminal record check
  - Have a copy to give to your principal. Bring the originals as well in case they want to see them

### Your First Week:

1. Take every opportunity you have to teach.... no matter how scared you are
  - But also be open about areas where you are less experienced so you are not asked to do something without the necessary preparation
2. Learn everyone's names as soon as you can (students and staff)
  - Use charts, rhymes, or anything that helps you memorize faster. Knowing names gives you authority and credibility.
3. Make personal connections with your students
  - Make the first move to get to know your students! Be cautious of the fine line between getting to know them and being their friend...
4. Meet your staff, especially the custodian and the secretaries!
5. Meet your PRINCIPAL
  - Do this as early as possible, give them your resume, child abuse check, and criminal record check directly.

### Throughout Your Placement:

1. Have fun and be energetic!
2. Always focus on the positive
  - You will make mistakes, this is normal and expected! You are there to learn from them!
3. Get lots of sleep
4. Be flexible
5. Look for the challenge, but don't stress yourself out
  - What area can I improve on the most? What resources are here to help me improve?
6. Be aware of your limitations
7. Know what your shortcomings are and how you can improve them.
8. Keep yourself healthy, make sure to have some "me" time
9. If you need it, take a sick day
10. Plan more than you need to
  - What *exactly* are you going to say when you are in front of the students tomorrow?
11. Don't be afraid to email people if you have questions
  - Stay in contact with other student teachers
12. Don't stress about conducting. It is okay that you haven't had much conducting experience!
13. Don't just focus on your learning. You are there to teach the students!
14. Each group is different, teach to the students

### Take-Aways from Past Placements:

Here are some things that "veteran" student-teachers have learned from their placements.

1. Kids are awesome
2. Experiential learning is important in music too
3. Learning is empowerment
4. Find ways to relate to your students through different means
5. Diversity/variety in the music is important for students
6. Create a positive environment for the students

8. Be prepared to change your lesson halfway through
  - Be prepared to teach on the fly
9. Ask for student input. Feedback is important
10. It's okay to admit when you don't know things
11. Learn to stand up for yourself and your beliefs about teaching

If you have any more questions or concerns about your placement I would suggest talking to music education students who have done a couple placements already. The bottom line is to be open with your cooperating teacher, be professional at all times, and treat everything as a learning experience. Enjoy your first experience in the wonderful field of music education!

## Coming Events

### BUSMEA 2013/2014

#### Student Teaching Information Session

Student Lounge School of Music  
Dates and Time TBA

#### BUSMEA Jazz Festival BBQ

Q.E.II Music Building Entrance  
March 20-22 11:00 - 3:00

## This Issue:

Dr. Wendy McCallum, Editor

Madeline Lowe, Layout and Design

Find past issues of the BUZZ on our website.

## BUSMEA BULLETIN BOARD

The BUSMEA bulletin board is located in the basement of the School of Music, in front of the locker bays. You will find all kinds of information on the bulletin board such as minutes, copies of the BUZZ, and information about upcoming events.

If you have something valuable that should be displayed on the bulletin board please forward it to [busmea@brandonu.ca](mailto:busmea@brandonu.ca).

#### Da Capo 2014

Right: BUSMEA  
Executive Council  
2014

Left to Right: Erin  
Dodds, Wendy  
McCallum, Sara  
Bittner, Stevie  
Macpherson, Laura  
Chartrand, Kelsey  
Brown, Jocelyn  
Bruce, Emily Turcott,  
Matt May

Missing: Madeline  
Lowe



**Congratulations to the New BUSMEA  
Executive Council 2014/2015**

**President - Emily Turcott**

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