

**Engagement and relevance in the orchestra classroom through
concert programming**

by

Ellen L. Birkedal

B.S., Concordia University Nebraska, 2011

A REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF MUSIC

School of Music, Theatre, and Dance
College of Arts and Sciences

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2022

Approved by:
Major Professor
Dr. Phillip Payne

Copyright

© Ellen Birkedal 2022.

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to show the importance of relevance to music education and how it impacts the lives and engagement of students in a string orchestra program. Students engage in music as a regular part of their lives outside of the classroom, but oftentimes the musical experiences they have in the classroom do not connect with their lives outside of it. For the lesson plan shown in the video teaching demonstrations, the students first discussed which order to put certain musical selections in for their upcoming concert, then the students performed one of the pieces from that concert cycle. By allowing for greater student choice and input in the selected repertoire, and offering different styles and genres of music in every concert cycle, the experiences students have in the music classroom become relevant to their lives outside of the classroom.

Throughout the course of my Masters' Program, I have grown in pedagogical knowledge on the violin, viola, cello, and bass. My music reading skills, particularly in the alto clef have improved greatly, and I have been playing through each part before giving the music to students, thus making me more aware of nuances in the music and how it would impact the student's performance of a piece. Perhaps the biggest area of growth that I have experienced during this process is a different approach to the way I structure and program my performances and the music that we perform. The structure that I used previously was in the format of three concerts per year. The first concert featured music from the Baroque, Classical, and Romantic time periods, the second featured Holiday and Contemporary music, and the third featured Pop and Movie music. The new concert structure that I have been using is one where each concert has a theme and all pieces fit the theme. This allows for multiple genres and styles of music to be played during each concert, which engages both the students and the audience, offers variety,

and makes each concert relevant to everyone by playing what is familiar, and pushing the boundaries of experience to the unfamiliar.

Table of Contents

List of Figures	vi
List of Tables	vii
Acknowledgements	viii
Dedication	ix
Chapter 1 - Teaching Philosophy.....	1
Why Schooling?	1
Why Music in Schools?	2
Comparison/Contrast	5
Conclusion	7
How My Philosophy Informs My Teaching	7
Chapter 2 - Lesson Plan(s).....	9
Concert Plan.....	9
2014 Music National Standards (NAfME, 2014)	9
Prior Knowledge/Skills	9
Rehearsal Objective	9
Assessment of the Rehearsal.....	10
Relevant Contextual Factors and Modifications/Accommodations Needed	10
Instructional Materials, Resources and Technologies.....	10
Rehearsal Plan.....	10
Chapter 3 - Reflections	14
Bibliography	23

List of Figures

Figure 3.1 Outer Space Concert Poster.....	20
Figure 3.2 In Color Concert Poster.....	21
Figure 3.3 Utopia/Dystopia Concert Poster.....	22

List of Tables

Table 2.1 Rehearsal Plan.....	13
-------------------------------	----

Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank my husband. Your unwavering support for my education and growth has truly propelled me through this process when my energy has seemed to run dry. To my children, I promise next summer I will be free to go to the park at any time! To my mother, aunt, and sisters, thank you for watching the kids so that I could focus on working. To my K-State teachers, thank you for sharing your experience and wisdom with me. Finally, thank you to Dr. Dirks who sparked an idea that reignited my passion for teaching music.

Dedication

This paper is dedicated to the Chamber Orchestra and Concert Orchestra students of Affton High School. Thank you for putting up with my former way of programming things, being excited about my new ideas, sharing your lives with me, and for being so dedicated to the Orchestra. None of this would be possible without you.

Chapter 1 - Teaching Philosophy

Why Schooling?

