

Music Graduate Students' Society (MGSS) of McGill University
General Assembly
April 15, 2014
A-832/833

Minutes (unapproved)

Called to order 16:33

President Jacob Sagrans welcomes students

(See p. 8 below for list of those present)

1. Approval of Agenda:

JS proposes instead of closing remarks any remaining time can be used for other business. Hubert motions to approve, Kery seconds. All are in favor, none opposed nor any abstentions. Agenda has been adopted.

2. Approval of Fall GA minutes:

JS inquires if anyone proposes changes or corrections? Jessica Holmes moves to adopt minutes, Sten Thomson seconds: all in favor. Minutes are adopted.

3. Reports:

- a. **President's Report (Jacob Sagrans):** It has been a privilege and honor to be president of MGSS this year, meeting many of you and hearing concerns for how we can improve and strengthen our community. President's work this year has been largely behind the scenes. Some highlights include: Working to advocate for grad students and improve MGSS policies and procedures (some examples will be seen later in the meeting with motions and new constitution). Additionally, have been going to faculty council each month as grad rep, been meeting with Eleanor Stubleby (director of graduate studies) as well as PGSS (which we are a subsidiary of). One exciting accomplishment was having helped start an ad hoc committee with Eleanor to improve the grad studies website. The site will be changed, and the committee will be making sure all the info is up and organized in a logical way – excited and hopeful about that. One other initiative starting now: been in contact with the social equity and diversity office at McGill about possibly setting up a partnership and their school that works on an El Sistema project, based on the music education project from South America.
- b. **Vice President's report (Kyle Kaplan):** Focused on the fact that two of the most important events are welcoming and GA tonight – thinking about forming community through these events and maintaining those for Library After Hours and other social events. This can be built upon. Have relatively kept within budget and had a pretty good variety of events and good food. Intended these events as forming community and creating a stimulating environment. Has been reflecting on the importance of these events.

c. **Secretary's Report (Meaghan Parker):**

Focus over the course of the year has been improving awareness among the grad student community of MGSS and its events and initiatives through marketing campaign and improving visual presence through poster design and social media. Have had increased applicants for the Symposium as well as for the Special Projects Fund.

d. **Treasurer's Report (Kelly Symons):**

It has been great keeping track of numbers this year – we started the year with our separate bank account with \$3500 extra dollars in that account. PGSS holds the \$10.00 each of us pays through student fees. From the previous year there was \$1600 left of that money, and we got \$5960 from incoming graduate students. Proposed budget we started this was worked around the fees we expected to get – amended that part way through the year to increase by \$800 to add to spending for symposium from the left over funds from last year. This year's final budget (See budget file from Kelly Symons) We have been mostly right on with our budget, perhaps a little over. We have around \$700 left to spend so we are close to budget on social events. Symposium budgeted \$1800 spent \$2800, so \$1000 over. MGSS events budget was \$1100, only spent around \$500 for Library After Hours. Special Projects Fund budget was \$1250. We will go over budget if all 3 projects under review go through – but that is fine because we have the money. Funded MCML, In C in the park, Claire Chase residency, possibly funding a recording project and a composer concert. If that goes through, we will be roughly 150 dollars over budget. Still \$800 in Special Projects Funding to go through, \$500 for party. Total \$6800.

Jacob Sagrams: As MGSS members we have the chance to accept the budget.

Kery Lawson motions to accept the budget, Solmaz Shakerifard seconds. All in favor, none opposed, no abstentions.

Kelly Symons: Proposal of budget for next year based on what we did this year: based on \$6000 dollars of PGSS fees that will be collected next year for MGSS. The expenses based on meetings this year will be increased by 25 dollars (fall GA went a bit over last year). Social events budget has only been slightly increased. Suggests reduction to colloquia since we overbought wine and people did not drink it. Sometimes people go to other events afterwards so not as much need for wine. Symposium: decided to spend more as we had the money. Some of the expenses were more than expected, but next year proposes \$1600. Library After Hours has been reduced as we only spent \$150, decreased to \$200. 400 dollars left in budget for any other special event that may come up. Special Projects Fund increased by 600 dollars to show more support. Administrative fund was brought down by \$50. Still planning to buy another micro for the TA offices for this year. Nina Penner motions to adopt this budget, Jason Noble seconds. All in favor – none opposed, no abstentions.

