

## External Review Report of the School of Music

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### External Review Committee

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### **Executive Summary:**

The SoM, like other Canadian post-secondary music programs, is in transition. The cultural environment and society are changing, student demands are changing, and higher education in music needs to respond, all within an ever-more constrained resource environment. The SoM needs to be lauded for their efforts to evolve. We see them as striving to find the balance between a traditional conservatory-style music education and a more innovative, research-oriented education in music. We recognize the pressure this places the leadership under and want to emphasize the support that is needed from the senior administration, the Faculty of Fine Arts, and the Dean to assist them with these critical changes.

Although the age of the music building is beginning to show, it was generally felt that teaching, rehearsal, studio, and practice spaces are adequate for the student population. However, it is critical that Phase B of the CReaTe Lab Recording Studio be completed to support growth in the Music Tech area, and that an annual budget for equipment maintenance and upgrades be allocated. Renovations are also needed for the Phillip T. Young Recital Hall. (One example is the poor state of the seating and flooring in Farquhar auditorium).

The library resources are housed in UVic's main collection, a situation common with many post-secondary music collections in Canada; the ensemble performance materials are housed in the SoM building. In short, this is a strong library collection.

The SoM faculty have strong profiles for their respective research, creative activities, and performance work. There is a good record of success with Canada Council awards, but efforts could be made to increase engagement with Tri-Council grants both for faculty members and graduate students. The number of full-time faculty in the SoM has steadily decreased over the last number of years, forcing a greater reliance on sessional instructors to deliver some of the SoM's core curricular components. Integrating sessional instructors more meaningfully and

stabilizing funding for Music Performance Instructors will be to the benefit of all colleagues and students. Future hiring opportunities should be aligned with new areas of growth.

The SoM's support staff are a positive and cohesive group that carry an extraordinarily high workload. The risk of burnout could be mitigated by the streamlining of internal processes and the University's investment in technology to replace manual tasks.

The SoM offers a wide range of degree options, including a BMus (performance, music education, composition and theory, musicology and sound studies, and musical arts), a combined degree with Music and Computer Science, a BA in Music, an MMus, MA, and PhD. Unfortunately, the reduced complement of permanent faculty over the last few years has meant the SoM has struggled to offer all the required courses. The newly streamlined B.Mus. core curriculum should help in this regard, and programs such as Music Education and Composition could review their core requirements with the goal of making it feasible for students to meet requirements in a timely way while maintaining the program's quality. In general, students have good performing opportunities at the School and are able to select from an exceptionally wide set of ensemble offerings, perhaps wider than the SoM is able to support and sustain.

That said, there is a solid series of core courses as well as interesting electives. In terms of future directions, given the greater diversification of the student body and personal and institutional incentives to stress Indigenous and multicultural issues in teaching, the music program would benefit from diversifying its electives in such areas. Opportunities for interdisciplinary curricular and research activities beyond computer science and music could also be explored, particularly within the Faculty of Fine Arts. Music offerings such as "Popular Musics of the World" could be offered as hybrid or fully online courses to attract students outside the music programs. And the newly launched BA Music degree could be enhanced with the inclusion of studies that are in high demand by students, from one-on-one lessons to a focus on music technology.

To its credit, the SoM has maintained its enrollment numbers despite declining enrolments being the norm in music programs across North America. Furthermore, the UVic music students, particularly at the undergraduate level, are enthusiastic and unusually collegial. One geographical challenge is the competition the SoM faces from the music programs in close proximity, notably UBC and the three music programs in Alberta. Of course, a further challenge facing all music programs in North America is the significant reduction in high school band and choral programs these past few years due to COVID. The recovery is there but has been slow; it will likely take three to five years to fully recover. Given the competition for a

decreasing population of students it is imperative that the SoM fully implement whatever recruitment strategies it can at this time to ensure it can attract as many students as possible in this highly competitive market.

The student attrition rates have remained relatively low for the past decade or so and faculty have done a commendable job to shepherd them throughout their program of study. In fact, one of the frequent comments by the students we met was how much individualized attention they received by all faculty (both full time and sessional) throughout their four years of study. This said, the time to completion is on average 4.5 years and needs to be reduced in order to remain competitive with other music programs.

### **Committee Recommendations**

We have five general categories of recommendations to offer. Recommendations 1-3 involve people, Recommendation 4 considers curriculum, and Recommendation 5 involves facilities.

