# International Council on English Braille

# Music Committee Report - April 2018

## Prepared by Jordie Howell: Chair, ICEB Music Committee

## Introduction

Music speaks to us regardless of language, creed or background. We are moved emotionally by music, or inspired physically to dance whether or not the song is familiar. A print reader can peruse a score and make sense of the notation because of an international standard. In braille, we too benefit from standards that direct our music code. Our task as the ICEB Music Committee is to align Unified English Braille to the international music braille code to avoid conflicts and highlight minimal ambiguities. We achieve this through charges which have been agreed upon by our committee and approved by the ICEB Executive.

## Progress on Charges

### Charge 1. Continue work on isolating ambiguities between Unified English Braille and the braille Music Code.

**Item 1.1 Consult with other ICEB committees around relevant discussions or decisions regarding braille music and UEB.**

The music committee’s main purpose is to outline conflicts between the music braille code as UEB has been adopted in member countries, and to outline any country variations and formatting differences. We have achieved this by:

**Discussing UEB brackets within a music context.**

The committee has found that brackets within a music score are treated differently by member countries and our task is to write this up for the ICEB website. A summary of the differences and current discussion appears below.

A quote from BANA Music Braille 2015 for clarification:

“1.3 Three kinds of braille parenthesis markings are used in music transcriptions. Literary (Unified English Braille) parentheses "< "> are employed in ordinary literary context. Music parentheses ,' ,' are used when parentheses occur within music. Special parentheses 7 7 are used in chord symbols, music headings, and word-sign expressions to represent parentheses appearing in print .... Additionally, special parentheses are used for bar numbers.”

End of excerpt.

While Australia predominantly follows UK formatting, we also use special parentheses for brackets around rehearsal figures in vocal music and music instructions above a vocal line to economise on space. UEB brackets are maintained for the title information above the music itself.

Our representative from Canada commented that “we need to be able to back up what we decide with something other than "That's how it's always been done" but if we know we're staying with 2-3-5-6 as opening and closing brackets within a music score, or within the musical lines of a music score, because of the need to conserve space and because of the possible confusion with other symbols, that's reasonable.”

New Zealand follows the rules of the BANA Music Braille Code 2015, and has commented that “literary, music, and special parentheses are brailled as quoted from that manual. We like the use of the special parentheses (dots 2356) as they are only one cell each and cannot be mistaken for a word sign, or flat sign. Moreover, they are in the lower part of the cell, like other punctuation. They consider these parentheses to be part of the music code, rather than remnants of the pre-UEB literary code.

“The special parentheses are the most compact way of including brackets in chord symbols within the music code. Chord names are already lengthy to fit beneath the notes, … and if we were to use UEB brackets for these, then we’d also have to use the 2-cell UEB plus or minus signs for chord symbols.

“Braille music is a universal code, which like print music can be read by speakers of any other language. With the prospect of digital files and braille music scores becoming universally available through projects such as OpenScore, it seems important to reduce the amount of variation between countries rather than adding extra symbols to the mix.”

New Zealand also comments on brackets used in music within European and Asian countries and made reference to a piano score received from Japan. This “used the 2356 enclosures, as we would have done in NZ, around part of the tempo heading Allegro (ma non troppo).”

In South Africa, the view is that “since the same signs that were in use in the literary code for brackets before UBC were used in music scores, the UEB brackets should now be used in text parts of a music score. It would be confusing to use pre-UBC signs in the text part of a music score. In print there is one sign for all punctuation marks, and no distinction is made between music scores and ordinary text.”

The UK commented that “not all brackets within music code will be special parentheses. Some will be music parentheses i.e. brackets in print surrounding an accidental.”

It is the music committee’s task to formulate a statement that all representatives agree presents how brackets are used in a music context accurately in all ICEB member countries.

**Item 1.2 Create a list of Braille music courses/manuals available in UEB to be added to the ICEB website. Differentiate between transcription manuals and courses suitable for the teaching of braille music to children or adult learners.**

This resource is available from the ICEB website at [www.iceb.org/music](http://www.iceb.org/music)

It is a document that will be added to as more resources become available.

**Item 1.3 Compile documentation around exceptions to the International manual setting out country formatting differences e.g. the Australian music addendum.**

So far, Australia and the UK have produced addenda or guidelines outlining formatting considerations pertinent to the individual country and not included in the International Manual on Braille Music (1996). The US also released their updated music braille manual in 2015 which has also been included in our resource list as it contains information about music and UEB.

Australia:

ABA Braille Music Addendum

<http://brailleaustralia.org/about-braille/music-braille/>

UK:

Music and Unified English Braille

<https://www.ukaaf.org/music/>

US:

BANA Music Braille Code 2015

<http://brailleauthority.org/music/music.html>

### Charge 2. Create a call to action concerning the need to preserve the heritage of braille music only available in hard copy master format, presenting the call and a summary of how to progress this issue to the ICEB Executive.

