# Journal of Performing Arts Leadership in Higher Education

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## Mission

*The Journal of Performing Arts Leadership in Higher Education* is a peer-reviewed journal dedicated to the enrichment of leadership in the performing arts in higher education.

## Goals

1. To promote scholarship applicable to performing arts leadership
2. To provide juried research in the field of performing arts leadership
3. To disseminate information, ideas and experiences in performing arts leadership

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## AN EXAMINATION OF FINANCIAL EXPENDITURES IN AMERICAN TERTIARY MUSIC SCHOOLS, 2004-18

A considerable amount of attention in higher education finance has focused on college affordability and the rising cost of education. Tuition has risen substantially over the past few decades, and numerous studies confirm this trend. For example, the National Commission on the Costs of Higher Education found that tuition prices, in real dollars, almost doubled between 1980 and 1995.[1] Additionally, the American Institutes for Research's Delta Cost Project found that from 1997 to 2005, revenue from tuition increases outpaced revenue from other sources.[2] More recently, data from the National Center for Education Statistics indicate that between 2004 and 2016, tuition and fees increased 34% at public colleges and universities and 26% at private non-profit institutions.[3]

Further examination of the narrative concludes that the terms "cost" and "price," while often used interchangeably, carry divergent definitions and applications. The National Commission on the Costs of Higher Education made a distinction between "cost" and "price" in their 1998 review of economic trends in higher education. They defined *cost* as the expenses that are incurred by the institution, while *price* refers to the amount that students are required to pay to attend the institution.[4] Although the cost of delivering a tertiary program of study is often associated with the price of tuition, the two are not inextricably linked.[5]

While tuition may be on the rise, trends in the institutional expenditures required to deliver educational experiences to students are less obvious. Using an adjusted education and general formula, Getz and Siegfried found expenditures per full-time equivalent student at two-year and four-year public institutions between 1978 and 1987 increased 2.4% beyond the rate of inflation.[6] Similarly, Harter, Wade, and Watkins determined that costs per full-time equivalent student grew at an annual rate of 2.13% between 1989

[1] National Commission on the Cost of Higher Education, James Harvey, and the American Council on Education, Straight Talk About College Costs and Prices: Report of the National Commission on the Cost of Higher Education (Phoenix: Oryx Press, 1998), 160.

[2] Jane V. Wellman, et. al., The Growing Imbalance: Recent Trends in U.S. Postsecondary Education Finance: A Report of the Delta Cost Project (Washington, DC: Delta Cost Project, 2008), 19.

[3] National Center for Education Statistics, "Digest of Education Statistics: 2016," Table 330.10. Accessed September 12, 2018, from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16_330.10.asp?referrer=report.

[4] National Commission on the Cost of Higher Education, 14.

[5] Paul T. Brinkman, "The Economics of Higher Education: Focus on Cost," New Directions for Institutional Research 2000, no. 106 (Summer 2000), 6.

[6] Malcolm Getz and John J. Siegfried, "Costs and Productivity in American Colleges and Universities," in Economic Challenges in Higher Education: A National Bureau of Economic Research Monograph, ed. Charles T. Glatfelter, Ronald G. Ehrenberg, Malcolm Getz, and John J. Siegfried (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,1991), 300.

and 1998.[7] In terms of relationships with the broader economy, instructional expenditures in higher education, as expressed as a percentage of national Gross Domestic Product, only moved from 1.14% of GDP in 2007 to 1.16% of GDP in 2014.[8]

Much of the national conversation regarding academic units in music or other fine arts, at least anecdotally, has focused on the expense of offering instruction in such specialized fields. On the other hand, the published literature contains little objective data to demonstrate the cost of delivering an education in music in relation to other disciplines, or how the costs have changed over longer periods of time. As with higher education in general, a prevailing narrative is that the cost of delivering an education in the arts is rapidly increasing. This has led some observers to debate the relative value of a degree in the arts, particularly when compared against the possible long-term employment and earnings potential that such a degree might provide. Students now borrow large amounts in student loans to deal with increases in tuition, and the load of education debt carried by arts graduates may significantly impact their professional trajectories and level of career satisfaction. A 2013 Federal Reserve survey found that adults between the ages of 25 to 39 with student loan debt were less optimistic about the value of their degrees compared to those without debt. Similarly, according to the 2017 Strategic National Arts Alumni Project Annual Report, arts graduates who carried student debt tended to rate their overall educational experiences lower, and felt less connected to their home institutions.[9]

Large scale survey projects such as those administered by the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and the Higher Education Arts Data Services (HEADS) provide a source for aggregated data from which to calculate average cost per student. While there is no single method of calculating average cost per student, due to the long history of such surveys a trail of information exists which can allow for comparison of financial data over time. One possible approach for determining educational costs is to examine the total of all unit expenditures in relation to the number of enrolled music major students. While such a perspective may have limitations, and may not adequately account for indirect educational costs (such as physical plant, infrastructure, or central administrative services), this

[7] John F. R Harter, John A. Wade, and Thomas G. Watkins, "An Examination of Costs at Four-Year Public Colleges and Universities between 1989 and 1998," The Review of Higher Education 28 (Spring 2005), 386, https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2005.0011.
[8] Dawn Iwamasa and Michael Thrasher, "An Analysis of Instructional Expenditures in U.S. Public Higher Education from 2004 through 2015," Planning for Higher Education (in press).
[9] Anthony Cilluffo, "5 Facts about Student Loans," Pew Research Center (blog), accessed August 24, 2017, http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/08/24/5-facts-about-student-loans.

view does provide for comparative data that may possibly reveal underlying financial trends and patterns. The purpose of the present study is to examine the median financial expenditures of music units in American colleges and universities in a longitudinal manner, with emphasis on unit spending per music major student.

## Methodology

Primary data for this study originates from the Higher Education Arts Data Services (HEADS) project coordinated by the Council of Arts Accrediting Associations. The annual HEADS survey captures data across a wide spectrum of institutional metrics, including enrollment and finance. All member institutions of the National Association of Schools of Music are required to participate in the survey, as well as certain institutions working towards NASM accreditation. The annual *HEADS Music Data Summaries* provide data aggregating total financial expenditures per enrolled music major student (given by median, average, and various percentile comparisons). In addition, these amounts are stratified by size and type of institution, as well as by the highest degree offered in music.