First and foremost, school should be a place where students learn skills and information that can be practically applied to their lives, relationships, and interests. It gives students a broad overview and working knowledge of many topics and skills. The goal of school is to shape students so that they are able to thrive as human beings across disciplines and to benefit the communities around them. Each discipline does this in its own way, that is tailored to the nature of that discipline and its distinct goals. Those goals serve the larger goal of education. For example, the skills learned in math class enables the student to participate in activities that require mathematics to solve a problem. This could be used to calculate a final price for a sale item, measurements for baking or woodworking, what you're paying in taxes, detect errors in your paycheck, etc. By having learned math, the student has the skills to thrive when problem-solving and can use those skills to benefit society.

In order for our students to be able to thrive in society, the education they are being offered should be relevant to their lives and what is happening in the world. Though schools cannot and should not follow all the whims of the society around them, there is a need to reassess and make changes that will benefit our students and better prepare them for life outside of the classroom. As schools get more out of touch with the direction the society is going in, they will increasingly not be able to achieve the goal of providing relevant and applicable information that allows students to thrive. Therefore, one of the assumptions that should drive decision making is relevance. In other words, when a committee is evaluating two different reforms, one of the questions they should ask is, which one is more relevant?

Another assumption that should drive decision making is the consideration of the education of the whole person - mind, body, and spirit. This includes all disciplines (physical education, science, history, music, etc.) that contribute to the human experience. Students should have varied experiences and a working knowledge of each discipline that they can call upon and activate at any point in their lives. This serves as an introduction to those topics that they may wish to develop further knowledge in at a later date. Educating the whole person also involves the social and emotional aspects of what it means to be a human being. This includes collaboration, independence, self-awareness, others-awareness, respect, being able to identify and express feelings, and responsible decision making among others.

Why Music in Schools?

Music is inherent to who we are as human beings. Even babies bounce when they hear music. We feel music in our bodies. We are drawn to it. Music is such a basic part of being alive, and of life, that to not teach it in schools would be to ignore a part of our humanity. It is a unique part of the human experience that permeates history and culture. All throughout history you can find people making music. Sometimes it is for themselves, sometimes for others, sometimes it belongs to a rite, sometimes it is in a worship setting or a social setting; humans inherently have a need and a desire to participate in, listen to, and create music.

Music education nurtures and educates the whole person - mind, body, and spirit. There are many skills involved in music that engage the mind. The ability to differentiate between pitches requires the listener (music player or music listener) to focus on what they are hearing and to analyze and compare them. To read a piece of written music and know what it is asking the player to do takes music literacy, activation of the creative process, and the skills to physically sing or play what is printed. Working on balance and blend within a group requires

self-assessment and group-assessment. The body is engaged in music making by physically using your tongue, lips, neck, shoulders, arms, fingers, back, abdomen, and legs to achieve correct posture and positioning, sound supported by good breath, pushing down the keys or placing fingers on a string or a bow, and creating proper articulation in the mouth with a correct mouth shape. Being an instrumentalist or vocalist requires physical discipline, muscle memory, and strength.

As a non-performer of music, the brain is engaged in analysis - whether conscious or not - the recalling of memories, and making connections to past experiences. The body is engaged through movement (i.e. dancing, swaying, rocking) and emotional responses that manifest themselves physically. Being a non-performer of music involves mental engagement, critique, and physical and emotional responses.

Music has an almost magical way of connecting us to our souls. If a person is spiritual, they may find that certain music brings them to a place of peace and calm. If a person is religious, music may be something that they practice regularly at their place of worship. The soul's connection to music could be private, something someone experiences alone, it could be a communal experience, or it could be both. Music moves people in their souls. It evokes thoughts and dreams and emotions. The musical experience does something that other areas of study like history and math cannot do. It allows an experience that encapsulates all of human existence at once - the engagement of mind, body, and spirit.

By engaging the whole person in music, we are shaping students so that they can thrive and participate in the myriad of human activities that involve music. This connects to the purpose of education - to provide students with skills and information that they can apply to their lives, relationships and interests, and to thrive as human beings across disciplines and in their

communities. Because music is so prevalent in the human experience - i.e. singing a child to sleep, hearing music playing in a store, dancing with your significant other - to exclude that from education would limit the student's ability to thrive in those areas of life.

