

# Teaching music to the music teachers is Dorothy Powell's role

By Jane Muller  
Dorothy Powell, who began piano lessons even before she attended elementary school herself, has been bringing music to area children

for 28 years. Her lessons began out of her mother's frustration. As a youngster, Dorothy would try to push her mother from the

bench of the piano which she was playing. She was innocently attempting to get her tiny fingers on the keyboard which attracted her curiosity. Her mother had given

in by the time Dorothy was four years old, and the lessons began. By her sixth birthday Dorothy had attained first class honors in Grade 1 Conservatory exams and just five years later she began to perform in concerts and on radio.

"I did my own radio series at 13," said Miss Powell. She earned teaching and performance certificates for piano and at 15 she began to study pipe organ at Christ Church Cathedral in Hamilton where she lived.

While playing at the All Saints Church in Hamilton she became an Associate of the Royal Canadian College of Organists.

She remembers her teacher Mona Bates who had much experience performing in Europe. Miss Powell said her Canadian teacher was "great."

Mona Bates inspired Dorothy to travel with her talents, performing in smaller cities as well as larger ones like Chicago. A planned chain of concerts in London, England and New York was called off due to a lack of finances and Miss Powell turned her time to teaching.

It didn't happen all at once, though. The Aldershot school board

asked Miss Powell if she was interested in being a music supervisor but when her reply did not come in August, another musician was hired.

She had been vacationing when her answer was needed but the following summer she received the same proposition. This time her answer was prompt and positive.

"I didn't know anything about school work then," Miss Powell recalls. She had been teaching piano at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Hamilton for a number of years before joining the school board.

In 1960, one year after the death of her father, Miss Powell and her mother moved to Milton and she watched her job as music supervisor change gradually.

Her work was concentrated in the Burlington area for the most part, but in 1969 her field of supervision moved

north and she became involved with Milton school children.

She worked for her Bachelor of Arts degree with a music major for three years part time, graduating in 1976 with 91 per cent in her major. Miss Powell is qualified to teach music to students from Kindergarten to Grade 13.

As an executive member of the Ontario Music Educators Association, Miss Powell travelled weekends throughout the province bringing music to students through their teachers.

"We organized regional workshops and brought music education into the area north of Toronto," she said. Fort William, Kenora and Sault Ste. Marie were among the places she visited.

Her 28 years as a music educator have led Dorothy to witness some major changes in teaching processes.

She said there has been a big change in the involvement of teachers who are now learning different ways to teach music to children, especially the young.

Miss Powell described the now outdated music class where students would sit with straight backs and folded hands to sing.

"There was no movement," Miss Powell said. "In the last 10 years we have been trying to involve the children any way we can with different musical concepts."

The children are involved in playing musical instruments as much as possible, while music programs consist of five areas of musical exploration.

These areas are described by Miss Powell as singing, instrumental, movement to establish beat, creative music forms and listening skills which spill over into other school subjects and life tasks.

Miss Powell's main commitment now lies in providing workshops for the teachers of Robert Baldwin, J.M. Denyes and Martin St. Schools. She teaches teachers how to teach music, basically.

A recent workshop was held for teachers to attend on their own time. Miss Powell taught the autoharp, which not only

makes students familiar with the key and pitch of chords produced, it gives them an opportunity to strum the strings to a beat.

"Music is one of the basic concepts we try to develop with our young children and the autoharp is one source to practise this skill," Miss Powell said.

Within the next two years, Miss Powell will retire from her job with the Halton Board of Education. Her retirement really only poses one problem, she will have to decide which of her many choices she will go with.

She could teach Piano lessons again, return to radio or performing, or possibly all three could be a part of retired life.



Basic music aid. The autoharp is an instrument which teachers are being encouraged to use to help children develop their musical skills. Dorothy Powell instructs teachers in this and other forms of music education for children.

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## Solicitor sought

A Halton sub-committee has been formed to select a new regional solicitor. The job of solicitor came open when Dennis Perlin was officially promoted to the job of Chief Administrative Officer. Until the job is filled, the region is employing the services of outside lawyers. Mr. Perlin will sit on the sub-committee with councillors Joan Allingham and Harry Barrett.

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