



Connecting Canada 2021

by Neven Prostran Conference Chairperson

This July 8-10, CFMTA/FCAPM hosted its first ever virtual conference: Connecting Canada. After nearly a year of planning, the Conference hit many milestones and set many precedents for future virtual events. Furthermore, a \$1000 donation was made to the Gord Downie and Chanie Wenjack Foundation in an effort to work towards reconciliation with First Nations peoples in the framework of music education.

For three days, 339 participants came together virtually to watch a mixture of live and pre-recorded professional development sessions centred on the theme of Musical Diversity from Coast to Coast to Coast. Sessions were delivered from across Canada (and even Australia) and topics ranged from women composers, hip hop history, repertoire and syllabi analyses, and so much more. Live Brazilian Folk/Bossa Nova music from Ana & Eric closed off day one, and vendors engaged with attendees in their own section of our virtual platform, Whova. Our invited speakers, Dinuk Wijeratne and Pat Carrabré, delivered sessions on creativity and diversity of income respectively, and our keynote with Canadian soprano superstar Measha Brueggergosman was streamed live from the Peggy Corkum Music Room in Halifax. And, of course, our National Piano and Voice Competitions concluded on the 10th with this year's \$500 Diversity prizes! All in all, the components of an in-person Conference were present, albeit in a new way for many of our educators. All of this for an easily affordable \$49!

To be viable, the pros of a virtual Conference had to outweigh the cons. Travel costs were a thing of the past, limited seating in smaller multi-purpose rooms was no longer applicable, and, with the ability to record all sessions, it was now possible to experience every session of the Conference. It was clear that this was not just the way forward, but better in many regards!

Moving forward, the prospect of further virtual professional development for CFMTA/FCAPM is exhilarating. By diving into the deep end of Virtual Conferences, particularly with the Whova platform, CFMTA/FCAPM now has the knowledge, expertise, and experience, to deliver quality ongoing virtual professional development.



Finally, rethinking the conference experience was not an easy task. The Conference Planning Committee was essential to the success of this event; Nick Arseneault, Amy Boyes, Lynn Ewing, Laura Gray, Evangeline Keeley, Laureen Kells, Lois Kerr, Joanne Loughheed, Kimerica Parr, Rita Raymond, Tiffany Pinhorn Smith, and Ellen Thompson. A special acknowledgement is in order for our tech guru, Dina Pollock, whose countless hours of work, research, and guidance ensured the success of this event. And, of course, a heartfelt thank you to our sponsors, vendors, adjudicators, competitors, performers, guest speakers, session presenters, and, above all, our attendees for recreating the conference experience during this unforeseen time.

See you on screen!

Sincerely,
Neven Prostran
Conference Chairperson - Connecting Canada 2021



Feedback and thoughts from the conference attendees:

Thank you to everyone that sent in feedback and thoughts. I did not have the room to add them all so here are just a few. The complete comments/feedback will be in the Year in Review 2021 available in January
- Dina

I wanted to say thank you to you and the CFMTA Conference Committee for the virtual conference this year!

I wasn't able to participate during the conference days at the beginning of July, but have been watching the videos of sessions since then. What a great option to have! It really gave me the flexibility to participate with my summer schedule. Really terrific opportunity!

Thanks again for all of your hard work and efforts!

Christine Rogers - ARMTA Lethbridge Branch 

Hi! Just a HUGE thank you for a fabulous event! It was very interesting and I loved having a space for diverse voices! Long overdue!

Also, I very much appreciated the Indigenous Land Acknowledgement for every session. I would like to see this happen at provincial and local RMT events and meetings, and I would like to know if the CFMTA has plans to introduce this as a motion at the national level for all member groups.

Barb Levorson 

Thank you to all the organizers for all the work you put into the virtual conference! The sessions were interesting and engaging. I was happy to be able to attend since I don't often have the chance to go to a conference because of the distance involved. I was able to watch many of the sessions over the course of the month of July.

