

Arts in Education Council at Duets 2008 October 23-25 at VanTech High School

1. Our display was well positioned at the entrance to the big display area where participants could hardly miss our name and quotes artfully set up by Ron. Though fewer folk came to chat than at the BCTF Convention, enough stopped by gratifyingly exhorting us to keep up the good work and tell how important our efforts are to them.
2. Mingling with the teachers who deliver the arts that we advocate for is salutary and surely effort well spent. We also connected with other concerned groups such as the Coalition.



Morag Cuthbertson at our Duets 2008 table

3. Our AGM was preceded by a Roundtable attended by Dennis Tupman, Cathy Bayleys, Fine Arts co-ordinator in Surrey, Kathy Saul-Fowler, president designate of BCMEA and Chad, a UBC music education student. Having all these viewpoints was enlightening if depressing, but, we need not despair. They needed to vent and we needed to be made fully aware of their concerns and frustrations. Talking next day to Dennis, he struck a more positive note advising us to ignore the big picture and concentrate on our perhaps narrower targets one at a time and on his advice to seek out Charles Ungeleider and Paul Shaker.
4. The National Arts Centre web is a glorious, if overly full, site spearheaded by Pinchas Zukerman. They not only send the orchestra and PZ across the country, but offer great materials and support to teachers and place books and materials in every school. We found common ground and a fantastic connection in Kelly Abercrombie [kabercro@nac-cna.ca] who was carrying their flag here at Duets 2008. We need to follow through on this connection too.

5. Just before we were ready to pack up, Lynn Langtry Smith of S.D. 91 Nechako, also known as “Violin Lynn” dropped by to say that she always means to join our group but is terribly busy running a string programme all across her area. That is the understatement of the year.

Trained in Manitoba where her version of a unique programme was initiated by Frontier School District, she later became Vanderhoof’s High School Music teacher. On finding her superintendent, Roy LeMoigne, was and is highly supportive of and passionate about the Arts in education, together they found the will and a way to develop a violin programme beginning with Grade 6 students. They are slowly expanding upwards and have begun extending into Grade 7.

To accommodate to the inclement winter, the programme runs in twelve week segments, the bookends requiring driving two and a half hours to outlying areas, while the middle period finds her serving in Vanderhoof itself. It is quite staggering and wildly supported by parents and the communities. This despite little or no preparation in the earlier grades. As the district already has videos and photographs of her at work, we asked her to let us have a look with a view to putting them on our web should they fit within our parameters. For the record, her address is [llangtry@mail.sd91.bc.ca].

6. We must mention the keynote speaker, Dee Daniels, not only a singer of unbelievable power and range, but happily, a most entertaining and fascinating speaker. Opening with a riveting rendition of Let the Light Shine, she regaled us with stories of her life from teen years up to the present. We did wonder how this might tie in with the Conference, but of course, her opening song was the clue as she honoured all the hard working music teachers and exhorted them to Let their Light Shine.
7. Finally, for the record, we paid Adam Moore the required \$200 for our display area and table, but alas, he couldn’t give me a receipt on Thursday night, but promised to email one to us. We might have to jolt his memory. In the meantime, the cheque itself will hopefully reveal that we didn’t spend it on fine dining!
8. Our AGM ended with good cheer prompted by Ron’s Co-Chair’s Address and we hied us home with a giggle or two and smiles on our faces.

Morag Cuthbertson
Ron Rumak