For the purpose of this project, median expenditures (fiftieth percentile) per music major student was chosen as the point of analysis. Unit expenditures include the grand total annual budget of the music unit, inclusive of faculty/staff salaries, benefits, scholarships, and operations. In calculating the ratio, the HEADS formula utilizes a headcount of all students enrolled as music majors in degree seeking or non-degree seeking capacities, whether at full-time or part-time status. Consequently, this denominator represents an actual enrollment (rather than FTE) accounting system.

To provide for a clearer linear comparison, all amounts were adjusted for inflation using the Consumer Price Index calculator provided by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm). This allowed all data to be reported in terms of constant 2018 dollar amounts. Finally, information was organized into reportable form using standard *Excel* spreadsheet software.

## Results

Table 1 and Figure 2 present median expenditures of all academic music units reporting HEADS data from 2004-2018 (adjusted for inflation). Median expenditures rose from $17,022 per music major student in 2004-05 to $18,661 per student in 2017-18 (a net increase of 9.6%). However, most of the increase appeared in the last four years of the period, with expenditures in 2013-14 being roughly equivalent to where they stood nine years earlier.

The low point appeared in 2007-08 ($15,579), while the maximum appeared in 2016-17 ($18,733). Expenditures increased in six of the years under review, while seven years saw a decrease in expenditures.

In Table 3 and Figure 4, median music unit expenditures for public institutions are reported. The data is disaggregated by size of institution, with annual rates of change for each category indicated. Smaller units (those with 1-100 music majors) reported the highest expenditures per student, followed by large units (401 or more students). Units with 101-200 students reported fewer expenditures, while mid-size units (201-400 students) reported the lowest levels of expenditures.

The largest overall increase among public institutions appeared among large units, with a 16.7% net increase over the period under review. The smallest increase appeared among mid-size units (201-400 students), with a 9.5% net increase. As with the prevailing trends, most of the increases appeared after 2013. In the case of the mid-size units, per-student expenditures in 2014-15 were less than they were a decade earlier.

Table 5 and Figure 6 summarize data for private institutions, stratified by unit size. Note that by HEADS protocol, the classification system of private unit size does not directly equate to the categories used for public institutions. Overall, per-student expenditures among private music units substantially exceeded expenditures in public music units. The highest expenditures appeared among larger units (201 or more students), followed closely by small units (1-50 students). Units with 51-100 students had lower expenditures, while mid-size units (101-200 students) had the lowest.

As indicated in Figure 6, patterns suggest that private units experienced more volatility and fluctuations in expenditures, with clear spikes and valleys evident. However, longer term trends indicate a lack of growth among certain categories. For example, large units only observed an increase of 2% from 2004-05 to 2017-18 (from $23,441 to $23,977). Small units indicated a net increase of 4.1% over the period under review. On the other hand, units with 51-100 students saw the largest growth, with a change of 10.8%, while mid-size units observed a net growth of 6.4%.

Finally, Table 7 and Figure 8 provide expenditure data classified by the highest degree offered in music by the academic unit. Doctoral-granting research institutions had the largest expenditures, followed by those offering up to the baccalaureate level. Master's level institutions had smaller expenditures, while community college and other associate's level units reported the lowest per-student expenditures.

In terms of changes, the associate's units experienced contraction in expenditures throughout most of the period, with growth evident only in

the final two years. Similarly, master's level units saw expenditures contract or remain flat for longer durations, with expenditures in 2016-17 only 2.4% higher than they were in 2004-05. For most types of institutions, increases were most evident after 2013-14.

## Discussion

The purpose of the current study was to examine the median financial expenditures of music units in American colleges and universities longitudinally from 2004-18, with emphasis on unit spending per music major. Results indicate that regardless of institution size, music units in private institutions consistently spent more per student than units in public schools. However, long term expansion of spending in such units was more subdued. Larger private units (201 or more students), for instance, only witnessed a growth of 2.3% in expenditures from 2004-18. In addition, fluctuations in spending were substantially more noticeable among private institutions. This may partially be attributable to private institutions' greater reliance on unpredictable fundraising support, which may demonstrate volatility based on market performance and prevailing economic conditions. In addition, reduced household and per capita wage growth across the population may tend to inhibit the willingness of some families to undertake the higher tuition rates of private institutions, especially when considering the less certain financial prospects of careers in the arts.

The data indicates that small music units (less than 100 students in public institutions or 50 students in private institutions) tend to be among the most expensive and least efficient to operate. Schools of music require an assortment of core, discipline-specific materials, including concert venues, instruments, and rehearsal spaces. These central elements must be in place regardless of the size of the student body. Very small units absorb the cost of such essentials without the benefit of the "economies of scale" provided by larger, more expansive units. On the other hand, very large doctoral-granting units also tend to experience higher expenditures per student. Such institutions typically support robust research enterprises, and may maintain smaller class sizes (particularly at the graduate level). In addition, faculty with substantial research portfolios may carry reduced teaching loads, increasing the corresponding expenditures per student.

Mid-size units, especially public, master's-level institutions, tend to exhibit the most efficiency in terms of expenditures per student. These units may enjoy the "economies of scale" missing among smaller units, without the increased expense of supporting large-scale research endeavors. In addition, these schools may employ lower-cost graduate assistants at the master's degree level, who may not require the financial support of more experienced

doctoral students. Interestingly, baccalaureate-level institutions, which may encompass liberal arts colleges and similar institutions, tend to be less efficient.

## Implications

The results of this analysis carry meaningful practical implications and further questions. First, the higher per-student costs of small music units, when compared with the greater efficiencies of mid-size units, may provoke debates concerning the feasibility of exceptionally small units. While dependent upon a great many factors beyond the scope of this discussion, potential consolidation or mergers of very small units could warrant dialogue in some situations. Clearly, such scenarios carry many complex implications, and therefore warrant careful debate and ongoing discussion among institutions and the profession at large.

Second, the expenditures per music major student at community colleges and other associate-level units significantly trail other types of institutions.

