



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND YOUTH AFFAIRS
Mr Michael Pettersson MLA (Chair), Mrs Elizabeth Kikkert MLA (Deputy Chair)
Mr Mark Parton MLA

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into the cessation of the Music
for Colleges course

Submission Number: 23

Date Authorised for Publication: 11 June 2019

**Submission for the
Inquiry into the cessation of the Music
for Colleges course**

The Standing Committee on Education, Employment
and Youth Affairs

Prepared by

ACT Gifted Families Support Group

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Introduction

The study of music has long been a part of the curriculum offered in ACT schools. In late primary school, the introduction of the Instrumental Music Program (IMP) is a great opportunity to start students on a more intense study of an instrument than the standard music curriculum. The IMP puts music education within the reach of all children, including those from low socioeconomic backgrounds. As students continue their journey through High School the study of instrumental music (and that of an individual instrument) continue to exist. Gifted music students then audition for the H music course.

Music students in this program are both gifted (having a very high potential) and talented (already performing at very high standards).

The education of gifted students should be funded by the ACT Government in a way that allows these students to reach their potential in the area of their talent in this case, music.

Demand

The demand for courses as intense and demanding of talented music students always seem to outstrip their supply. A competitive selection process is often put in place, and just like the selection process for the ACT under 15's soccer team (or any other representative sport team) some students miss out. All states and territories in Australia rely on the Gagne Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent to define and understand the processes that take giftedness (potential) in talent. McPherson (1997) suggests this high talent pool may be 2%.

The Board of Senior Secondary Studies 2018 table 3h, shows that:

- 12 students completed Specialist Maths (H): all male
- 13 students completed Advanced Classical Music (H): 6 female, 7 male and
- 21 students completed Advanced Jazz Music (H): 6 female and 15 male.

It can be seen that interest in both Music streams is higher than that of Mathematics.

Demonstrated Long Term Benefits and Outcomes

There is a lot of research that shows providing accelerated learning for gifted students in their area of passion results in long term benefits. Most of this research has been conducted overseas. So, we thought the committee might be better informed by looking at comments from 3 people who were previous students of this type of program in the ACT who have then gone on to Tertiary study and to have careers in music. Demonstrating the long term benefits to ACT students who have studied music at this level during Year 11 and 12. At the time of their study the H Course Music program was referred to as Type 1.

Previous Student 1 (Female):

I did Type 1 during year 12 and it was a great experience both musically and socially. Both the practical and theoretical components of the course were delivered to a high standard that set me up very well to go on to study jazz performance at a tertiary level. I also made many connections with really lovely people who became great friends and musical collaborators.

Previous Student 2 (Female):

I was part of the type 1 program 2010-11. It was a fantastic opportunity to hone my performance and theory skills in a specialised jazz setting. Small group ensembles were a really important part of the program and the relationships I made during this time have led to more creative pursuits in later years. I still perform in several bands both as a paid performer and as part of community projects. I attribute much of my confidence and skill as a musician to my experiences in the type 1 course, and as a result I took advantage of more opportunities that I wouldn't otherwise have had the confidence to take.

And from Wilbur Whitta (shared with his permission)

My name is Wilbur Whitta and I am a former student of the ANU School of Music Type 1 jazz course during 2010-11.

After completing the course I went on to study a Bachelor of Music (Jazz-Performance) at the University of Sydney, and a Master of Arts (Jazz Piano) at the Royal Academy of Music in London. During this time I have been fortunate to receive many accolades, including the 2019 Dankworth Jazz Composition Award for Small Ensemble, the Australian Council for the Arts Career Development Award, the BBM Youth Supporter Award for Jazz Music and the Anthony and Sharon Lee Foundation Jazz Scholarship.

I was introduced to jazz performance through the Type 1 course and without its foundation that I received in these formative years I would not have pursued my jazz studies to the postgraduate level. I found the teaching on the course to be a high standard, catering well to students from various backgrounds.

My time in the course set me up well for a career in music, as it did for countless other students. I would consider any cuts to funding for this course to be a great loss. It is a vital part of music education in Canberra.

Sincerely,
Wilbur Whitta

Best practices for delivering music programs to gifted and talented music students

“In comparison to other subject areas, music has in many ways been a pacesetter in providing for the needs of the talented. We need only look at the types of opportunities we offer young musicians. For example, in many countries musically talented children can undertake specialist training on a chosen instrument, participate in selective choirs, orchestras and bands, and attend a wide-range of regional and state-wide camps and other enrichment activities.” (G. McPherson 1997)

Gifted children develop areas of advanced knowledge and talent best when they are given the opportunity to study together. Music is a great example of this. The above examples of students who participated in an advanced music program together shows the outcomes of learning together whilst undertaking advanced subject content.

Around Australia there are many examples in public education systems of how this is occurring, below are some examples:

In NSW: Sydney has a specialist music high school: Conservatorium High school, a selective High School for gifted music students.

In Victoria: Victorian College of Arts Secondary School has a selective music stream and provides very high quality music programs to advanced students.

In WA: Rossmoyne Senior High School hosts a Specialist Classical Music Program. Students in the Specialist Classical Music Program study and perform alongside musically talented peers.

In all cases, whilst the state has a “priority enrolment school” basis for enrolment, gifted music students are provided the opportunity to attend a selective program and study together in the same school. In the ACT where there is no current opportunity that allows talented music students to enrol in a selective course together at a college (YR 11 and 12 program). The only opportunity in the ACT has been, what was most recently the Music for Colleges course.

Best practice summary

There is only one way to educate musically gifted students, that is to use a selective process to identify them, put them together in state of the art facilities with expert music teachers and teach them!

Funding

Whilst the ACT government allocates funding for Education through the ACT Education Directorate (budget), there are many education programs that seem to come and go in the ACT because their funding is sourced from another area. When this funding source dries up, the ACT Education Directorate reports it is unable to fund the program from its own budget and the program and the learning that comes with it is lost. The Music for Colleges is now one of these education programs.

Why are we taking learning opportunities away from our gifted music students?

In a household budget, if you lose some income, you reduce expenditure across many things. The ACT Education Directorate should do this in this case. It should reduce funding across all categories of expenditure by a very small amount, so that this program can be funded and continue.

Further, the ACT government may consider recovering this amount of funding by reducing, again by a small amount the expenditure across all education and youth programs including funding for school age children who attend the ACT institute of sport. This would send the positive message to the community that all areas of endeavour (talent) are equally valued as important to the ACT government.

Conclusion

Gifted and talented music students throughout Australia are provided with and benefit from learning together. In the ACT this has happened through the Music for Colleges (H Course Music) or one of its previous types of Music courses. These music courses require selection through audition. Previous students from this program have continued their music education after leaving school (yr11 and 12 college) and are successfully working in the music industry, some with awards! The ACT government must find a way to continue to educate our gifted and talented music students, where they learn together in at high quality facility, with expert music teachers to reach their goals and their potential.

References

McPherson, Gary E 1997, Giftedness and Talent in Music, The Journal of Aesthetic Education Vol 31, No.4 pp 65-77