Music Education in our schools today is faced with a problem that has been cycling again and again for 150+ years: staying relevant. According to Mark and Gary (2007), "When music educators conceptualize their profession in its societal context, they become aware that teachers of music have always met the needs of society. Ceasing to do so could make music education irrelevant and put it in danger of disappearing" (p. 458). Though I do agree that ceasing to meet the needs of society could make music education irrelevant, when you look at how music has functioned in societies for centuries, I don't agree that teachers have always met the needs of societies. It seems that we are in a cycle of having to defend the importance of music and its role in humanity. This is one such time. We live in a day and age where technological advances are racing forward at a break-neck pace and music education has stayed relatively the same for decades even though society has changed so much. Music educators are still competing with subjects that are considered more important, and our class offerings are by and large the same.

Students have everything in the world at their fingertips within seconds, and by and large music education is not doing much to keep up. With the dawn of fast-moving technologies come different ways to obtain knowledge and create products. There are some schools here and there that are being "innovative" with their music class offerings, but those are few and far between. If music education is going to stay meaningful to our students and the society in which it now lives, changes must be made. As Kratus (2007) says, "The music made in schools... represents a small and shrinking slice of the musical pie. Students perform music in school that they rarely, if ever, hear outside of school" (p. 45). To combat this, I suggest that there be an increase in music

educator positions, and that music classes be expanded past traditional course offerings of performance classes (band, choir, orchestra) and music appreciation classes. Those classes are certainly meeting the needs of the students in them, but I agree with Mikza (2013) when he says, “In many schools, the band, chorus, or orchestra is the heart of the music program. To draw more students into music, we need to retain what works and also offer programs that broaden access to music education” (p. 45). Perhaps if we not only offered a wider variety of options like a ukulele or guitar class, composition, music production, and world music ensembles but staffed them appropriately as well, we would meet the needs of the greater student population. The two keys to making this successful however, are interesting and relevant class options, and appropriate staffing. Music educators are already expected to be experts of anything at all pertaining to music, and that is just not feasible with the broad array of genres, instruments, and platforms that exist.

Comparison/Contrast

Though Elliot Eisner comes from a visual arts perspective as opposed to the performing arts, some of my sentiments are echoed in his own. As Eisner (1998) says, “if education was to do more than develop a small part of human cognition, it had to give the young opportunities to work in the arts. The arts were mind-altering devices and the curriculum the major means through which such alteration could be fostered” (p. 61), and “Like the arts, the school curriculum is a mind-altering device; it is a vehicle that is designed to change the ways in which the young think. If the arts develop particular mental skills - the ability to experience qualitative nuance, for example - and if they inform about the world in ways unique to their form, then their presence in our programs for the young are likely to foster such outcomes; their absence, the

opposite” (p. 64). He focuses solely on the cognitive aspect, while I focus on the cognitive, physical, and spiritual aspects equally.

Like David Elliott, I too believe that music education is multidimensional: “Musical works involve many layers of meanings; that musical understanding involves many closely related kinds of thinking and knowing; and that the significance of music in human life can be explained in terms of many important life values” (Elliott, 2005, p. 7). We also agree that “All humans are born with the “hardwiring” (that is, in our brain mechanisms) to learn how to make and listen to music at a competent level....music learning is achievable and applicable to all people” (Elliott, 2005, p. 11). Elliott also spends significant time talking about musicianship and listenership, and my focus is on educating the whole person and staying relevant.

The fact that music is inherent to who we are as human beings is so important that stating that very fact is how Estelle Jorgensen (1997) chose to start her book, *In Search of Music Education*, “Music making is a characteristically human activity. It is so pervasive that it appears to be universal” (p. 1). This aligns well with my belief that music is inherent to who we are as human beings that goes beyond the boundaries of history and culture. This can also be easily compared to Christopher Small’s (1998b) view that “To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing” (p. 9). Here he is saying that anyone engaged with music in any way is ‘musicking’.

