

## Speech for Dad's Award Presentation

*Shared by Brendan, Kelsea, and Taylor McLean*

Having been close to dad our entire lives, we have been able to get an intimate perspective of what drives him to foster a strong band scene in Saskatchewan—an unwavering commitment to the music itself. Although dad worked tirelessly in his roles in the 1980s and 90s on the SBA board and executive, and, more recently, as interim Executive Director, the administrative aspects of the SBA were simply vehicles for teaching and inspiring the next generation of musicians. Like the late Dr. William Revelli, who reputedly balked at the idea of “band director burnout,” dad likewise seems to have a deep reserve of energy that allows him to never get tired of the small things, such as teaching a misguided grade seven player how to sit up and move some air, or how to fit a clarinet reed on the mouthpiece just right.

Likewise, dad rarely grows tired of listening to quality art music. The McLean children are intimately familiar with his preset rotation in his vehicles; it's either Metropolitan Opera, Real Jazz, or Symphony Hall.

In the band room, dad has always been a preacher of musical integrity. Mediocrity or “almost right,” is never an option. Though his fiery demeanour has softened in more recent years, the amount of respect and adoration he commands in front of a group has only amplified. Two of us, Brendan and Kelsea, have chosen to follow very closely in our parents' footsteps by choosing the music educator path in our careers. Every time we've brought dad in to work with our students, pin-drop silence would immediately descend upon the groups as soon as he got anywhere near the podium. He radiates an energy and passion for the music, which is palpable throughout the entire room. It quickly becomes evident, though, that dad is not setting up an adversarial situation with the players, but a collaboration towards excellence. Rehearsals are intense and music-centered. Students are told: “when in the room, be in the room.” Focused work on the music is occasionally interrupted by a witty joke aimed at the musically savvy, or a liberal spread of bad band director jokes.

Dad does not shy away from life lessons when he feels they are warranted, as he subscribes to the notion that music education in itself has a transformative power in students' lives. As any of dad's former students can attest, including the grade 9s that wreaked havoc on his patience, Mr. McLean had and continues to have an indelible impact on their growth as human beings. Dad's rehearsals are full of students who have what Benjamin Zander describes as “shining eyes.” A former student of dad's shared this: In my continuing musical experience, I have found few colleagues and educators who focus on “the music” the way [Greg] helped me to. So many demand technical perfection but forget the soul of why we do what we do. You always asked me to ask myself: What makes music? What is the difference between a person blowing air and a person creating?” Another former student and current music educator wrote: “There are few gifts that teachers impart into our lives forever. Greg McLean gave me one of the most precious gifts I possess, the love and appreciation of music. His master teaching and empathic mentorship of young musicians and teachers has influenced countless students and I am grateful to be among them.”

Thank you to the Saskatchewan Band Association for honouring dad with the SBA Distinguished Band Director Award and thank you to Brent Ghiglione for facilitating this process and hosting this presentation this evening. We, the McLean children, are incredibly proud and honoured to call Greg McLean our father. We know that the impact dad has had on generations of musicians in the province and the country is profound and far-reaching. Dad: We too feel privileged to have been your students and we know that we wouldn't be the musicians and educators we are today without your formidable musical presence and awe-inspiring servitude to the music and to music education.