For example, music units at associate-level schools spend 28% less per student than baccalaureate units, and 32% less than those at doctoral institutions. In the years following the economic downturn of the Great Recession (2007-09), enrollments at community colleges grew rapidly. Presumably, the lower tuition prices of such schools have led many students to consider these colleges as a means to conserve money over the course of a degree plan. However, the substantially lower expenditure rates may provoke questions concerning the nature of music training in these units, especially when compared with other, higher-funded types of institutions.

Another compelling issue is the disparity between the large rise in the price of tuition versus the more subdued rise in institutional expenditures per student. Overall, music units reported a 9.6% increase in expenditures from 2004 to 2018. Conversely, between 2004 and 2015, tuition and fees at public four-year institutions increased by approximately 38%. This supports the assertion that educational costs are being shifted from state budgets or other funding sources, and redistributed to students through tuition increases. While students are paying more in tuition and fees than ever before, the question arises of whether students are getting more for their education for the bigger price. Consequently, for music units, the greater student investment does not necessarily translate into increased programmatic expenditures. Economic theory states that the benefits of an education must outweigh the price. If economic decision-making trends hold steady, with students less likely to value their education with increased debt load, at what point will

students view an arts education as no longer worth pursuing?

Historical data suggests that during times of economic recession, students may be less likely to choose music as a major. In response, institutions may experience increased pressure to provide scholarships, grants, and other forms of non-repayable student aid. Furthermore, degree programs that demonstrate clear paths to employment (e.g., music education, music therapy, arts administration, etc.) may continue to increase in popularity.

## Conclusion

The common narrative concerning higher education finance suggests that costs are increasing rapidly. On the contrary, the results of this study indicate that the cost of providing higher education in music, when measured in terms of expenditures per student, did not experience rapid expansion from 2004 to 2018. Other studies indicate that tuition, on the other hand, has increased substantially over the last several decades. Actual music unit expenditures have varied depending on the size and scope of the unit, with public schools tending to spend less per student than private schools, and mid-sized units spending less than very small or very large units. Further analysis of long-term financial data may yield additional insights into the nature of music instruction in higher education.

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**Table 1.** *Median Unit Financial Expenditures per Music Major Student at
Institutions Reporting Annual HEADS Data in Constant 2018 (Inflation
Adjusted) Dollars.*

| Year | Median Expenditures | Percent change |
|------|---------------------|----------------|
| 2004-2005 | $17,022 | |
| 2005-2006 | $16,474 | -3.22% |
| 2006-2007 | $15,930 | -3.30% |
| 2007-2008 | $15,579 | -2.20% |
| 2008-2009 | $16,765 | 7.61% |
| 2009-2010 | $16,223 | -3.23% |
| 2010-2011 | $16,062 | -0.99% |
| 2011-2012 | $15,944 | -0.73% |
| 2012-2013 | $16,574 | 3.95% |
| 2013-2014 | $17,290 | 4.32% |
| 2014-2015 | $17,974 | 3.96% |
| 2015-2016 | $18,618 | 3.58% |
| 2016-2017 | $18,733 | 0.62% |
| 2017-2018 | $18,661 | -0.38% |

**Figure 2.** Median Unit Financial Expenditures per Music Major Student at Institutions Reporting Annual HEADS Data (U.S. Recession Indicated in the Shaded Area). Amounts Reported in Constant 2018 (Inflation Adjusted) Dollars.
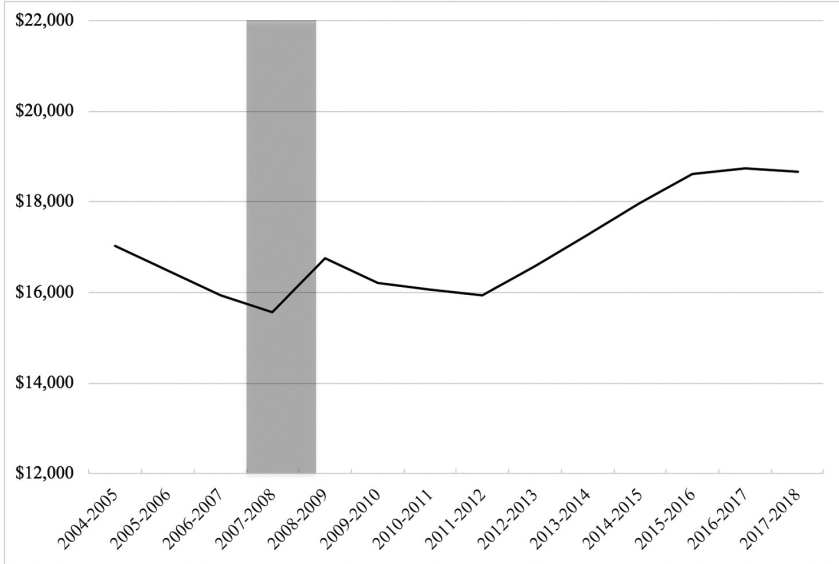
**Table 3.** Median Unit Financial Expenditures per Music Major Student at Public Institutions Reporting Annual HEADS Data in Constant 2018 (Inflation Adjusted) Dollars.

| Year | 1-100 Music Majors | Change | 101-200 Music Majors | Change | 201-400 Music Majors | Change | 401+ Music Majors | Change |
|------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 2004-2005 | $16,991 | | $14,578 | | $14,149 | | $15,071 | |
| 2005-2006 | $17,894 | 5.31% | $13,422 | -7.93% | $13,417 | -5.17% | $14,750 | -2.13% |
| 2006-2007 | $16,753 | -6.38% | $13,940 | 3.86% | $12,441 | -7.27% | $15,793 | 7.07% |
| 2007-2008 | $15,587 | -6.96% | $14,095 | 1.11% | $12,553 | 0.90% | $15,604 | -1.20% |
| 2008-2009 | $16,954 | 8.77% | $14,827 | 5.19% | $12,716 | 1.30% | $15,828 | 1.44% |
| 2009-2010 | $17,142 | 1.11% | $14,246 | -3.92% | $13,064 | 2.74% | $15,667 | -1.02% |
| 2010-2011 | $16,785 | -2.08% | $14,030 | -1.52% | $12,770 | -2.25% | $15,542 | -0.80% |
| 2011-2012 | $16,651 | -0.80% | $13,348 | -4.86% | $12,080 | -5.40% | $16,299 | 4.87% |
| 2012-2013 | $18,323 | 10.04% | $13,878 | 3.97% | $13,578 | 12.40% | $17,340 | 6.39% |
| 2013-2014 | $17,881 | -2.41% | $13,919 | 0.30% | $13,735 | 1.16% | $18,106 | 4.42% |
| 2014-2015 | $18,923 | 5.83% | $16,063 | 15.40% | $14,126 | 2.85% | $17,995 | -0.61% |
| 2015-2016 | $19,832 | 4.80% | $16,349 | 1.78% | $14,973 | 6.00% | $18,338 | 1.91% |
| 2016-2017 | $19,477 | -1.79% | $15,892 | -2.80% | $14,711 | -1.75% | $17,950 | -2.12% |
| 2017-2018 | $19,101 | -1.93% | $16,123 | 1.45% | $15,493 | 5.32% | $17,584 | -2.04% |