e. **Symposium Chair's report (Jessica Holmes):**

Symposium was a huge success on many fronts – addition of keynote performer this year was nice compliment to traditional keynote lecture. Tried very hard this

year to create better integration across music related areas. We did as good a job as we could have, but saw less theory participation than we would have liked to. This can be something to work on moving forward. We did go very over budget, partly because we had a lot of money to use. This was partially due to a miscommunication/ ambiguity over the budget to work with. We said we'd reimburse up to \$1000 of travel/accommodation and meals, and he was quite extravagant and went over budget. For future events, might be good to have a per diem to control this better, all though this was likely the exception. Jessica Holmes would like to thank again the members of the committee for all their help and hard work. Sean Lorre and Laura Risk will do a great job for 2015. We were expecting more money from PGSS - they only gave us 275 dollars and in past have given \$600. Jacob Sagrans remarks that the reason was that the amount used to be matched by grad studies. This year they cut that and didn't advertise the change.

f. **Performance Representative's report (Christian Smith):**

Was responsible for contacting Clemens Merkel to do keynote performance. This was a big step so hopefully this happens again next year. Also initiated Claire Chase residency reception, wanted to draw attention to her visit as it was important. Helped organize more area reps in performance then ever before, although only a few of them stayed in contact and only one is here right now. There seems to be some confusion within the faculty regarding the role of area reps: they didn't understand themselves the importance of area reps, often the profs in each department just didn't respond or weren't aware.

g. **Research Representative's report (Solmaz Shakerifard):**

Solmaz Shakerifard: Attended research graduate subcommittee meetings once per month. A few things we brought to the attention of the research faculty(with Jacob) will be voted on later. Two important things: process of going through thesis proposal evaluations – started discussing in September, voted in January. Process will be changed slightly for next year: will be discussed by supervisor and six representatives, one from each area. Not everyone will stay to vote on the proposals, will rotate who is responsible for the evaluations. The point of this is so that people participating will be more attentive and give better feedback and more focused. Solmaz advocated for this as well as for more transparency about available information about funding and travel awards. Short example: there is 27000\$ in GREAT awards and 12.5 k in mobility available, 27 people applied and all applicants received awards, for GREAT award, 75 people applied and 59 got them. We have asked that this kind of information is available to students.

h. **PGSS Councillors' report (Kery Lawson and Sten Thomson – Tim Wilfong is absent):** All councillors wrote the report. Kery Lawson: PGSS is the student union representing all graduate students and post-docs at McGill. Proportional representation is given to the various member groups based on enrollment, and MGSS currently has three councillors representing the interests and priorities of all music Graduate students. The Councillors attend monthly meetings and

participate in voting on various issues relevant to graduate students, including the implementation of new fees, the advocacy of policies to improve the well-being of graduate students, and other such issues. As PGSS councillors, we, (the three representatives for PGSS) in the past year have learned about and become involved in the decision-making process of the PGSS and the various issues facing graduate students, including such issues as the quality of student services in the face of budget cuts, the ongoing court battle between PGSS and the Student Federation of Canada, or initiating legislation to lay the foundations for more effective interactions between graduate students and their supervisors/advisors. We also represented the School of Music to the graduate student body and were involved in promoting a better awareness of the School of Music and its activities to other graduate students as well as dealing with the issue of facilitating access for non-music graduate students to lessons and music classes. Despite the relatively low commitment of participating in monthly meetings, PGSS councillors thus perform an important service in the communication between MGSS and the community of graduate students as a whole.

i. **Member at Large's report (Jason Noble):**

Has been a pleasure to represent composition students this year, as they have been under-represented in the past. Focused this year on making composition students aware of services of MGSS and how it can help them. Promoted the special projects fund, talking about it at meetings of MGSI, contemporary music lab and other meetings, as a result we have received several applications. Advocated for updating format for prep materials for comps, thank you to Jacob for promoting this. At the moment the materials are available in paper photocopies, talking about possibly updating this to include practice tests, and possible digitizing these prep materials.

4. **Announcement of new council.** Jacob Sagrans thanks everyone and reminds outgoing and incoming execs to stay tuned for forthcoming turnover event.

5. **Updates to Constitution:**

Last year Eric Smialek focused on updating the constitution to better reflect how MGSS was being run. This year Jacob Sagrans focused on looking for areas that could be better clarified. Found that area representative roles could be better clarified – specifically that representatives can vote within their area and represent all the students in their area.

Changes proposed: (changes highlighted in yellow, subtractions crossed out):

Procedures regarding elections should be updated to clarify more fully how elections will be run. Did anyone who read it have any questions or comments about any proposed changes? (No responses). One other thing to emphasize is to add official provisions in constitution for co-chairs or co-representatives. Jacob Sagrans forwarded these proposed changes to both the research and performance subcommittees and made sure changes were fine with them as the proposed changes affect the role of student representatives. They are fine with all these changes. Any questions or comments? From Eric Smialek: word of kudos – thanks for doing this Jacob. Jacob Sagrans: there are still a few more things that could use clarifying, but will communicate these to next executive council.

