



## **Westwinds Music Society**

Room 38B8 – 2526 Battleford Ave. SW  
Calgary, Alberta, Canada

**July 24, 2020**

### Re: Covid-19: A Message for our Westwinds Family

We hope everyone is finding safe ways to enjoy their summer. Fewer storms and perhaps a little more sunshine would be on our lists; however, how else would we know we're in Calgary?

We know it's a bit unusual to hear from us in July. However, it seems important to update everyone, given the crazy times we are in right now. The music community is absolutely buzzing right now, in response to the provincial government and AHS, along with various municipal government and school district decisions. We'd like to take a moment to update you with what we know and what we don't know.

Here's what we know:

1. The Alberta Band Association (ABA) is fighting the good fight to have a bigger voice right now. Unfortunately, the ABA is not recognized as an official organization by the Alberta Teachers Association (ATA). There is another organization, the Alberta Fine Arts Council (the official representative of the Arts), and the plan is they will be part of a joint committee for advocacy purposes (see below #5)

The ABA has just completed a document regarding 'Wind Playing Indoors' that has recently been shared with AHS and the Alberta Government and eventually with band teachers and directors throughout Alberta.

The ABA has worked hard on behalf of bands and band teachers to provide many resources on their website (<https://www.albertabands.com>) including:

- a. Current studies on aerosols and wind instruments
  - b. Advocating for music programs, including template letters to MLAs, school boards, trustees, and administrators (from parents and directors), along with statements to support the arts.
  - c. Re-opening Guidelines – Manitoba is providing key resources, along with B.C., Ontario, and various American sources.
  - d. Planning Resources for Online and In-Person Instruction
  - e. Instrument and Classroom Hygiene
2. Choir Alberta is also working hard at this time, and has assembled a number of resources on their website, (<https://www.choiralberta.ca/>) including:
    - a. 'Guidelines for Choral Singing from Alberta Health' on their website.
    - b. 'Information about the Transmission of Covid-19 and Choirs'

- c. 'Covid-19 Impact Survey for Canadian Choirs – National Summary of Results'
  - d. 'Covid-19 Action Plan Template'
  - e. 'Principles to Guide Community Choirs through Covid-19'
3. CADME (Calgary Association for the Development of Music Education) is also working on a unified statement to be sent to the Alberta Government in conjunction with the ABA and other organizations regarding the value of music education.
  4. The Stampede Foundation was successful in their appeal to the Alberta Government/AHS to hold percussion and dance rehearsals outside. A few weeks later it was announced by AHS that wind playing and singing outside was also permitted.
  5. There is also a vision to have some sort of Alberta Music Educators Association (AMEA) to be a consolidated voice for music education advocacy. This is something that occurs in Ontario, BC and Manitoba, as well as in the United States. This is a long-overdue organization that has sprung to life due to Covid-19 and our present situation.
  6. There is a long-awaited study regarding aerosols and wind instruments that was released July 13<sup>th</sup>, the results of which can be found on the ABA website. The summary is here: <https://nfhs.org/media/4029971/preliminary-recommendations-from-international-performing-arts-aerosol-study.pdf>
  7. Most of our music teachers around the province are advocating for keeping music in some form in the curriculum, even if it is not singing and playing wind instruments.
  8. The Alberta Government just announced the return to in-person school for students K-12. However, 'Learning experiences involving unprotected (without a mask or physical barrier) in-person singing, cheering or shouting, or playing wind instruments should be postponed at this time.' Some of the suggested alternatives involve lessons focused on music appreciation or music theory, or playing instruments that are lower risk (ie. percussion or string instruments).
  9. City of Calgary Parks and Recreation, the department that rents out school spaces to various organizations for evening programs (including Westwinds) has asked for our schedule. and our requests have been submitted for the Fall semester. We are awaiting approval of these permits but have not been given any indication as to when this will happen.

Here is just the beginning of a list of what we don't know:


1. Whether the Calgary School Boards will allow rentals from outside agencies (through Parks and Rec) this year. We also have no timeline at present for when we will know this.
2. Whether Lakeview United Church will be allowed/permitted to rent their space. If so, in what capacity, and will our choirs be allowed to sing in their building?

3. What we can do as an organization to find ways to meet the needs of our Westwinds members within this restricted environment?
4. Whether our members will feel safe enough to return to in-person playing and singing even if we closely follow suggested guidelines indicated in emerging studies.

We are making the reasonable assumption at this point that it will not be a normal start up for the 2020/2021 season. Since May, the intent has been to survey our members as to their preferences, given the circumstances. Having said that, the information has been so fluid and ever-changing that it has been hard to know what to ask as we don't know what we might be able to offer. Thus we wait and continue to gather information. Please know that there will be a survey coming your way prior to September to give you an opportunity to provide what will be invaluable feedback for the coming season.

Our history as an organization with over 30 years of making music together has included tremendous support from a large group of incredibly dedicated individuals – from its founders to talented educators, hundreds of volunteers and over time, thousands of members – and is worthy of fighting for. Thank you for your patience and support as we weave our way through these unprecedented times.

Best regards,



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Jane McLauchlin  
Artistic Director  
Westwinds Music Society



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Bruce Robin  
President  
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