**Figure 4.** Median Unit Financial Expenditures per Music Major Student at Public Institutions Reporting Annual HEADS Data by Enrollment Size (U.S. Recession Indicated in the Shaded Area). Amounts Reported in Constant 2018 (Inflation Adjusted) Dollars.

**Table 5.** Median Unit Financial Expenditures per Music Major Student at Private Institutions Reporting Annual HEADS Data in Constant 2018 (Inflation Adjusted) Dollars.

| Year | 1-50 Music Majors | Change | 51-100 Music Majors | Change | 101-200 Music Majors | Change | 201+ Music Majors | Change |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 2004-2005 | $22,456 | | $17,700 | | $14,719 | | $23,441 | |
| 2005-2006 | $22,061 | -1.76% | $17,771 | 0.40% | $13,573 | -7.79% | $19,477 | -16.91% |
| 2006-2007 | $19,669 | -10.84% | $17,730 | -0.23% | $15,062 | 10.97% | $18,685 | -4.07% |
| 2007-2008 | $20,212 | 2.76% | $16,513 | -6.86% | $15,694 | 4.20% | $20,189 | 8.05% |
| 2008-2009 | $22,438 | 11.01% | $17,216 | 4.26% | $15,943 | 1.59% | $22,892 | 13.39% |
| 2009-2010 | $20,406 | -9.06% | $17,484 | 1.56% | $15,957 | 0.09% | $21,954 | -4.10% |
| 2010-2011 | $21,172 | 3.75% | $16,651 | -4.76% | $15,872 | -0.53% | $22,111 | 0.72% |
| 2011-2012 | $20,619 | -2.61% | $15,074 | -9.47% | $15,755 | -0.74% | $24,152 | 9.23% |
| 2012-2013 | $21,175 | 2.70% | $16,140 | 7.07% | $18,196 | 15.49% | $21,803 | -9.73% |
| 2013-2014 | $21,768 | 2.80% | $16,959 | 5.07% | $17,494 | -3.86% | $22,863 | 4.86% |
| 2014-2015 | $22,861 | 5.02% | $18,519 | 9.20% | $16,660 | -4.77% | $20,866 | -8.73% |
| 2015-2016 | $22,766 | -0.42% | $19,321 | 4.33% | $19,644 | 17.91% | $21,252 | 1.85% |
| 2016-2017 | $23,771 | 4.41% | $18,964 | -1.85% | $14,681 | -25.26% | $21,378 | 0.59% |
| 2017-2018 | $23,385 | -1.62% | $19,603 | 3.37% | $15,666 | 6.71% | $23,977 | 12.16% |

**Figure 6.** Median Unit Financial Expenditures per Music Major Student at Private Institutions Reporting Annual HEADS Data by Enrollment Size (U.S. Recession Indicated in the Shaded Area). Amounts Reported in Constant 2018 (Inflation Adjusted) Dollars.
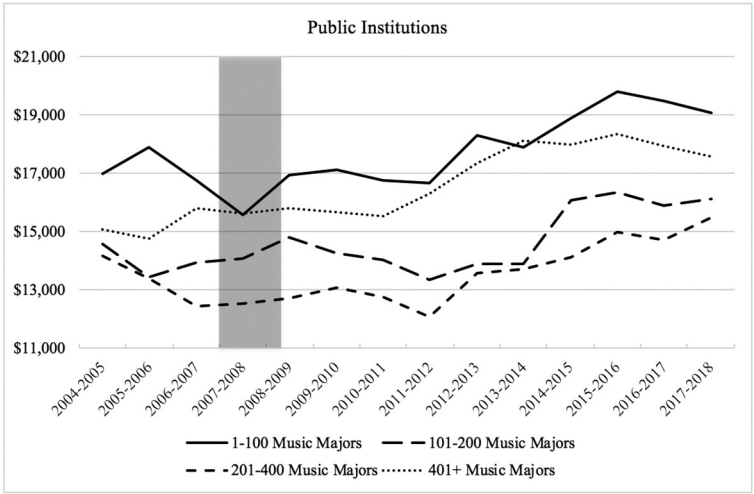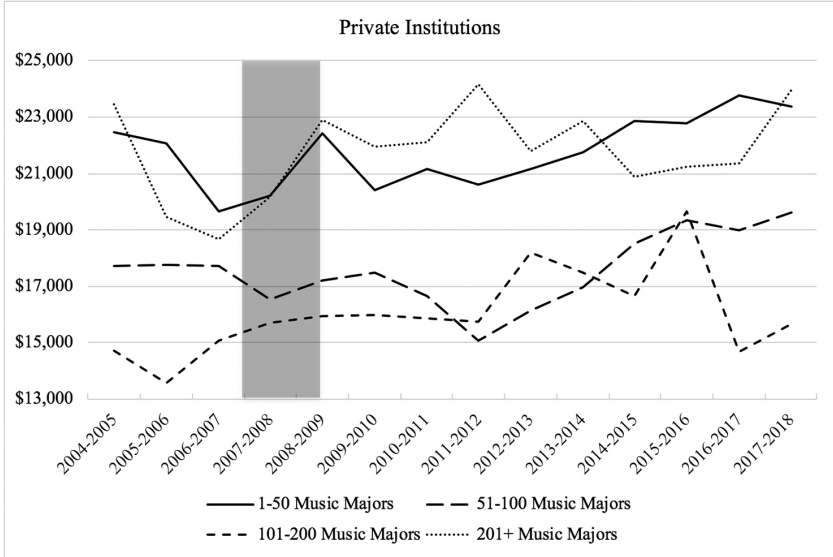
**Table 7.** Median Unit Financial Expenditures per Music Major Student by Highest Degree Level Offered at Institutions Reporting Annual HEADS Data in Constant 2018 (Inflation Adjusted) Dollars.