Bennett Reimer discusses both the value of form and practice in his philosophy of music education. He uses the term synergy to describe how they work together. I agree with him when he says “The sounds of music, and the practices of music, are experienced through the filter of who we are as both communal and individual beings” (Reimer, 1989, p. 67). His main focus is

on providing music experiences to as many people as possible. An argument could be made that my focus is similar - I seek to engage as many students as possible in musical experiences that will nurture their whole person, and that are relevant and applicable to them.

Conclusion

Formal education gives students an overview and working knowledge of many topics and skills so they are able to thrive as human beings across disciplines and are able to benefit the communities around them. Music education is important because music prevails in all areas of life as an integral part of our humanity. It permeates the lives of our students, and nurtures the whole person - mind, body, and spirit. By engaging students in music education, we are equipping them with the skills and knowledge to participate and thrive in human activities involving music. In order for music education to stay in our schools, we must strive to stay relevant by meeting our students' musical needs and interests. Though there is overlap in my music philosophy with other thinkers, I focus more on the education of the whole person and the importance of relevance more than the other thinkers. I am most strongly in contrast with the cognitivist approach of Eisner, which tends toward making music education less relevant in a society that values the excitement, energy, creativity, and spontaneity that is found in music genres other than what is typically labeled as "intellectual" music (music in the Western Classical Tradition).

How My Philosophy Informs My Teaching

My philosophy that music education must strive to stay relevant in order to meet our students' needs has informed both the process that I used and the musical works that I programmed this year. It was a process that included more student input, not only in song selection, but also in the theme selection of concerts as well as the order in which the pieces

would be performed. This allowed the students to take ownership of their learning, as well as choose pieces that they were interested in and that reflect and inform the music that they listen to outside of class. When selecting music the students were unfamiliar with, I offered a few different options and they exercised their student choice. Including music that they were already familiar with as well as music that they were unfamiliar with but had input about, allowed students the chance to see the direct correlation between the music they choose to listen to and the music we performed, while also expanding their musical experience from a more comfortable starting point.

Chapter 2 - Lesson Plan(s)

Concert Plan

2014 Music National Standards (NAfME, 2014)

MU:Pr4.1.E.IIa, MU:Pr4.2.E.Ia, MU:Pr4.3.E.IIa, MU:Pr5.3.E.Ia, MU:Pr6.1.E.Ia,
MU:Pr6.1.E.5b, MU:Re7.1.E.Ia, MU:Re9.1.E.8a, MU:Cn10.0.H.IIa, MU:Cn11.0.T.Ia

Prior Knowledge/Skills

This concert plan is a new endeavor for myself and students. The students already have some experience selecting repertoire from a teacher selected list. In the past, I have sometimes offered two or three choices for students to choose between, but most of the rest of the concert programming was decided by me. The students also have some experience suggesting repertoire, which sometimes gets programmed and sometimes does not.

The students have prior experience running sectionals and making some decisions in rehearsal within their sections about finger patterns/placement, bowing directions, and articulations. They are able to follow instructions during sectionals as to which parts of the music they should be focusing on at that point. They are able to mark in their music finger patterns and bowing directions so that all members of a particular section move together. The students know how to articulate in class their thoughts about various musical techniques pertaining to technical skills, dynamics, and expression.

Rehearsal Objective

As a result of these rehearsals with me, the students will have planned an entire concert cycle based around an idea. The students will be able to articulate the flow of the concert and why songs were placed in a specific order. The students will be able to understand the stylistic differences between pieces of music. The students will be able to express music through dynamic

and articulation markings including crescendos and decrescendos, sfzp, tremolo, staccato and legato bowing, and hooked bowing.