#### **1. Director Support**

##### **1.1 Create a second leadership position, i.e. an Associate Director.**

The portfolio of the Director is quite heavy, made even more challenging by the complexity from the diverse elements in a music curriculum. The Associate Director position would be responsible for overseeing several responsibilities associated with undergraduate students, e.g. timetabling, schedules, and serving as the first person to address student issues. Along with opening space in the workload of the Director to allow for more focus on activities such as fundraising, strategic planning and liaising with other units, an Associate Director role would generate opportunities for succession planning in the SoM.

##### **1.2 Provide mentorship to the Director by those in more senior leadership positions. The Director is leading the SoM through a period of transition to a more diverse, innovative, and sustainable model, where past practices of processes and expectations will likely be changed in an environment of dwindling resources. In short, such aspirations for new activities means that purposeful and strategic decisions need to be made about what will be discontinued. The Director needs to be supported through this process.**

## 2. Faculty Member Support and Expectations

### 2.1 Promote and support external research funding applications.

Although SoM faculty have a laudatory record of Canada Council awards, these awards are rarely associated with student support and, because the AVP Research's Office cannot track or report on this money, the SoM is inevitably excluded from opportunities such as Canada Research Chairs or CFI applications whose eligibility relies on the Tri-Council success rate of an academic unit. We strongly suggest the SoM find ways to support faculty members with Tri-Council grant applications, in collaboration with the grants officer position in the Faculty of Fine Arts and the Office of the AVP Research.

Along similar lines, the committee recommends that graduate students be encouraged as much as possible to apply for Tri-Council support to assist them financially with the weak internal funds they may receive.

### 2.2 Review the workload of full-time, tenured performance faculty.

The workload for full-time, tenured research faculty members is consistent with many Canadian music schools, but this is less clearly the case for full-time, tenured performance faculty workloads. The committee recommends that workload for this cohort be researched and reviewed in order to ensure a workload policy that is equitable and sustainable.

### 2.3 Create a permanent base budget for Music Performance Instructors.

Given that the sessional Music Performance Instructor (MPI) model provides a fiscally sustainable way to meet the ongoing need for one-on-one private lessons, a scenario found in all post-secondary music programs in Canada, we recommend the Faculty of Fine Arts look for creative ways to create a permanent base budget amount for MPIs to protect the SoM's core activity from overall sessional budget fluctuations. As a point of departure to determine this figure, we suggest reviewing MPI costs over the past five years.

### 2.4 Build stronger relationships with sessional instructors.

To mitigate the general feeling of dissociation from the activities of the SoM expressed by sessional instructors, the committee recommends taking community-building steps such as: a) hold a Fall orientation meeting to update sessional instructors on UVic's academic expectations, available services to instructors and students, syllabus requirements, expectations of work that falls within the appointment (including responding to student emails, writing letters of recommendation, etc.); b) allocating a pool of funds to support recruitment

activities by Music Performance Instructors, who play a vital role in sustaining BMus enrolment; c) allocating a small pool of funds, if possible, for professional development by sessional instructors, together with terms of reference to access such funds.

### 3. Support Staff Workload

#### 3.1 Clarify expectations to streamline support staff work processes.

Unnecessary stress and undue support staff workload could be reduced by consistent processes and cooperation from faculty members. Problematic practices include support staff entering grades for ensembles, promotional and communications information being received late from faculty members, and receiving incorrect class schedule details. (We should note that the stress caused from last minute bookings was a concern also raised by the students we met.) The committee recommends that the Director meet with support staff to identify pertinent issues and generate a priority list of directives to distribute to faculty members.

#### 3.2 Replace the current key system with a secure key card system.

The current system where support staff are responsible for cutting, distributing and monitoring keys for practice rooms, labs, classrooms, and offices for the ever-changing student population as well as for a large number of sessional staff, is unduly time-intensive and not secure. Music students (and some faculty) are often present on campus in the evenings and need to be protected by an effective security system. The committee recommends that the University replace the current system and make a one-time investment into a secure programmable key card system.

### 4. Curriculum Matters

#### 4.1 Support the new curricular directions by aligning future faculty hiring.

One of the challenges in contemporary post-secondary music programs is how to diversify the course offerings and student body in a space that has been designed for a classical western-art conservatory-styled curriculum. The SoM has begun some important steps in this direction, including streamlining its core requirements for the B.Mus. and introducing its combined computer science/music degree and the new BA in music offering. Both new programs promise to bring in different types of students from the traditional B.Mus. student and are widely viewed as positive developments within the SoM. Although some concern was raised about bringing performance faculty positions back to previous levels, the committee recommends that the opportunities created by these new initiatives make it strategic to prioritize future

faculty hires to support the two new programs.