The thing is everything about how you run is determined by constitution, but there are many situations where it's hard to know what to do based on constitution. Learned from issues we have run into and adopted that for future councils. Eric: just to add, from speaking to people about elections, people were uncertain and worried about what they would have to do. The work that Jacob has done is very valuable as all the info about what you have to do is in the constitution. Nice to have a central location for it. Nina Penner asks: has or will this be posted to the web? Jacob Sagrans: proposed version was posted, but if it is approved, it will be updated and posted. Jess motions to adopt changes, Eric seconds. Jacob Sagrans: we need two thirds majority. 3 abstentions, none opposed. All others in favour – the changes are adopted.

6. **Motions:**

Jacob Sagrans would like to bring these motions forward to the faculty of the school of music. Issues that have been brought forward by several MGSS members. We thought this better than simply meeting with Eleanor and complaining himself, this was we can show that a large group of grads are concerned about these issues.

First motion is on placement exams: Jason talked about this. Main idea is that students are not being given enough info to help prepare for placement exams far enough in advance – this is a concern because how well you do effects your course requirements. Poor performance means you will take longer to finish, and this could have financial implications. MGSS wants people to come as prepared and informed as possible, in order to do as well as possible. We want every area to make a mock exam available to the students. Jacob Sagrans proposes a slight change to this motion: Last clause is not necessary as there are university wide policies that govern accommodations so faculty cannot make up any new policies regarding this. Jacob would like to propose one month advance notice for placement exams instead of two months, simply because some students are excepted late, and 2 months did not seem realistic according to Prof. Stublely. This is fair because the most involved exam doesn't take more than a week to complete. Ultimately up to the faculty to decide what to do, but we are voting to advocate for these changes. Having this pass at the GA will really be beneficial in getting this off the ground. Kelly motions to approve, Sten seconds. All in favour, none opposed, 1 abstention. Motion has passed.

Next motion relates to comprehensive exams, related to practice tests and questions for practice tests. These are not as available as they could/should be. We proposed that all areas that require comps must provide access to at least one past/mock practice exam. (Just the questions, not answers). Jacob Sagrans proposes changes to this motion – getting rid of the last clause about accommodations (same as above). Prof. Stublely suggested the second change: we thought students should have 2 months between scheduling and the exams. Prof. Stublely noted that students have not been great at getting back to the department regarding scheduling. It should be 2 months between when student is contacted and earliest possible date of the exams. Eric Smialek: this sounds reasonable in theory but in practice, sometimes important emails are overlooked. Eric is nervous about this policy being set in stone in case emails are not followed up on. Eric wonders whether things are not better as they are, and whether or not this works against

us. Jacob Sagrans notes that right now students know roughly when they are but sometimes the actual dates aren't set until right before. Nina Penner points out that we need to pass this, and getting too tied up in a certain problem is a concern. Eric: so students know roughly when it is so it shouldn't be a problem. Jacob: if they tell the students they will be notified 2 months in advance, the people will be on the lookout for emails. Jessica Holmes: the important thing is to make the faculty accountable for letting students know in advance. Jacob Sagrans: part of the problem is there is supposedly a binder of comps questions, some people share amongst their peers, but that doesn't always work for everyone. Jason moves to adopt this change, Nina seconds. None opposed, 1 abstention, all other in favor. Motion has passed.

Third motion regarding grad student finances: this has been a very big concern. Basically this motion advocates for more transparency about information concerning finances. Right now it can be very challenging to figure out how much you should expect to pay based on your residency/courses/funding etc. We propose that students are informed of what they can expect to pay as graduate students at the school, taking into account their status, program, and how much funding is offered. Right now they are clear on how much funding you are offered, but not clear on how much you can expect to pay in tuition and living. Andrew: what would be the difference between the information you propose and what's on the student accounts website? Kyle Kaplan: that info isn't available when you apply. They did not walk you through how the funding shifts and what each semester costs. Info is available but hard to know what is realistic. For example for MA's, thesis is almost never finished by that semester, which incurs extra fees. That process is not made clear. And for PhD students, it's not clear how residency changes. Jacob Sagrans: this info is also not coming from music grad studies; they direct you to an external source. We would like to see this info being given in admissions letters. Solmaz Shakerifard: this motion is very important because at the last meeting this was brought up and the faculty is planning to be even more vague as they don't have as much funds. This is very important because future students will have even less info than we have now unless we put this forward. And next year research and performance reps should follow up on this. Jacob Sagrans: This is also just an approximate amount – obviously we can't say exactly, but would be closer to the truth. Kelvin Chaan moves to adopt, Solmaz seconds. All in favor save one abstention, none opposed. Motion has PASSED.