Assessment of the Rehearsal

The students will have met the rehearsal objective by producing a concert program that flows well, and performing with dynamic and expressive depth as well as technical accuracy.

Relevant Contextual Factors and Modifications/Accommodations Needed

Because the final concert program is selected by and for the seniors, all senior violinists will play on the first violin part as the balance of the group allows. There are various combinations of groups performing together. A mass rehearsal is necessary to put all pieces into place. This will require special planning between the two schools, arranging buses, and blocking off time during a school day.

Instructional Materials, Resources and Technologies

Scores and Sheet music for Pure Imagination, Paradise Island, Spirit of the American West, I Dreamed a Dream, Apocalypse, Adagio for Strings, Radioactive, and The Hunger Games. Various recordings found on JWPepper and YouTube.

Rehearsal Plan

Time	Activity	Purpose of Activity	Sequence	Assessment
Dec - Jan	Seniors decide on a concert theme	Seniors get to decide what the theme of their final concert will be	Seniors discuss theme and song ideas with each other and the teacher	Teacher assessed
Early Feb	Teacher shares with	Students choose which songs they are most	Teacher shares a list of possible	Class discussion

	the class scores and recordings of possible concert pieces to fit the theme the seniors have chosen	interested in playing based on difficulty level, what they like the sound of the most, what they think will fit with the overall theme the best	song choices and the class listens to snippets while looking at the score. Students share their opinions with the class. In the cases of mixed opinions, the class votes on the pieces they want.	
Mid - Late Feb	Rehearsal of pieces begins	Introduce the pieces and make stylistic considerations	The class reads through each piece. The teacher instructs students on finger/shifting patterns, bowing directions, and rhythmic considerations	Class rehearsal
Mar - April	Rehearsal of the pieces continues	Increase student knowledge of the pieces that are being learned	Sectionals and large group rehearsals take place. Corrections are made by the	Class rehearsal

			teacher or peers as needed.	
Late April	Students and teacher decide on a program order	Collaboration between teacher and student takes student choice and opinion into account at the forefront	Teacher shares with students her thoughts of how the concert order might go. The class discusses and students either agree or disagree.	Class discussion
Late April	A concert program is designed and ordered	Create a program that represents the concert theme appropriately	Student and teacher work together to design program	
Early May - week of show	Large group rehearsal with all students and extra musicians	Students and extra musicians have a dress rehearsal of the concert so they know what to do/expect on concert night	Different groups perform together on stage	Performance
Early May	Students perform the concert	Students share their work with their friends, family, and the community	Different groups perform together on stage	Performance
Early May	Concert Debrief	The students and teacher have a class discussion about what went well and what could have	Teacher and students share their thoughts and impressions	Class discussion

		gone better at the concert	about the performance	
--	--	----------------------------	-----------------------	--

Table 2.1 Rehearsal Plan

The primary goal of these lessons was to facilitate a student-led concert cycle in which the seniors chose the overall theme and all students had a say in the songs that they were learning and performing. The secondary goal of these lessons was for students to learn and perform music from a variety of styles and genres in a way that is appropriate to that particular piece.

Throughout this process, students expanded their knowledge of technical skills, practiced expressive playing, played music from genres they had never experienced before, and were able to articulate their thoughts and opinions about pieces of music and why they should or should not be selected for a concert. This learning was achieved through full class discussions, student-teacher discussions about technical decisions such as finger patterns/placement and dynamics, and student selected music. The in-class discussions and final performance and reflection served as the assessments. Moving forward, this instruction can be improved by the teacher taking less of a role in finding musical options, allowing for students to be the prime search engines for music that interests them and fits the theme. This instruction changed the way I approached concert programming by sharpening my focus from selecting music by very broad categories and difficulty grading level only to selecting pieces that fit a specific theme and considerations for the strengths and interests of the group performing it.

