

## New Technologies and Cognitive Sciences With Dr. Gilles Comeau

On Sunday February 28, our own ORMTA member and University of Ottawa Professor of music, Dr. Gilles Comeau, presented a workshop in Freiman Hall at University of Ottawa containing invaluable information for all music teachers.

The latest research findings were presented which provided answers to the questions teachers have been debating for years. For example, empirical evidence showed that the level of accomplishment that a student attains is directly related to the number of practice hours he/she has done not to his/her talent or giftedness. In fact 10,000 hours of practice over about 9 – 10 years was required for a student to reach the expert level. Therefore, the dominant factor in determining whether a student attains a high level is his/her motivation. Parental involvement is the key factor in motivating students to practice particularly up to the age of 11. After that parental support diminishes and high achieving students are generally motivated from within. Evidence also shows that listening to many recordings of a piece of music before learning it is beneficial at all levels and was being done by all highest achieving students in the study. These are

only a few of the tidbits of information that kept the audience spellbound during the first half of the lecture.

The second half of the workshop dealt with new technologies and was equally intriguing. Dr. Comeau was given a grant to set up a 1.2 million dollar research laboratory in Ottawa. Teachers will be invited to view this research laboratory once it is completed. What is being studied here will have an impact on all our teaching. Not only does the new technology enable teaching over long distance but will enable private teachers to enhance their own studios with equipment such as video cameras which can show various views of the student (hands, arms, body) and enable instant replays so faults that the student is often not aware of can be easily pointed out and corrected on the spot.

Ottawa is indeed fortunate to have such expertise close at hand. I look forward to hearing and seeing more results of the research being conducted here. Thanks to Dr. Comeau for the stimulating lecture, to the University of Ottawa for providing the room and equipment and to Ann Empey and Kirsten Carlson for their help.

*submitted by Betty Harris*