#### 4.2 Streamline ensemble opportunities.

The large number of ensemble offerings in the SoM exceeds the number available at many other music programs in Canada. We recommend redeploying resources more purposefully and creating a leaner, more streamlined suite of ensemble opportunities. Further, all of these ensembles fall under the rubric of a western-art conservatory-style groups. As part of the SoM's aspirations to diversify its curriculum and to appeal to new students, we suggest the SoM explore other types of ensemble opportunities such as Indigenous and World Music ensembles.

#### 4.3 Streamline course requirements in Music Education and Composition.

Two streams in the B.Mus. program—Music Education and Composition—were highlighted as having a prohibitively high number of required courses. In the case of Education, students reported being unable to acquire sufficient credits for a second teaching subject. The committee recommends that these programs be reviewed with the goal of reducing the number of required courses.

#### 4.4 Continue to enhance interdisciplinary opportunities.

The interdisciplinary curricular and research opportunities being created with the new computer science/music degree are impressive, and we recommend that the SoM build on this strength by exploring opportunities with the BA degree, whose flexibility has the potential for associations with other academic areas. With respect to the BMus program, research and curricular opportunities between the SoM and the other disciplines in the Faculty of Fine Arts should be explored as much as possible. As an example, we see such interdisciplinarity as a fruitful means to generate creative Indigenous opportunities within the Faculty.

#### 4.5 Integrate an Indigenous perspective.

One challenge to note is the SoM's lack of decolonizing strategy or means to integrate Indigenous content both within courses as well as actual electives. As a point of departure, one way to respond to this piece could be to implement Indigenous learning outcomes for all courses offered. Such outcomes would be included in the syllabi and promoted on the website.

#### 4.6 Ensure consistency in curricular protocols for students.

Some students, at both undergraduate and graduate levels, reported experiencing a disconnect between the structure and details of a course and the course syllabus. (For instance, a not insignificant number of students remarked that they did not receive a syllabus for their private lessons; other students commented about how changes to

details of the syllabus—deadlines, assignment dates, etc. added undue stress to their experience of this course.) We suggest that the Director (or Associate Director, assuming this position were created in the SoM) ensure that all faculty and sessional instructors comply with UVic’s rights and responsibilities associated with the course syllabus and its role for a successful delivery of a course.

## 5. Facilities and Equipment Infrastructure Prioritization

### 5.1 Create a priority list of renovations and identify possible sources.

The infrastructure needs identified by members of the SoM include the completion of phase B renovations to the CReaTe Lab, new seats and flooring for the Phillip T. Young Recital Hall, and upgrading classrooms to SMART technology. Given these competing challenges, the committee recommends that a priority list of upgrades and renovations be made (immediate, shorter term, and longer term needs) so that sources of funding can be identified and University Advancement can work with donors to assist in procuring the funds needed. Concerning funding to complete the Phase B Lab renovation, the self-study document identifies a CFI application as one possible source of funds. While we would not dissuade the SoM and Faculty of Fine Arts from putting forward such an application, the strong competition at both the University and federal levels make it prudent to explore alternative sources. Donor support could come in the form of individuals with whom UVic has been in conversation, perhaps in partnership with internal University funding sources. In addition, given the significant role British Columbia plays with the film and video game industries, corporate sponsorship/partnership opportunities should be pursued.

### 5.2 Meet the infrastructure and equipment needs in the Music Technology areas. The SoM’s investment in the innovative technology programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels, including the new faculty hires, needs to be matched by investment in infrastructure—the completion of Phase B of the CReaTe Lab (discussed above)—and a sustained investment in equipment maintenance/upgrades. Without this, the programs, which have already proved their popularity, will not be able to meet the intended needs of the curriculum. The review committee understands that funds from the ongoing maintenance and upgrading of equipment have decreased over the past few years to 0. Given that technology changes rapidly, it is critical that annual funds be allocated to ensure faculty and students have access to the most current academic resources

### 5.3 Plan a schedule for upgrading pianos over time.

The large contingent of pianos the SoM received around 2008 from Steinway will

likely need normal upgrade work (regulation work, hammer replacement, etc.) in a similar period of time. Plans should be established so that this work can be phased in to mitigate the SoM incurring a substantial financial expense at a single point in time.

#### 5.4 Offset the hidden costs associated with performance activities.

The committee recognizes the hidden costs associated with performance activities, including bookings, publicity, instrument moving, stagehands, recording, etc. We recommend that, in addition to the recently implemented policy to charge a fee for community members to participate in large ensembles, a fee be levied for non-student audience members to attend ensemble concerts, as is the norm at all post-secondary music institutions of which we are aware. Costs could be reduced further by replacing paper programs with digital versions that audience members could access online, another common practice.