



PHOTOS BY YUJET CHAN

A place for every voice

Teacher–leader weaves lessons about diversity and representation into music education

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JORGIANNE TALBOT KNEW SHE WAS onto something after her first Christmas concert as a music teacher.

She called the production *A Celebration of Carols*. It was a series of songs of joy from around the world and the grand finale was “Silent Night,” which all the students learned in English and sign language. After preparing for their own concert, the students attended a community musical performance in which the performers also sang “Silent Night.”

“The whole school of students in the audience began signing with the performers as they sang on stage. It was a magical event,” Talbot recalls.

Although it was only her first year of teaching, Talbot could already see how music could move her students while simultaneously opening their eyes to diversity and representation.

SHINING A LIGHT

Being the daughter of a dedicated high school math teacher, Talbot found that her passion for music was interwoven with a love of teaching. Her journey to teaching music began with her own education.

“To be the best music teacher I could be, I first needed to be the best musician I could be,” she says.

With this in mind, after completing a bachelor’s degree in music and beginning an after-degree in education, Talbot travelled to Hungary to study the

Kodály method of music education. She continued her professional learning by completing her education degree and a master of music degree and joining the Alberta Kodály Association (she later served as vice-president and then president).

“Jorgianne is passionate about music and is able to bring her extensive knowledge of Kodály methodology to instill students with a strong foundation of musical skills,” says Bruce Cable, a colleague of Talbot’s during her time at Victoria School of the Arts.

An elementary and choral music specialist, Talbot feels fortunate to have found assignments that allowed her to teach music full time and promote students’ connection to music. She was later able to share her expertise and passion for music education with colleagues as an arts education consultant with Edmonton Public Schools, as a sessional instructor in the University of Alberta’s elementary education music department, as a mentor teacher and as an interchange (secondment) participant.

In each role she occupies, Talbot both advances literacy in music and builds learning communities in which different cultures are appreciated and represented.

“What’s special about the role of music educator and consultant is that I can bring different cultures into the classroom through the music,” Talbot says.