Final motion concerns employment opportunities for students. With funding cuts, more students must rely on employment for funding. Right now there is no organized information about job opportunities. We want the faculty to establish a place where people can go for employment opportunities, not just TAships. There are a surprising amount of job opportunities that go unnoticed as they aren't advertised. Tim Wilfong felt that the teaching opportunities within our faculty are tailored toward research students, but some performers will benefit from teaching experience, so we would like to see the faculty make available more opportunities for performers to get teaching experience. Jason Noble: the same goes for composers, there are very limited opportunities for teaching for us as well. Would like to add composers to the motion. Suzu Enns: unfortunately it seems that performance students aren't even considered for the academic positions that are available. Kery Lawson: these positions are made for musicology or

theory students, so there should be some for the other areas. Jacob Sagrans: in practice, performance students are not considered as qualified, so we would like to see more opportunities tailored to them. Christian Smith: What I have heard from the faculty is that TA positions are used to pad scholarships for music research, while performers get a lot more scholarship money than researchers. Jacob: has learned a bit about the conservatory, and Sara Laimon is getting our faculty involved in the conservatory, hoping to get grad students more involved in conservatory, hopefully paid teaching positions. This is a long term goal – lots to work out first. Christian moves to approve, Suzu seconds. None opposed, no abstentions, all in favour. Motion is passed UNANIMOUSLY.

7. Closing remarks/ Questions, comments, further business

Carolyn Barr: concerning acceptance letters - I got an email saying a decision has been reached and had to check the website which was confusing. Other schools' faculties do various things. All that would be required would be an email announcing acceptance rather than this convoluted website. Hubert: I think this is because it's easier to have people check their status rather than mistakes about acceptance status. Kyle Kaplan: This time everything was much more vague than before, there were a lot of glitches in the system. Eric Smialek: I think there is an effort that is happening about phoning new grad students: although having said that, I should not be the one phoning. I have heard the most effective way is to have a professor call and congratulate. Recruitment does seem to be doing something. Carolyn: for other who haven't contacted faculty, this may reflect badly. Suzu Enns: there was an email sent for research students to contact potential or new students for an hourly wage. Performance students had a meet and greet with potentials but were not offered pay, while researchers were offered pay. Eric: the paid position seemed to be sitting in an office and phoning peoples' homes, more like a telemarketer so it's a little different. Research students also get contacted to meet/talk to prospectives in an informal way. Jacob Sagrans: but perhaps they should still have that option for performance students. Christian Smith: there is a bit of a difference as a meet and greet is more personal whereas calling people is more like a job. Solmaz Shakerifard addresses the issue with archiving thesis proposals – this was brought up at research meeting. Everyone is in favour of archiving PDFs of approved thesis proposals. Jacob Sagrans: the idea would be if you are writing your proposal you can consult successful proposals. People would have to agree that their proposal can be included. Solmaz: they would just add one part to proposal form to agree to have proposal to be archived.

Kelly moves to adjourn, Sten seconds, all in favour – meeting is adjourned unaminously!

Present at the General Assembly:

| Name | Area | Program |
|--------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Alexander Morgan | Music Theory | PhD |
| Andrew Horowitz | Music Tech | MA |
| Carolyn Barr | Performance | MA |
| Christian Smith | Performance | MM |
| Emma Frid | Music tech | Exchange |
| Eric Smialek | Musicology | PhD |
| Hubert Léveillé | Theory | MA |
| Jacob Sagrans | Musicology | PhD |
| Jari Piper | Performance | MM |
| Jason Noble | Composition | PhD |
| Jessica Holmes | Musicology | PhD |
| Kelly Symons | Research | MA |
| Kelvin Chan | Music Education | MA |
| Kery Lawson | Musicology | PhD |
| Kit Soden | Composition | MM |
| Kristin Franseen | Musicology | PhD |
| Kyle Kaplan | Musicology | MA |
| Leah Batstone | Musicology | PhD |
| Marcello Giordano | Music Tech | PhD |
| Meaghan Parker | Musicology | MA |
| Melvin Backstrom | Musicology | PhD |
| Michael Turabian | Musicology | PhD |
| Mimi Haddon | Musicology | PhD |
| Nina Penner | Musicology | PhD |
| Rebecca Flore | Theory | MA |
| Rory O'Connor | Musicology | MA |
| Sarah Gates | Music Theory | MA |
| Sean Lorre | Musicology | PhD |
| Solmaz Shakerifard | Music Education | MA |
| Sten Thomson | Theory | PhD |
| Suzu Enns | Performance | PhD |
| Toru Momii | Theory | MA |

33 students in attendance