



Canadian Music Educators Association
L'Association canadienne des musiciens éducateurs
Promoting Excellence in Music Education

Dennis Tupman (Presentation 2003)

In a recent column that appeared in the CME Journal, Dennis Tupman quoted Parker Palmer "Good teachers are truly present in the classroom, deeply engaged with their students and their subject. Good teaching comes from the heart where intellect, emotion, and spirit converge." (Palmer, 1998) My guess is that Parker Palmer was thinking of teachers, people like people Dennis Tupman when he wrote those words.

We know, however, that Dennis's classroom is not contained within the four walls of schools or concert halls; his classroom has grown to match his heart and his passionate commitment to music and to people. His students are teachers, musicians, policy makers, parents, administrators as well as young people. Dennis is truly present in all he does.

Dennis, those of us who have been touched by your heart and passion know some of your accomplishments and your qualifications. Several years ago, your colleagues here in BC honoured you with an honorary life membership in the BCMEA, an honour that stands as a testimony to your achievements. It celebrates your commitment to your dream of music education for Canadian students. The following list is not complete but rather highlights selected moments of your professional career. These moments only hint at the scope of your work for and provide some background for those who might not know you well.

You have:

- Actively participated in music and arts education for more than forty years
- Served as district principal of the Arts for 21 years in the Vancouver school district
- Conducted bands, choirs, and orchestras
- Adjudicated many festivals
- Served as a clinician, provincially, nationally, and internationally
- Advocated in speeches and columns for music education
- Writer of columns and monographs
- Received the Governor-General's medal for arts leadership
- Been a Faculty Associate in music education at UBC
- Chaired several conferences, most recently the World Symposium on Choral

music, for which you were awarded an Honorary life Member of the BC Choral Federation

- President of BCMEA
- Co-editor of the CMEA journal
- President of CMEA
- Member of advisory boards for government agencies
- Father, grandfather, and husband

These qualifications and accomplishments are important; they allow us to know Dennis as an accomplished professional. They but hint at Dennis the human being, the man being honoured today.

Imagine, if you will a small building, a room jammed with people, on a hot September day in Toronto, at the Canadian Music Center, nearly 20 years ago. I entered the meeting room of the Board of Directors of the CMEA as President of the Manitoba Music Educators Association, knowing not one person in the room. Suddenly, a large grin, a welcoming handshake, and an arm around my shoulders ushered me to my place at the table. The grin was my first glimpse of Dennis; the grin was a small indicator of Dennis¹ reaching out to connect with people through music and through talking about music.

During the BCMEA conference, held in Surrey in February 2003, many of your friends and colleagues told me stories about your early years. Your father, known as "Mr Music" in Victoria, was a choral conductor who took you as a small boy to rehearsals and performances. These early experiences of being surrounded by music and by groups of people working together to perform music, provided a strong foundation for you and for your career. One music educator told me that Dennis has a gift of asking questions, of listening intently and carefully for people to answer the question, and then filling in the gaps of the answers, using anecdotes, statistics, or interesting phrases to help people understand his position and to convince them to adopt his position on the issue under discussion. Another educator said "I love to read but I am so busy teaching and rehearsing that I read only those books Dennis recommends because I know they will be excellent!"

Jump forward a decade to another meeting of the CMEA in Toronto. As we were returning to the hotel after an exhausting day of meetings, we noticed the arrival of a tour bus. The hotel lobby was soon filled with people speaking German. A group of tourists and a group of CMEA Board members all got on the same elevator. Dennis, ever one to reach out to others, began reciting the words of a Bach Cantata. Smiles appeared on every face in the elevator; those few words connected us all in human fellowship.

Dennis is willing to connect with policy makers. When words do not seem to have any effect, Dennis has taken to wearing sandwich boards that advertise the benefits of music education in schools, marching outside of buildings in which policy decisions are being made. We know he uses words; he writes regular columns in many journals and speaks across Canada about the benefits of music education and about how central music and music making are to the life of any community.

Dennis continues to teach from the heart, where ³intellect, emotion, and spirit converge² Congratulations, Dennis, on being awarded an **Honorary Life Member in the Canadian Music Educators Association!**