| Year | Associate's Degree | Change | Bachelor's Degree | Change | Master's Degree | Change | Doctoral Degree | Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2004-2005 | $14,518 | | $17,834 | | $15,486 | | $18,292 | |
| 2005-2006 | $14,158 | -2.48% | $17,009 | -4.63% | $15,511 | 0.16% | $18,982 | 3.77% |
| 2006-2007 | $12,641 | -10.71% | $16,809 | -1.18% | $14,382 | -7.28% | $17,873 | -5.84% |
| 2007-2008 | $11,746 | -7.08% | $16,192 | -3.67% | $14,511 | 0.90% | $17,666 | -1.16% |
| 2008-2009 | $11,920 | 1.48% | $17,648 | 8.99% | $14,618 | 0.74% | $18,758 | 6.18% |
| 2009-2010 | $11,027 | -7.49% | $17,179 | -2.66% | $14,446 | -1.18% | $15,573 | -16.98% |
| 2010-2011 | $12,562 | 13.92% | $17,333 | 0.90% | $14,480 | 0.24% | $18,863 | 21.13% |
| 2011-2012 | $11,507 | -8.40% | $16,722 | -3.53% | $13,430 | -7.25% | $20,045 | 6.27% |
| 2012-2013 | $12,412 | 7.86% | $17,826 | 6.60% | $14,534 | 8.22% | $20,277 | 1.16% |
| 2013-2014 | $12,929 | 4.17% | $18,237 | 2.31% | $15,299 | 5.26% | $21,012 | 3.62% |
| 2014-2015 | $15,084 | 16.67% | $19,519 | 7.03% | $15,845 | 3.57% | $22,693 | 8.00% |
| 2015-2016 | $13,333 | -11.61% | $19,772 | 1.30% | $16,142 | 1.87% | $22,515 | -0.78% |
| 2016-2017 | $14,176 | 6.32% | $20,084 | 1.58% | $15,860 | -1.75% | $21,491 | -4.55% |
| 2017-2018 | $15,688 | 10.67% | $20,043 | -0.20% | $16,226 | 2.31% | $20,720 | -3.59% |

**Figure 8.** Median Unit Financial Expenditures per Music Major Student at Institutions Reporting Annual HEADS Data by Highest Degree Offered (U.S. Recession Indicated in the Shaded Area). Amounts Reported in Constant 2018 (Inflation Adjusted) Dollars.
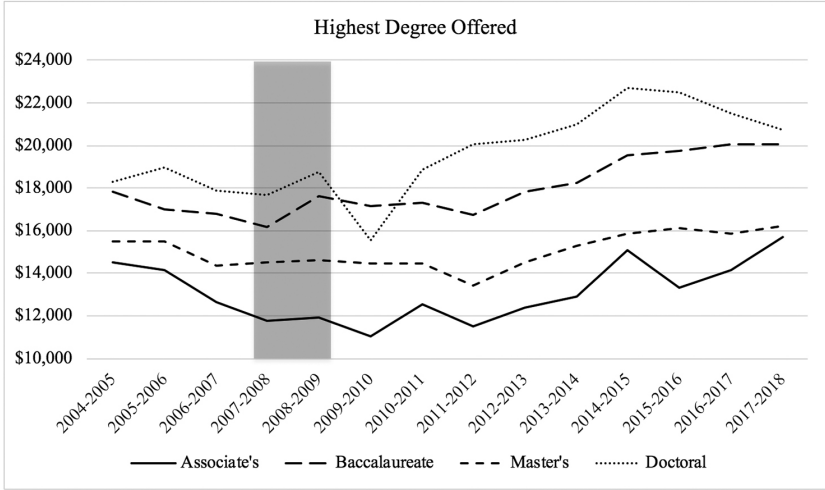
## PI KAPPA LAMBDA CENTENNIAL
## CELEBRATION ADDRESS

It is a great honor to be with you celebrating the centennial of a truly great organization with a noble mission. I so admire the leadership of Pi Kappa Lambda, and I have admired them for my whole career in the education of musicians. We all have a common cause, understanding the importance of an unwavering commitment to excellence and achievement among all of us in world of music.

Right from the outset, allow me to address a subject that comes up at every NASM meeting, probably hundreds of times – but it is an evergreen subject. What is our responsibility to the thousands of young people who are concentrating on the vocation of music, in terms of their eventual careers? Does it make sense to meet a young person on fire with the love of music, and say to them, "We can help!" as opposed to, "You are a crazy person. Let me inform you about the arithmetic of careers in music."

My answer combines some of both approaches. We must be clear about the challenges ahead for any and all musicians. Young people need to hear the truth. Part of the truth is that they will need to give that unwavering commitment to excellence and achievement that Pi Kappa Lambda stands for, and this means every day, all day, for a long time. Living up to this commitment is no guarantee of a career. But it is virtually a guarantee of a life-changing experience, an experience of greatness – an experience that will last a lifetime. I won't go deeply into the increasing body of research showing the immense cognitive and social benefits of serious musical study, but that research is out there (and I don't mean the "Mozart Effect!"). When I engage with dedicated young people in music, and see their discipline, enthusiasm, and the love that they bring to their work, I know in my heart that this engagement is a good thing.

A key is the challenge and encouragement involved, and that has been the century-long commitment of Pi Kappa Lambda: to encourage, to challenge, and then to celebrate real achievement.

I'd like to take a brief detour into my personal experience, now many years ago, as a young and aspiring musician. My theme here is "A dramatic capacity to focus."

