

JUNOs like a Cinderella night

By Jake Storey

Bancroft's MusiCounts Teacher of the Year is back from the JUNOs.

The 2017 JUNO Awards were held on April 2. North Hastings High School music teacher and this year's JUNO award winner for MusiCounts Teacher of the Year Dianne Winmill attended. She got to go to many events leading up to and directly following the JUNOs. *Bancroft This Week* caught up with her to find out about her experiences.

‘It’s so unbelievably out of my realm of experience. I felt like Cinderella at the ball,’ said Winmill of the events. ‘It was surreal to be dressed up and to have all that attention on me. It was very odd.’

Winmill was given a backstage tour and invited to attend the JUNO Cup, a hockey game between musicians and hockey players.

The game was played for fun and score wasn't kept.

While she didn't get the opportunity to meet any of the biggest stars, whom Winmill slays were swiftly ushered away as soon as they got off the red carpet, she reported that she had the opportunity to meet major names in Canadian music. Individuals such as producer Bob Ezrin, Josh Ramsay of Marianas Trench, singer Buffy Sainte-Marie, singer Gord Banford, children's artist Will Stroet and the band Neon Dreams.

On Ezrin, Winmill said, ‘He’s a Canadian who has been a huge supporter of music education in Canada. I got a personal introduction to him. He was just a lovely man, so supportive of me and of all music educators in the country. He was just so down to earth for someone who’s done so much for music in Canada.’

Prior to the JUNOs Winmill and 11 of her students also got to go to the Woodshed studio where they made a recording and attended a Blue Rodeo concert at Massey hall. Winmill said that she was seated right behind Canada music legends Ed Robertson and Gordon Lightfoot. She was even invited up to the front by security once they recognized her. She stood right against the stage when Gord Downie came out to perform with Blue Rodeo.

On meeting with the media before the concert, Winmill said, ‘It was surreal. It was like a full blown press conference,’ said Winmill. ‘I had people wiring me up with microphones and everything and I’ve never had anything like that happen before. I’m chatting with the press and everybody was taking pictures and then the reporter from CP24 said, how big a fan are you of Blue Rodeo and then I turned around because Jim Cuddy was saying hi to me, and he had my JUNO in his hand, my special one for MusiCounts Teacher of the Year!’ A video of this encounter can be found on *Bancroft This Week*’s Facebook page.

Winmill was very pleased with how much attention music education had received because of the event. She said, ‘[I wish] that people were always as interested in music teachers and music education as they seemed to be that day.’

At the JUNO Gala Dinner and Awards, a two-minute video detailing her experience up until that point was played. ‘It was really special. They showed it at the gala awards and dinner and all I could do during the video was try not to cry. Just trying to hold it together because I knew there would be a camera on me somewhere. After the video, 15,000 people stood up and clapped. It was really, really humbling and crazy.’

With the \$10,000 prize North Hastings High School's music department received, Winmill has already order new instruments. She's holding onto the rest of the money for their future needs.