At the 2016 ICEB General Assembly, the following resolution was passed:

 Resolution 3: Preserving music braille presently available only as hard copy

Noting with appreciation the past efforts of many people, organizations and countries;

Reminding all participants of both an historic and continuing legacy of music braille;

Considering criteria for undertaking and outcome of the preservation of music braille;

Recognizing the fact that considerable financial commitment is required;

This Sixth General Assembly of ICEB resolves to:

1. Encourage all relevant member-countries of ICEB, their organizations and agencies, to collaborate (where possible) to facilitate and further the preservation of music braille in hard copy;

2. Request that all sponsor-countries, appropriate organizations and agencies make known to ICEB and relevant committees, their position in respect of preserving music braille; and

3. Call upon all those involved to do their utmost to ensure future generations have access to and use of music braille resources from the past.

This charge is not something that is concrete or that can be completed. We are however following progress in the digitisation of braille music scores and encouraging countries to maintain their hard copy resources. There is strong feeling within the committee that hard copy music scores need to be preserved and we encourage countries to work towards promoting these precious resources to borrowers and preserve them digitally.

### Charge 3. Encourage the continued development of the international braille music code through liaison with countries which have active braille Music committees and collate progress.

**Item 3.1 Investigate the possibility of collaborating with the World Braille Council incorporating as much international involvement as possible to commence work on a revision of the International Braille Music Manual.**

At the 2016 ICEB General Assembly, the following resolution was passed:

Resolution 4: Revision of New International Manual of Braille Music Notation

Acknowledging that braille music is the only universal braille code;

Recognizing that there are some elements of music not yet represented in the braille music code;

Acknowledging more work is needed with regard to integration of music braille with Unified English Braille;

This Sixth General Assembly of ICEB resolves to:

Investigate a cooperative project with braille authorities within and external to the International Council on English Braille to update the New International Manual of Braille Music Notation (1996) by Bettye Krolick.

The ICEB Music Committee is investigating contacts internationally who can assist with this initiative through the World Braille Council, the World Blind Union and the US National Library Service.

### Charge 4. Monitor the growing use of technology in the production and distribution of braille music.

**Item 4.1 Present a summary of the way in which member countries are using refreshable braille display technology and downloadable electronic scores thereby improving access to braille music internationally; discuss and report on software in braille music transcription practices.**

Several of our member countries have online catalogues and library members are downloading scores and using them in rehearsals and educational settings. Braille music translation software is also increasingly becoming a vital part of transcription processes.

The UK commented that “for the last few years, we have conducted trials using both Words and Voice and keyboard music in experimental ways. For instance, we produced samples of keyboard music using the Bar-By-Bar system. … a prototype of the Orbit Reader has been used as a means of learning a piano piece.” Also recently, “a day-long event is being hosted at RNIB where use of what is hoped will be the final prototype of the Canute 40-cell line-length nine-line braille display. This will demonstrate how it can be practically used by a range of braillists in a music context.”

This charge has not progressed formally. Members though have been contacted by Sarah Morley-Wilkins regarding a collaboration between the DAISY Consortium and national organisations around music braille. The current phase of the research is to draw up a series of questions relating to music braille. These focus on areas such as current groups working on the music braille code, music braille collections available internationally, and the production and use of music braille. This project extends beyond countries of ICEB and is therefore of a wider scope than our committee. It is our aim though to consolidate how our members use technology in the production of music braille and add this to our committee webpage.

### Charge 5. Promote the teaching and learning of braille music through the investigation of models for the successful promotion of teaching and learning braille music that could be applied locally and/or internationally.

**Item 5.1 Compile a list of braille music programs, key educators or institutions in each country as a reference for members to be added to the ICEB website. Encourage providers and institutions to update this information to keep it current and to promote attendance by international students where possible.**

The current focus of the committee is to create a central location for information sharing across member countries. Committee members have expressed the importance of keeping up to date with initiatives internationally, particularly those countries with fewer resources to draw on. By the 2020 ICEB General Assembly we anticipate a rich list of resources on our webpage for members to access along with progress towards the collaboration on a future edition of the International Manual on Braille Music (1996).

## Committee Members and Observers

Australia

Voting member: Jordie Howell

Observers:

Bill Jolley, Kathy Riessen, Bruce Maguire, Ross de Vent.

Canada

Voting member: Rebecca Blaevoet

Observers:

Darleen BOGART, Phyllis Landon, Lori Kernohan

Ireland

Voting member: Stuart Lawler

Observers:

Ilka Staeglin, Maeve Smith, Jackie Rooney.

New Zealand:

Voting member: Moya Michalakis

Observers:

Wendy Richards, Maria Stevens. Mary Schnackenberg

Nigeria

Voting member: Jean Obi

South Africa

Voting member: Neels Matthyser

Observers:

Marius Swart, Ntshavheni Netshituni, Antonnette Botha, Christo de Klerk, Pasha Alden

United Kingdom

Voting member: Roger Firman

Observers:

James Bowden, Mike Townsend

United States

Voting Member: Karen Gearreald

Observers:

Ruth Rozen, Fred Schroder, Judy Dixon