Chapter 3 - Reflections

Throughout my work in the Masters' Program at K-State I have grown exponentially as an educator and as a person. This process has required me to articulate my teaching philosophy, put it into practice, and reflect on it. I am a much better educator for it. I had general ideas about what I thought before, but through the articulation of my philosophy for History and Philosophy of Music Education, I realized why it matters to have one specifically, and how important it is to make sure that what I am doing in my classroom reflects that philosophy.

My philosophy focuses on relevance in the classroom and educating the whole person. The relevance piece for me was really driven home in an "a-ha!" moment that I had during my first summer in the Advanced Instrumental Rehearsal Techniques class. As a part of a project where we were required to select music that we wanted to perform during the upcoming year, Dr. Dirks and I had a conversation about the way I was programming. She suggested that I consider the possibility of selecting a specific theme and fitting music within that. Thus, the "Outer Space" concert was born. In the end, I programmed all but one of the pieces I had selected during that summer course. This activity was not only helpful for restructuring the way I was thinking about selecting music, but it was also extremely helpful and directly applicable to the way I was leading rehearsals.

Changing the structure of my programming has drastically improved my overall teaching and has reignited my passion for teaching. It energizes me to think about themes and it's fun for both me and the students to find music that fits those themes. This also engages the students in a way that I was missing before. Even though I might have asked them what they thought about a piece of music, the only concert they truly looked forward to was the pops concert we had in the spring. I have found that this is largely true - most people like music that they already know.

There is something about it that comforts and engages us. This is true, even for me! However, at some point, the familiar music was unfamiliar to everyone. Part of the job as a music educator is to expand the field of what is familiar, and therefore relevant. Using a theme is a great way to accomplish that; the theme itself can be the point of familiarity and relevance even if the music is not. Through that theme, the students and audience create meaning and connections, and the theme becomes a lens through which to experience the music as relevant to their own life.

There was a disconnect in the way I was selecting music. In prior concerts, I selected music only loosely based on the grade level I thought a group should be playing at, and a cycle that went like this: Concert 1 - baroque/classical/romantic music, Concert 2 - holiday/winter themed/contemporary music, Concert 3 - pops music, anything goes. This usually meant that our first concert was what people typically label as “Intellectual” music, the second ranged from popular holiday tunes to music that no one had ever heard before, and the third was whatever movie or pop music students at the time were interested in. What this ended up doing, is creating a cycle where the students usually didn’t love any of the music we were playing until the final concert. It also further polarized them from other styles of music because they had already decided they weren’t going to like anything but the pops concert.

The new structure of my programming, which has been outlined and discussed in earlier parts of this paper, is one that engages both the students and audience at every point. This is accomplished in two notable ways: 1. It has been a personal goal of mine to include as many different genres and styles of music on each concert as is possible and as makes sense to the flow of the concert. The updated programming offers a wide variety of styles on every concert, with the hope that we draw every member of the Orchestra and audience in on a particular song, and expand their field of relevance. The unfamiliar becomes familiar. The first concert of the year

saw songs such as *Star Wars* and excerpts from *The Planets* as well as *Curse of the Rosin Eating Zombies from Outer Space* for an “Outer Space” themed concert. The second concert saw *The Pink Panther*, *The Blue Danube Waltz*, *Colors of the Wind*, and *Brook Green Suite* among others, for a concert with the theme of “In Color”. The final concert of the year, selected and designed by the seniors, was “Utopia/Dystopia”. That concert followed a storyline that started with *Pure Imagination* from *Willy Wonka*, worked through *Adagio for Strings*, and ended with *Radioactive* and *The Hunger Games*. Each of the concerts was a true collaboration between the students and myself, curating the concert pieces once the themes had been set. 2. I have also changed the order in which different groups perform. It used to be the youngest to the oldest, but now I program the pieces in the order that they make the most sense and the groups follow that order. This also changes things up for the students and the audience as it offers a variety of ability levels throughout the concert instead of moving through in a linear progression.

