



**Ekaterina
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I am raising the topic of music education in our neighbourhood for three reasons. Firstly, observations made by music teachers and parents are necessary to gauge how music education is developing in our area. Secondly, the wish to answer the questions of the Unison Flash Survey to identify the program needs of our community's residents. Thirdly, we need proposals for specific ways to improve music education and enlightenment in the Bathurst-Finch neighbourhood.

Having come to Canada four years ago with a seven-year-old child, we wondered how we could help develop our daughter's music abilities. The Russian system of music education is very different from that in Canada. In Russia music schools are government run and possibly the reason for the inclusion of more people; the system is regulated and all teachers are required to hold a college diploma or degree from a university. They are allowed to teach after 10-15 years of special education.

In Canada, teaching music is a non-regulated occupation in the private sector; a music teacher does not require a license. What are the consequences? In one of the local conservatories (located in the basement of a supermarket), I saw six kids learning how to play the keyboard, there was no piano. The teacher was

handing out worksheets. Individual efforts of every student merged into a cacophony of all the students.

Who can a parent turn to when they want to know if their child is innately gifted musically? Which instrument is appropriate for them? These types of questions are answered by music teachers after an assessment of your child's musical abilities (pitch, rhythm, memory). In my opinion, **providing information on consulting, educational services and after-school programs (private or government) is an urgent need in our neighbourhood.**



For those who want to expose their kids to a keyboard, guitar or piano, Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation offers a nine-week group, or one-on-one classes in a few community centers. **The City programs mainly focus on recreational approaches** (children often learn just for fun). Some flexibility varies from centre to centre. I see more similarities than differences between group keyboard lessons offered by the City of Toronto, and by some private schools. Tuition fees vary - the City charges ap-

proximately eight times less than private schools for group keyboard lessons, private lessons are twice as much. There are distinct drawbacks to these group programs. Firstly, **they don't afford opportunities for further growth of gifted students** who aspire to a higher level of learning. Secondly, **the instructions are focused on practical instrumental skills, disregarding the importance of the basics of music theory.** Thirdly, our local community centre **doesn't facilitate music programs.**

Even though there are many good musicians in our area, **there hasn't been a local socially significant, affordable music program in four years.** Experienced music teachers (in our community) teach in their homes or downtown. At best, music becomes a part-time job. At worst, musicians have to say goodbye to their professional past. The amount of music teachers who are not professionally trained and have a minimal music education, is increasing. (They're able to "sell themselves.") It's one of the most professionally critical situations I've observed in Canada.



Together with local professional music teachers, we united to form the Alliance for Music Learning (Alliance) for the above reasons. It was created as a family and community-centered organization for children, their devoted parents, who joined on the basis of proactive learning, creativity and mutual trust. Our music instructors teach children and parents together (optional) to add to their understanding of how family-centered musical approach enhances an environment of respect and creativity.

From the very beginning, students of the Alliance can participate in the integrated program of musical literacy, involving sight and hand signs singing, ear training and



We Are The Pain"

voice production leading to precise intonation, unison and part-singing. Our consultants provide a high quality, comprehensive assessment of musical abilities before the start of the program. Consultation services which assist children and youth in determining what instrument and musical activity is preferable for them, will be made on the basis of activities related to music learning, such as visual-spatial processing and visual-motor processing.

From grade 1 - one-on-one instructions and ensemble playing experience (**piano, violin, and keyboard**). From grade



3, students begin to study the **flute, or clarinet**. From grade 6 – **saxophone** (opportunity to play in jazz band combo). Repertoire ranges from classical to popular standards. Musicianship and music history are an important part of the students' music experience.

The disciplines of music, particularly through participation in ensembles, helps students work effectively in the school environment. Music teaches the following skills: creative thinking, calmer attitudes,

imagination, study skills, persistence, teamwork and communication.

Members of Alliance have performed at music festivals including: Antibes Multicultural Festival, and a recital at the North York Civic Centre. We prepared a young singer to perform in the Canadian Opera Company's "Death in Venice" production (see picture below).

One of the music literacy pilot projects, **Antibes Children's Community Choir**, was recently launched by us at the Antibes Community Center after-school recreation care. The program is designed for Grades

1-3 for those who wish to sing. We are open to accepting new students and colleagues. **Currently we are looking for partners who welcome musical programs and own space where music can be performed.** For more information contact us at blazhkova@gmail.com, tel. 416.833.9099

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Julia Fursova

Community Kitchen

with us. If you are an adventurous cook, wishing to explore new tastes and dishes – join us too! Whether you are an experienced chef or a novice, join us in the Community Kitchen in the New Year.

To register for this program call 647.436.0385 and speak with Jenny Lyttle or Julia Fursova.

Squash stuffed with rice, cranberries and walnuts... Vegetarian lasagne with ricotta cheese and mushrooms, Russian pie with salmon and dill... looks like a menu from a high end restaurant in downtown Toronto, doesn't it? Yet it is only a small sample of dishes from the Community Kitchen – a program that has been up and running at Fisherville Junior High school since summer.

A lively group of people comes together every Thursday to cook, talk and, of course, share the food together. There is laughter, stories told, events discussed and recipes shared. Like any kitchen it is a place for food, and like any kitchen it is also a place for gathering. Nothing breaks the ice better than a hearty dinner, and nothing brings you closer to your neighbour than cooking a meal together.

The Community kitchen has also become a place for learning about other resources in the community – events, services and programs. The program is led by Registered Dietitian, Jenny Lyttle, and a Community Animator – Emine Guvenc. Together with the group they've been exploring recipes from around the world. So far, the kitchen tried Mexican, Turkish, Chinese, Russian and Filipino cuisine to name just a few. If you feel passionate about recipes from your home country, come and share them



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