If you can believe it, an eminent astrologer once gave me a reading, which began with his announcement that I have sun, rising, moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars and Jupiter all in Scorpio. He said to me, "That is a little scary. But it means that you have a dramatic capacity to focus. That's really important in music and the military, and in religious life, so I expect you should be a monk, or a soldier, or else a musician." Since I had no military ambitions, I decided to concentrate on music, evidently with the blessing of the universe.

It is true, though, that musicians tend to have a dramatic capacity to focus. We have to behave, day to day, knowing that every day counts, and we need to focus on that. The capacity to focus will have a dramatic importance for us, every day.

I had a friend, when I was in grad school, who made lists every day, to keep herself focused. Once, I was helping her put together a dinner party at her apartment, and I saw that day's list on the fridge. "Reserve plane tickets for next week, buy coffee, water, green beans, toothpaste, call Mom, clean bathroom, conquer all fears, give doorman the guest list." Wait, what was that second to last thing? "Conquer all fears?" I quietly decided not to ask her until later how that was working for her.

But I did start making my own lists. The way my life works now, I primarily compose music in September and October, at a beautiful place in Maine. Every morning I make the day's list. Feed the dogs. Walk the dogs. Check emails. See if the tree guy can look at that tree that doesn't look so good. Compose deathless masterpiece. Do the lunch dishes. Yes, "compose deathless masterpiece," because you might as well try, right?

Here's another little story: early in my composing career I invited a new friend to come to a concert including one of my works. She and I were working together in a church job, but she isn't a musician. She listened to my music, and commented, "Wow –you seem so reserved, but you just completely reveal yourself in the music! How can you stand to be so emotionally exposed?" I said, "Well, that's what we do."

We keep ourselves at it, day after day. Others will help, and be more or less encouraging, but it is each individual's own dedication and discipline that will bring them to the stage, to the studio, to the classroom. Focus. People have good days and bad days, but we never think, "Now, it's good enough." The great, and sometimes terrible, piano teacher Adele Marcus used to say, "You're only a concert pianist during a concert." She meant, I think, that every success is only a platform on which the next success can be built, and there can be no complacency. You've never _made_ it; you're always _making_ it.

You all understand that I'm saying these things as simple facts. If they seem discouraging, then _be_ discouraged – but they're not meant as discouragements. Just facts. Did any one of you ever think a life in music was going to be easy? Did any one of you think that you would succeed because you _deserved_ to? But, I hope, every one of you knew it was worth it to work at this, every day, all day.

So, why? Not – why did you want to do this? But rather, why was it so important?

There are many ways to answer this, but today I want to focus on just one. We need for our work to be successful, because it is honest work. Artists are truth tellers. They mean what they say. They say what they mean.

They are worth listening to.

After all the necessary technical work, the essence of practice is in uncovering one's own honest – often searingly honest – interpretation. And we need that honesty.

In a culture where truth, where facts, where reality is so debased, artists stand up there and reveal themselves in all honesty. And what a beautiful phrase that is: "in all honesty."

There is a true, inherent drama in focus. We think big. We trust others to think big with us. We stay at it. We stay with it.

Truth telling is a hallmark of the creative and performing artist. We try to connect our innermost, authentic selves with the text, the score. In a class famously captured on video, the great drama teacher Stella Adler advises her gifted acting students that "the ideal is to be like a musician; they know how to respect text, and still be themselves."

I know we occasionally hear about, or tell about, "faking it." This is inevitable. Personally, I was taken aback once in a Juilliard class I was taking with one of the world's greatest collaborative pianists. I was assigned to play Faure's lovely song "Nell," and had dutifully worked it up. No sooner had I played a few bars than the teacher stopped me, saying, "No one plays all the notes in 'Nell!' Let me show you the work-around." I, being an idealistic young student, suggested that this was faking it, and he said, "No, improving it!"

But the exigency of just getting <u>through</u> something is not the ideal. The ideal is finding a way to say something personal and true, important and meaningful, even useful – in every performance.

Personal, true, important, meaningful, useful.

Personal, because otherwise why is it <u>you</u> that is on the stage?

True, because, as Keats said, "Beauty is truth, truth beauty."

Important, because art matters, because humans in every known generation in history have considered it important to make music. Music is mysteriously inherent in the human mind and spirit. Among the oldest artifacts known, that were made by ancient humans, are musical instruments.

Meaningful, because music expresses emotional, as well as intellectual meaning, in its own unique way. Mathematical, structural meaning shines through music. Emotions, that resist reduction into sentences, shine through music. The spiritual has a particular affinity and propensity for musical expression.

Useful, because time and again, people say about music that they need it. Music helps us in grief, in trouble, in times of uncertainty. Music lifts us in times of joy. Music sustains us in times of loneliness. Music joins us when we need to be linked together. Music inspires us to be our best. Music makes us feel, music makes us think.

Once again, the ideal is finding a way to say something personal and true, important and meaningful, even useful – in every performance. But perhaps of these attributes and qualities, the most importance is truth.

A few weeks ago, I was in China and Korea. In one meeting, I was sitting with a very important political leader, a business leader, and a musical leader. We were imagining some ambitious projects, and, after much useful practical discussion, the political guy said, "But what is the use of all this, when we are in a trade war?!" Without hesitation, I said that a time of political strife, of breakdown of communication, of uncertainty, is precisely the best time for a shared commitment to music – and shared joy in music. 70 million young people in China are studying classical music. It is something profound that we have in common, and it is a way we can really speak to each other.

One of the primary benefits of musical training is the profound experience of working together, of listening, of contributing, of sharing, of inspiring.

Above all, music is an endeavor that encourages openness, listening, sensitivity, responsiveness, communication, and honesty.

So, with much admiration and gratitude, I salute Pi Kappa Lambda for a century of standing for truth, in a world that truly needs it.