Another one of the benefits of structuring a program around a specific theme is that it opens up the possibility for collaboration outside of the music classroom. For example, the SAIL students at the primary school in my district were doing a unit based on what they had learned about the planets. As a part of this unit, they listened to recordings of Holst’s *The Planets* in class. The culmination of their unit was a space expo where groups of students presented the projects they had been working on. I contacted the teacher and told her about my Outer Space concert and how we would be performing excerpts from *The Planets*. Together, we arranged for my high school students to come to the elementary school during the space expo and perform live for the students and their families. Not only was this a great opportunity for the elementary students to see instruments up close and hear music that they had already heard (here’s that

relevance piece again), but it gave the families another connection point to their child's learning as well.

The possibilities of cross-curricular collaboration are endless. In the upcoming year, I am planning to have a concert themed on "Poetry", where there are multiple sections that are divided by different literary tools such as alliteration and rhyming. I will be working with the English department, and have scheduled this concert to happen in tandem with their "Poetry Out Loud" competition in late January. My goal is to have students from the English department read different examples of poetry that illustrate the literary tools of each section of the concert. For example, under the rhyming section I will play pieces where the title rhymes, such as *Fright Night* and *Chins and Pins*. Through this concert, I hope that English becomes more relevant to my student musicians, and that the music we select becomes more relevant to the students in the English department.

Through the Lower and Upper Strings Pedagogy classes, I learned many nuances of string instruments that I did not know before. Being a Horn player turned Orchestra teacher, prior to my summers with K-State the only formal experience I had with strings was a semester of a string techniques course during my undergraduate work, and two years of violin lessons at a local music store when I first started in my current position. In both of the pedagogy classes, I was not only taught the missing pieces of my own string learning, but I was able to dive deeper and ask questions that I otherwise would not have thought about or understood the answers to. I gained valuable insight into fingering patterns and correct instrument positioning. It gave me the confidence to not only understand shifting to different positions for my own playing, but also to be able to make decisions about positions and then explain and demonstrate those decisions to my students. To that end, it also made it possible for me to engage in conversations with my

more advanced students to compare my suggestions with their knowledge and experience and allow them to make the decisions that were most appropriate for their specific instrument and section.

In the Introduction to Graduate Studies in Music my first summer, I started thinking of an idea to engage older students in instrumental music. Typically, if a student does not choose to join an instrumental class the first year it is offered (in my district this first offering is in 6th grade), it becomes increasingly more difficult to join the group during a later year. This results in students either missing out on years of instruction and trying to catch up on their own in an ensemble if they choose to join later, or students missing out entirely on the possibility of an instrumental music experience outside of what they have done in a general music class in elementary school.

An idea that was sparked for me during Intro to Grad Studies was the idea to somehow create an opportunity later on in a person's education to learn an instrument. There are many students who might not be interested in playing an instrument when they're 12 but find it very interesting when they're 15 and by that time, they have missed the boat. My plan to combat this is with a class called "Music Lab". In "Music Lab", students could learn an instrument individually, with teacher guidance. They would join the class with teacher approval, and the two would work together to establish individual student goals for the semester and decide together how they would measure student learning and success. This may result in the student joining the respective instrumental ensemble at a later time, or maybe not, but the point would be that each student in this class had an opportunity to learn how to play an instrument. This idea supports both my philosophies of relevance as well as educating the whole person. We can meet them where they are and give them quality life experiences. Not everyone is going to become a

professional musician, but I believe that everyone who wants the experience of learning an instrument should have it.

While “Music Lab” started as an idea to offer an opportunity to students who had no prior instrumental musical experience, it has now expanded to an idea that includes three different levels of learning in one classroom. In this Covid world, the learning gap that everyone talks about also applies to the music room. Our students lost out on two years of instruction and rehearsals. In addition to catering to beginners, “Music Lab” can also expand to function as a kind of private lessons for struggling students. It can be expanded further to be a practice time for excelling students who are interested in having a dedicated time to practice alone during the school day. This is a class that I hope to implement in my district this coming year.