Thanks again for a job well done!

Elizabeth Peters

ARMTA member from Grande Prairie Alberta 



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Connecting Canada 2021

Feedback and thoughts from the conference attendees:

Congratulations on a great online CFMTA conference!

There was a good variety of speakers and the theme was very timely. I have been taking in Ottawa's Chamberfest since July 22 and have heard two composers whose names first came my way at CFMTA - Florence Price from the Olivia Best presentation and De La Guerre from Cecile Desrosiers (forget the first name but her work was noted and performed by Infusion Baroque at Chamberchats this morning. I felt very much in the know by recognizing the name.

Enjoyed the video montages from the various provinces -some were as heavy on sights as on sounds but all gave a vivid picture of the province and the work of the RMT group there. It was a nice touch, helping us to travel and visit online. Sorry to say I never did get the hang of the chat feature so online exchanges with other conference attendees was negligible. My technical smarts were limited to getting into Whova and managing the difference with time zones. Very happy with that!

Feedback from sessions I saw...

- *Started Thursday with Susan Blyth Schofield's relaxation exercises - a good idea to stop and stretch before settling in to several hours in front of a screen.*
- *Next Amy Boyes on teaching non-classical repertoire. This was very polished and professional and there were lots of helpful suggestions and good examples. Somehow I thought Amy would be talking to us about the newer, contemporary styles as well as pop so was disappointed not to get any insights on teaching music by composers like Mary Gardiner and Alexina Louie, for example. Nevertheless it was very organized and well done.*
- *Cecile Desrosiers on Beyond the Usual BIPOC composers was very interesting. She gave solid historical and biographical info on each of the composers highlighted and I loved that she played examples of their music. She also gave us the very practical equivalent level for RCM which would allow for a Teacher's Choice for exams. Two thumbs up!*

- *Speaker Pat Carrabre was an interesting character with lots of experience in the music world and a good message. I was expecting the usual speaker format with him holding forth from a podium so was surprised to see it conducted as an interview. On sober second thought I think that was an excellent way to do this online. Our attention wanders after a certain amount of time in front of a screen (speaking for myself, anyway) and this was a better way to keep us focused. Nice personal touch to have former student Amy do the honours.*
- *Maggie Morrison on Trends in the RCM Piano Syllabus was excellent. Maggie is a very articulate, polished and well organized presenter and she gave us lots to think about re getting away from the Eurocentric standards and into the wider world of music composers. Well done!*

Ann Babin - Ottawa, Ontario 🌀

Ann had so much more to say - but ran out of room, her complete review will be included in Year in Review 2021.

I really really enjoyed the conference. The ones that were really practical (less read) were the best. I hope it will again be part on-line or maybe own choice, in person or watch on line.

Renée Ruest 🌀

Sooooo many congrats on an inspiring and user friendly event.

Peggy L'Hoir 🌀

Thank you to you for putting on such a great conference. I enjoyed the format online much more than I expected. It was great and the variety of sessions was very interesting. Well done.

Annette Poirier-Bradley 🌀



Connecting Canada 2021

Feedback and thoughts from the conference attendees:

Hello everyone on the committee,

Bravissimo!! "Connecting Canada" was a wonderful conference!

Even though I have been a member of BCRMTA Victoria for over 25 years this was my 1st national conference.

Hats off to each of you for your MANY hours of hard work leading up to July 8th and during the conference itself.