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**Alan Fletcher**, one of this country's most accomplished music administrators and respected composers, was born in 1956 in Riverside, New Jersey, and earned his baccalaureate at Princeton University (1978) and his master's degree (1979) and doctorate (1983) at Juilliard. He studied composition with Roger Sessions, Milton Babbitt, Edward T. Cone, and Paul Lansky and piano with Jacob Lateiner and Robert Helps. In 1985, Fletcher was appointed to the faculty of the New England Conservatory of Music, teaching composition and theory and serving successively during his 16-year tenure at the school as Dean, Provost, and Senior Vice President. From 2001 to 2006, he was Professor of Music and Head of the School of Music at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, after which he assumed his current position as president and CEO of the Aspen Music Festival and School. Fletcher has lectured nationally and internationally on music and music administration and served on many boards, panels, juries, seminars and committees, including the board of the Aspen Institute and the Pittsburgh Opera. He has also contributed articles and op-ed pieces to the Huffington Post, *BBC Magazine, The Guardian*, *Symphony* magazine, *Gramophone* magazine, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Sonus: Journal of Global Music*, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, *Baltimore Sun*, the *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy*, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, and many others. Fletcher has won numerous composing

awards and received commissions from the National Dance Institute, the Pittsburgh Symphony (2008, 2011, and 2015), Los Angeles Philharmonic, Atlanta Symphony, Zurich Chamber Orchestra, Nashua Symphony, National Gallery of Art, Boston Celebrity Series, Duquesne University, New York Camerata, and other noted ensembles, organizations, and soloists. Mr. Fletcher's Piano Concerto, written for pianist Inon Barnatan, premiered in the summer of 2017 at the Aspen Music Festival and School and Los Angeles Philharmonic's Hollywood Bowl. He chaired the 1997 Salzburg Seminar Music for a New Millenium: The Classical Genre in Contemporary Society.

## ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT IN THE ARTS: INTRODUCTORY THOUGHTS AND MODELS FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

The assessment of academic courses and programs continues to be held as an important process on college campuses. While assessment efforts are often coordinated by an individual or office on most campuses, usually imparting specific expectations and methods for that assessment, it is important to remember that artists have been utilizing effective measures of assessment for generations. This can be both invigorating and detrimental to the creation and continuation of the assessment process and to incorporating it into your campus-wide process.

At its core, assessment is most useful when it is implemented with the intent of supporting the desired educational and artistic outcomes of a program or process. Unfortunately and all too often, assessment is added to "prove" a course or program's value, to provide data that is used for measuring unrelated or unplanned programmatic functions, or to show that a course is doing what it needs to do, so that the assessment can then be ignored and something else can be put under the microscope. Certainly, assessment has its value in each of these situations, but, as stated, it has the most value when it can be used as a tool to assist in the identification, description, revision, and implementation of appropriate goals, processes, and tools in support of providing students the best possible educational and artistic experience. This is true across the scope of university curricula, but can especially evident in the arts.

As we are all aware, the arts are often seen as outliers on campus, regardless of the situation. So, the natural inclination of an assessment coordinator, particularly one who is new to their position or to working with programs across campus, will be to assume that the arts will be different in assessment processes, as well. Since this is the likely scenario, it may be best to begin any discussion with a campus-wide coordinator with an assurance that, at least in assessment terms, the similarities far outweigh the differences, at least after just a bit of explanation and coordination.

The arts utilize methods of assessment that are very similar to those used in other subjects. In many cases, the methods were developed in the arts and have been incorporated into other subjects. For example, portfolios have long been in use as an accepted representation of visual artists' work; symphonic musicians are expected to perform excerpts from standard repertoire as an indication of their preparedness to assume a place in an orchestra, where they will perform repertoire from all styles and time periods; and dancers are expected to be able to present appropriate choreography in a variety of styles as part of the application process for positions. While we accept these

as standard practice, they actually represent assessment in its basic form and the ability to use such information when discussing assessment with outside colleagues is an important step in creating and using an organized, reliable, and consistent model for your program.

## Definitions

Since assessment of courses and programs in a post-secondary setting can utilize a wide variety of measures and processes, there are several methods that are widely used and accepted as standard practice. While we in the performing arts may have different names for them, the following list includes many common forms of assessment and the analogous artistic form.

### Formative Assessment

Formative assessment is generally defined as assessment that takes place during a course or sequence of courses or opportunities. It seeks to identify ways in which the student is forming understanding of a subject task. While vital to identify the validity of instruction in courses, success in a Formative setting does not imply success in the entire sequence. For example, a final performance exam in the first course of a 3-course sequence in Acting would be considered a Formative assessment, since there will be other assessments that will require the student to recall and utilize information and tools developed for this assessment in later classes. However, using nothing but an assessment in Acting I to suggest the validity of the entire Acting sequence would be totally inappropriate. Likewise, an assessment of part-writing skills in Music Theory I might be useful as one in a series of assessments, but should not be mistaken for suggesting the overall competence of a student who has completed a Music Theory sequence that includes five or more semesters of work in a wide area of proficiencies and skills.

Formative assessments are often used and reported in terms of "scaffolding." This implies that the information being assessed is intended to be used as a building block for other information in future courses or settings, combining the results of several assessments to show competence in a wider setting or appropriate preparation for a higher level course or program.

### Summative Assessment

Summative assessment usually takes place at the conclusion of a program, sequence, or activity. It seeks to provide information regarding the sum of the

information gathered by the student over the course of the program in its entirety. Some examples of Summative assessment tools include, Capstone courses, Portfolio Reviews, and Normed Examinations, each of which is defined below. Summative data tends to be the bulk of what is reported in Program assessment, since it seeks to identify the whole rather than parts.

## Direct Assessment

Direct assessment is a measure of an individual or small group in a specific setting. It can take a variety of forms and be used throughout an assessment structure. It is generally understood that the assessment is being given to the student or group and the results are intended to provide information about the student or group specifically. While this is often a test or assignment that is scored by an expert, there are various other forms a direct assessment can take.

## Indirect Assessment

Indirect assessment calls for subjects to self-assess or in some other way provide information regarding themselves or another group of people, how interactions among a group occurred, or how any predetermined expectations were met or altered throughout a course or program. The term indirect can be thought of as "assessing the assessment," therefore a step away from the assessment of an individual.