In reflecting on my teaching philosophy, it still rings as true for me today as it did two years ago. It has been refined and expanded through the Covid years, but music is still something that is innate to who we are as human beings, and it is the job of the music educator to find ways to make it relevant in the lives of their students. I believe the growth that I have experienced in the past two summers through the Masters’ Program at K-State in Music Education has equipped me to seek that which will be most relevant to my students, and adapt my teaching to it.



Figure 3.1 Outer Space Concert Poster



Figure 3.2 In Color Concert Poster

*The Affton Orchestras
present*



Friday May 6th, 7 pm
Judith E. Rethwisch Auditorium

Figure 3.3 Utopia/Dystopia Concert Poster

Bibliography

- Barber, S. (Composer). (1936). *Adagio for Strings* [Score and sheet music]. G. Schirmer, Inc.
- Bricuss, L. & Newley, A. (Composers). (2013). *Pure Imagination* (J. Allentoff, Arr.) [Score and sheet music]. Allentoff Music. (Original work published 1971)
- Eisner, E. W. (1998). *The kind of schools we need: Personal essays*. Heinemann.
- Elliott, D. J. (2005). *Praxial music education: Reflections and dialogues*. Oxford University Press.
- Holst, G. (Composer). (1934). *Brook Green Suite* [Score and sheet music]. G. Schirmer, Inc.
- Holst, G. (Composer). (2020). *The Inner Planets* (C. L. Gruselle, Arr.) [Score and sheet music]. FJH Music Company Inc. (Original work published 1916)
- Howard, J. N. (Composer). (2012). *The Hunger Games* (R. Longfield, Arr.) [Score and sheet music]. Hal Leonard Corporation. (Original work published 2012)
- Imagine Dragons (Composer). (2014). *Radioactive* (L. Moore, Arr.) [Score and sheet music]. Hal Leonard Corporation. (Original work published 2012)
- Jorgensen, E. R. (1997). *In search of music education*. University of Illinois Press.
- Kratus, J. (2007). Music education at the tipping point. *Music Educators Journal*, 94(2), 42–48. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002743210709400209>
- Mancini, H. (Composer). (2011). *The Pink Panther* (R. Longfield, Arr.) [Score and sheet music]. Hal Leonard Corporation. (Original work published 1964)
- Mark, M. L., & Gary, C. L. (2007). *A history of American music education* (3rd edition..). Rowman & Littlefield Education.
- Menken, A. (Composer). (1995). *Colors of the Wind* (J. Higgins, Arr.) [Score and sheet music]. Hal Leonard Corporation. (Original work published 1995)
- Meyer, M. (Composer). (2002). *Curse of the Rosin Eating Zombies from Outer Space* [Score and sheet music]. Alfred Music Publishing.
- Miksza, P. (2013). The future of music education: Continuing the dialogue about curricular reform. *Music Educators Journal*, 99(4), 45–50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0027432113476305>

- National Association for Music Education. (2014). *Core Music Standards*.
<https://nafme.org/my-classroom/standards/core-music-standards/>
- Reimer, B. (1989). *A philosophy of music education* (2nd edition..). Prentice Hall.
- Small, C. (1996). *Music, Society, Education* (Wesleyan University Press paperback ed. 1996..). University Press of New England.
- Small, C. (1998a). *Music of the Common Tongue: Survival and Celebration in African American Music*. Wesleyan University Press.
- Small, C. (1998b). *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening*. Wesleyan University Press.
- Strauss, Jr., J. (Composer). (1999). *The Blue Danube Waltz* (M. Williams, Arr.) [Score and sheet music]. Highland/Etling Publishing. (Original work published 1866)
- Williams, J. (Composer). (1999). *Star Wars* (L. Clark, Arr.) [Score and sheet music]. Alfred Music Publishing. (Original work published 1977)