- Neven, I was especially impressed with your skill at hosting the final live event with our Keynote Speaker - Measha's talk was a very fitting way to end the conference*
- To others who hosted other live events thank you as well ~ the comfortable interactions you each had with the presenter made the event more engaging*

Hi-lights for me:

- Being able to watch and therefore soak in better the semi-finals for the piano competition for a few days leading up to the conference dates and then nicely fit in the finals before the announcement of the winner & prizes on Saturday*
- Also being able to take in the vocal competition (unlikely that could have happened if attending the conference in-person) ~ very inspiring*
- 1st workshop I attended "PROPer Piano Pedagogy" - Karen Gerelus was a great presenter - very engaging - well prepared - so MANY useful tips I can use in my everyday teaching!*
- Invited Speaker, Dinuk Wijerative's "Exploring Creative Perspectives" - excellent presentation - enjoyed his personal touches and as I teach a bit of composition there were lots of nuggets for me to ponder*

- Live duo, Ana & Eric, from Newfoundland - such a relaxing way to end the 1st full day of the conference - and it was extra nice to see the faces/names of those in attendance and be able to chat with one another*
- "We've Got the Jazz" with Dishan Weerasinghe - although it was hard to hear his audio samples this was an enlightening presentation*
- "A Kaleidoscope of Colours: Globalization of Canadian Music led by Women Composers" - Diana did a wonderful job in combining this lecture-recital - the 3 interviews with Alice, Eon & Kotoka were very interesting - thank you to ORMTA for sponsoring this!*
- Montages from various provinces, so nice to see something from the Yukon ...*
- And of course as already mentioned, Measha's "Failure is Crucial" (& the ability to rewatch some of this a few days later to fill in blank spots in the notes I was taking)*

Also enjoyed being able to watch a few more workshops after July 10.

For some of the presentations I actually felt that it was more effective having them online as you could see so much up close! And for those workshops that were on YouTube it was easy to pause something if you needed to catch up with notetaking or I could rewind to listen to a point again right in that moment.

Thank you to all, Merci beaucoup à tous!!

Elizabeth Goh - Piano Teacher

AVCM, ARCT, RMT Victoria Branch, BC 🌀



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Connecting Canada 2021

Workshop Review (more to come in Year in Review 2021)

Building a Multimodal Toolbox for Teaching Students with Exceptionalities

Erin Parkes, PHD & Jeffrey Sabo MA - Lotus Centre for Special Music Education

Multimodal teaching involves learning through all different learning pathways, primarily using visual, kinaesthetic and aural approaches for reinforcing new concepts and activities.

Presenting materials using different sensory supports and cues facilitates repetition, offers reinforcement and strengthens learning. All students can benefit from this approach, but it is especially important for exceptional students, as they may have impairment in one or more learning modality. Leaning towards the student's favoured modality, if known, is particularly helpful, but a creative approach that uses different modalities with the same content is most beneficial. Consideration should be given to the student's sensitivity level for each learning modality, as exceptional students' thresholds for sensory stimuli are often narrower than for non-exceptional students.

The first example of multimodal teaching presented uses Faber and Faber's Cookie Dough song from their piano adventure series. Dr. Parkes uses occupational therapy putty for the "cookie". The colourful putty offers some resistance as it is rolled and formed into a cookie shape, strengthening hand and finger joints especially as fingers are used independently to press holes into the putty. The ensuing and encouraging visual cues created by the holes in the putty are not only fun, but aid proprioception where needed.

Another activity, presented by Jeffrey Sabo, uses cards to teach rhythm. For exceptional students, it can be beneficial to isolate and present rhythms or other materials that occur in music as their own activity. The Lotus Centre uses rhythm cards that are colour coded and sized to represent the value of varying notes and rests. Notation on the cards, as well as the colour, acts as a visual cue and running a finger across the card as it is sounded offers kinaesthetic reinforcement. Other reinforcements and repetitions of rhythms could be clapping, counting, using the cards to create patterns, or playing rhythms and patterns on various instruments.

The video concludes with Dr. Parkes presenting a really fun activity that has us on a motorcycle ride through the desert to Bizet's Carmen Overture. Different sections of the music are interpreted through stationary movement.

Joanne Diplock 

I should mention that Joanne sent in many reviews - will include them all in the Year in Review 2021 - Joanne, thank you for taking the time to write them for all members to enjoy.



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