



Mockingbird Foundation Attends Toronto 2000: Musican Intersections

Executive Director speaks at a mutual conference of 14 U.S. & Canadian organizations

College Music Society's Committee on Advocacy Panel

Nov 1, 2000, 8:15 p.m., Sheraton Grand Ballroom East, Sheraton Centre

Taylor Harding, Chair of the CMS Committee on Advocacy; moderator

Pat Page, Executive Director, American Music Conference

June Hinckley, Immediate Past-President, MENC; also works with Yamaha

Mary Luehrsen, Music Program Officer, Texaco Foundation's Early Notes program

George Bishop, NAMM

Ellis Godard, Mockingbird Foundation

Abstract:

Recently, there have been successful joint efforts to advocate on behalf of music and music study by the College Music Society, the Music Educators' National Conference, the National Association of Schools of Music, and other agencies concerned with music education in American schools and colleges. These efforts, primarily the results of the biennial MUSIC EDUCATION SUMMIT and some recent publications, are reasonably well-known among the membership of the College Music Society and other college music teachers, and are being used in local efforts to advocate the importance of music and music study to all types of constituents in our communities. What may not be as well-known by us are the advocacy efforts on behalf of music and music study conducted by corporations and organizations across a wide array of music industries and beyond. Many of these agencies, VH1 SAVE MUSIC Foundation, Texaco's EARLY NOTES PROGRAM, The Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation, the work of the GRAMMY Foundation and dozens of others, have targeted their efforts at public school music programs. Success with both private and public funding attention to music education in schools has been the result of many of the efforts.

The CMS Advocacy Committee presents this Panel featuring representatives of some of the above named initiatives for music and music study. The main objectives of the panel include: illuminating what advocacy efforts are underway and evolving; discussing which ones have been successful and how; revealing and examining where these efforts overlap and are connected in an effort to help shape them and their respective efficiency; and to help mobilize a wider effort of support and engagement from the music professorate.

Mr. Godard's biographical introduction:

Ellis Godard is a doctoral candidate in Sociology at the University of Virginia, and directs Research and Development at Applied Survey Research, a nonprofit social research firm in Watsonville, California. He is also Executive Director of the Mockingbird Foundation, a nonprofit established by fans of the band Phish to raise charitable funds for music education. In that capacity, he has experience with some innovative means of fundraising and with some innovative attempts at disbursements.

Mr. Godard's opening remarks:

I should say, first, that I am new to music advocacy, and that the Mockingbird Foundation has not yet disbursed funds. We don't yet have instructive successes or failures, but we do have unconventional fundraising and guidelines, which may be useful for this discussion. The Mockingbird Foundation and I are therefore glad to represent music advocacy efforts that are lesser known and that stray from a conventional focus on putting instruments in public schools.

The Mockingbird Foundation is itself extremely unconventional. It operates almost entirely through email, and has never held a face-to-face meeting. Indeed, several of our board members have not yet met in person. We do not have an endowment, a corporate supporter, or an ongoing campaign. The Foundation was incorporated in 1997 by fans of the rock band Phish – that's with a PH, an unconventional band with unconventional fans who wanted to publish a book about the band and their music, and give away all the proceeds.

The book – whose title is *The Phish Companion* – has just gone to press with Miller-Freeman, a music publisher in San Francisco, at over 900 pages and with nearly 15-hundred named contributors. It is selling quite well in pre-orders, and will be in major stores by early December.

The Foundation is also producing a tribute "cover" album with Phish's original music performed by other acts, including Arlo Guthrie, Little Feat, Merl Saunders, Son Seals, John Scofield, and Michael Ray, a bluegrass trio, a barbershop quartet, a Japanese metal band, and a 19-person orchestra.

All of the writers and editors for the book, and the artists and producers for the album, are donating their time without compensation. And all of our proceeds from both projects are being donated directly to music education for children.

Our funding guidelines define "music education for children" broadly and somewhat unconventionally. For example, we are interested in efforts outside of schools, including hospitals, shelters, and foster homes. We are also interested in supporting unconventional forms of instruction, and instruction in unconventional forms. And we are not focused on traditional performance skills, but are also interested in composition, vocalization, and improvisation.

As a result, we've received letters of inquiry from a number of efforts that may fall outside conventional funding efforts. For example, a pediatric hospital, a drop-out prevention program, a Sioux reservation daycare center, a shelter for abuse youth, a nonprofit composition library, a Negro spiritual scholarship program, a jazz program for autistic youth, a program to teach low-income youth to play steel drums, a group that produces musical scores in Braille, a church that promotes African-American arts, and an organization that teaches children with cancer to write songs about their experiences.

Now, I'm relatively unfamiliar and naïve, so perhaps funding such efforts is not unusual. But it strikes me that they may illustrate or at least represent gaps in current advocacy efforts. It may be that these are *necessary* gaps, due to the need to focus funding efforts on basic needs and assessable skills in public schools. Given reductions in public school funding, filling these gaps may be a luxury. Frankly, the amount of money we have so far is enough to do little more than acknowledge and encourage innovation. But at the very least, we're raising new funds and not directing efforts away from public schools.

Whether you know about other funding already in these areas, or perhaps have a position about the efficacy of such funding efforts, we're hoping you'll still buy the book and the album. They make great Christmas gifts. Also, I have a few copies of our funding guidelines for anyone interested, as well as some magnets for anyone with a refrigerator.