

## Music and Singing: A Pandemic Lifeline

From balcony concerts to live-streamed fundraising events, music has connected strangers and friends as social distancing and gathering limits were implemented worldwide in response to the global pandemic. All with good reason. **Music and singing support mental health and well-being.**

Statistics Canada's research reports that youth are at a higher risk of experiencing poor mental health during the pandemic<sup>1</sup>. Students experienced emotional difficulties related to social isolation and stress this past year in response to school closures and online learning<sup>2</sup>.

For many students, the music classroom is their "safe space" where they can learn, grow, and make music without judgment or scrutiny. This is particularly important for marginalized youth, including indigenous, racialized and LGBTQIA2S+ youth who are at increased risk of mental health impacts due to COVID-19<sup>3</sup>. Several of these marginalized groups have experienced reduced access to choir and group singing programs due to singing restrictions, according to the majority of music teachers who responded to the *Singing in Canadian Schools: COVID-19 Impact Survey*<sup>4</sup>.

***"Choir is the only place in school where I feel no one is judging me  
and I don't need to pretend to be someone I'm not."***

*Grade 11 Nova Scotia Student, 2020*

A group of Nova Scotia students penned a song titled "Without Our Voices" in response to their sense of loss tied to singing restrictions in schools during the fall of 2020. You can watch their moving work [here](#). These students, like many, turned to music making to cope during the pandemic and take care of their own emotional well-being<sup>4</sup>. As music educators look ahead to the next school year, we aim to see students return to safe spaces and regain their voices as an invaluable tool for self-expression.

### ABOUT THIS SURVEY

The *Singing in Canadian Schools: COVID-19 Impact Survey* paints an authentic picture of our experiences as Canadian music educators. The survey sample pool was substantial and representative, with almost 1000 respondents from across the country. Comprehensive survey results hold the potential to guide policy and practice related to singing in schools in the upcoming year, keeping students engaged AND safe. Final report publication to follow.

<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada (2020). Canadians' mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic.

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2020039-eng.pdf?st=mOOSUZkG>

<sup>2,3</sup> Mental Health Commission of Canada. (2020). *Lockdown Life: Mental Health Impacts of COVID-19 on Youth in Canada*. [https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/sites/default/files/2021-02/lockdown\\_life\\_eng.pdf](https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/sites/default/files/2021-02/lockdown_life_eng.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Morin, F., & Mahmud, M. N. (2021). Singing in Canadian schools: COVID 19 impact survey. Unpublished preliminary findings. Choral Canada