

Dr Susan West
Artistic Director, Music Engagement Program

School of Music
College of Arts and Social Sciences
Building 100
Canberra ACT 0200 Australia

+61 2 6125 8978
+61 2 6125 9775
susan.west@anu.edu.au

music.anu.edu.au

CRICOS Provider No. 00120C

MEETING AT O'CONNOR COOPERATIVE SCHOOL ON COLLABORATION WITH ANU SCHOOL OF MUSIC MUSIC ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

As you may be aware the ANU Music Engagement Program (MEP) has been working with O'Connor Cooperative Schools for some 3 years. The MEP is a large-scale program with a different philosophical approach that focuses on social, altruistic music making as a means to life enhancement, with musical skill development a subsidiary goal. The Program has both a local and international reach and is the focus of a major research program, which now includes medical, as well as musical/community projects. There are copies of the latest MEP Summary of Activities available for those interested in or requiring more information.

The MEP association with Jenny, Co-op Principal, is of long-standing. The MEP often follows teachers around the system, at the request of the teacher, and we welcomed a closer engagement with Co-op school, having worked there in the past, when Jenny became Principal.

Aside from our regular activities with the Co-op school community we are undertaking two special projects this year for which, in keeping with the MEP philosophy, we would like more community input and engagement.

They are:

An instrumental project involving, in the first instance, ocarinas with Year 1 and, later Year 2, to be expanded if viable to include whistle and ukelele; and

The introduction of a set of international repertoire, which will culminate in an interactive MEP-style 'concert' in Term 3. Those of you who attend Friday community singing will already know some of this repertoire.

There are three points related to these projects that involve further discussion with the community.

1. Collecting community opinion

Some of you will be aware that we have been surveying the Co-op students to collect opinions about a proposed set of international repertoire. This set has already been subject to evaluation by children in other schools, which is how the set was developed (as was the standard MEP song set of eighty songs, known as KIDSING). This type of student input is standard practice for the MEP. We are also about to invite members of the larger Co-op community to fill in the survey on-line and will then be looking for volunteers from this community, including Co-op alumni to engage with the interactive performance scheduled for Llewellyn Hall in Term 3. Collecting this type of information to help develop the in-school program does not require any special permissions or input from families because it is for internal use only and benefits the school community.

2. Recording results

Both Co-op school and the MEP are keen to record the results of this collaboration – ie the interactive performance at the School of Music in Term 3. This recording could be a wonderful record for parents and students, but, as with many MEP projects, may also provide a helpful example for others of the type of interactive performance that can be developed with the input of a whole community, rather than just music specialists. In other words, the MEP could potentially use the recording as part of their teaching materials. This idea is another important aspect of the MEP approach and one we are always keen to share. There is obviously a difference between using a recording internally within the school and more publicly, and discussing if and how this idea might be achieved requires input from the school community.

3. Research

As noted above, the MEP, being part of our national university, includes a research paradigm that is specifically designed to help use disseminate the approach in a practical way that helps others apply it, for the benefit of all. For example, there is now an outreach program in Invercargill, New Zealand, which is supported by the MEP, and has already undertaken some 50 outreaches since November last year. The difference between 'research' and the type evaluation described in No. 1, above, is not so much what information is collected (which is basically the same information) but how it is disseminated. For example, if we have permission to disseminate the results of the Co-op repertoire survey described above we can publish this information in a way that benefits other schools and communities. Likewise, using collected information for teaching purposes, as noted above, is different from framing the collected information as formal research.

The MEP currently has a five-year ethics protocol which was approved by the ANU Ethics Committee in 2015. This protocol allows us to ask our users for permission to use information collected for research purposes. We currently distribute these forms to our teacher population.

Up to this point we have not attempted a full-school ethics approval process but we are planning to do so with Co-op school and its community because we believe that the results of the projects we are undertaking at Co-op will be of significant value for other schools and communities. Just FYI, and since it might not be obvious to parents who ONLY engage with Co-op school, the singing at Co-op is significantly different from singing at many other schools as a result of the engagement between Co-op school and its teachers over the last 3-4 years.

Since Co-op is a small community, it will be simpler process to collect permissions than in a larger school; and we can trial the process itself to see if it is viable to undertake formal research in larger school environments. In essence, we are researching the research process, as well as the results of the research process. An added benefit is that undertaking such research provides a rationale for the additional time and resources allotted to Co-op, since we are asking the school to act as one of our major experimental environments.

S D W

MEP Artistic Director,
June 2, 2017