## Longitudinal Assessment

Longitudinal assessment is the process of collecting data over several semesters, years or other extended period. This method is particularly useful in smaller programs, where having only 2-3 graduates per year might make it hard to collect reliable data. Collecting the same information from students over four-five years would then allow far more information to be used and the results are more likely to provide an accurate assessment of course or program effectiveness. For example, a small studio in music might have one particularly outstanding student complete the jury process, exhibiting tone, sight-reading ability, and historical understanding through performance that would not accurately represent the abilities of other students in the same studio. While the short term value of the report in this studio would be great, the next class, perhaps even several classes of students would then likely show that they did not meet the same results, perhaps causing concern or unnecessary efforts to revamp the evaluation process. The same would be true in the opposite case; a particularly poor student could provide short term

evidence that a program or course did not meet expectations, while using results collected over a longer period would likely adjust for the one outlier, providing a more realistic representation of the process.

## Other Definitions

While they have been used as examples in the previous section, the following descriptions may be useful for some in context:

### Normed Assessment (Norm-referenced)

Normed Assessment generally takes the form of nationally or regionally administered examinations, such as Major Field Tests, the Graduate Records Examination (GRE) Subject test, or local comprehensive examination which includes results from several iterations. These are often used to show program relevance and consistency in comparison to larger populations of students. They are particularly useful if smaller sections of the tests can be utilized to gain information, meaning that while your student cohort may have a 90% passage rate on the GRE Music Subject Test, it might be more useful for your program's purposes to find that only 45% reached an acceptable level in the Music History subsection, even though their scores in other sections offset that deficiency in the overall score.

### Criterion-Referenced Assessment

Criterion-referencing means that work is assessed based on a specific benchmark, goal, or objective. While this can define virtually any form of assessment, it can be particularly useful in assessing the level of completion in coursework in the Arts, such as meeting the minimum expected proficiency in a piano class for non-piano majors, the basic expectations for Stage Design or Costuming, etc.

### Capstone Experience

A Capstone Experience is one that is provided at or near the end of a program or sequence and is intended to display the student's ability to incorporate elements of all previous knowledge and experiences provided during the sequence or program. Examples are a Senior Art Show, Senior Recital in Dance or Music, or a dramatic production that is conceived, prepared, directed and populated by students. It is also important to note

that the Student Teaching experience is a capstone experience, even though it may only occur after several other such experiences have been completed

## Portfolio Review

Portfolio Review is the collection, usually by the student, of work they consider to be relevant and reflective of their accomplishments over a course, sequence or program. While it would certainly describe the process by which representative works for a Music or Dance recital program are selected or the collection of appropriate pieces of a visual artist, it can also include the discussion of rigging, lighting, marketing, and cast selection decisions in preparation for a Theater production, or lesson plans and related video examples of class projects or presentations prepared by a student. The portfolio is generally assessed using a rubric or standardized tool and evaluated by an instructor or panel of experts, depending on how it is being used. It is important to note that this may be a valuable part of formative, summative, or even longitudinal assessment.

## Building a Useful Assessment Model

While most institutions have some form of assessment in place, it is possible, or even likely, that the construction and implementation of that process happened in reaction to a need to find reportable data, rather than as the way to discern answers to an intentional inquiry. Therefore, developing long-term strategies for instructional change, evolution of program outcomes, and other projects involving extended thought and process can be severely handicapped when attempting to use data that do not actually assist with the planning process. In fact, this can be one of the challenges with implementation of a long-term assessment process; many participants will have been frustrated with attempts that fell short, simply because the data used was inaccurate, incomplete, or attempted to answer a different set of questions. To minimize those frustrations, it is best to clearly identify what you seek to discern, develop questions and opportunities that address those goals, and then analyze the data with the entire process in mind.

    If you have the opportunity to revise or rebuild the assessment process in your area, these steps can assist in providing a useful and applicable process, which will not only be a valuable asset to you and your faculty, but will also address the needs of the offices on your campus that will report results to other entities.

## Start with the End in Mind

Program-level assessment is, not surprisingly, tied to programs, degrees, or processes that are more global than individual in scope. While it is absolutely necessary to know how effective a particular class is, that information is only a small part of the overall structure used to measure the effectiveness of a program. An assessment model that begins by asking, "What do we want our students to be able to do well upon graduation?" is more likely to produce reportable information and identify areas for celebration or improvement than one built on "Our students do well in Course A, Course B, and Course C; what does that make them capable of doing?" A specific example of this would be determining that, at the end of their Theater Direction studies, students will be able to provide evidence of proficiency in: lighting a stage for various production styles; directing colleagues in preparation of the production; leading design, construction, and placement of all sets, props, and costumes; marketing materials in support of advertisement for the production; and any other related areas the faculty deem necessary to show competency. If the opposite direction had been taken in preparing the assessment, students would be given opportunities to show proficiency in lighting, rigging, costuming, marketing, stage direction, and others, but not an opportunity to show how each area comes together to provide evidence of program completion. While neither is inherently incorrect, the former structure allows faculty to discern strengths and weaknesses of program elements, departments to use results to support student placement in the workforce or graduate programs, and students to gain insight into responsibilities and expectations of employment in the discipline.

Programs holding or seeking membership in one of the Arts Accreditation organizations (NASAD, NASD, NASM, NAST) are accustomed to providing evidence showing how their programs meet standards and proficiencies in both content and methodology. While this information is vital, not only for the accreditation process but for the formation of academic and artistic standards on your campus, the same information is not always what the Assessment Office will want or need. This is not to say that one process is better than another or that one entity should be compelled or expected to accept data intended for another. However, it is certainly possible to craft assessment measures so that they can gather data that will be useful in reports to a variety of offices and agencies, or to gather enough data in enough ways that allows a program to craft reports that are appropriate for diverse audiences and reporting structures.

## Use Clearly Defined Rubrics

The use of rubrics is not new to the evaluation process in the Arts, but the definition and clarity of such measurement has gone through significant refinement in the last decade. In assessment, a rubric is a guide to measuring the level to which a particular outcome's presence can be identified. The use of rubrics in the Arts is particularly helpful, since so much of our subject is highly subjective. By describing much of the aesthetic process using measurable terms, the use of rubrics allows the evaluator to describe aspects of a performance, event, or assignment in terms that take much of the subjectivity out of the process, while still allowing for that subjectivity to be present. For example, a musical performance described in terms of "successfully including tone that is full, consistent throughout the expected register and not detracting from the overall presentation" is more likely to be understood both in and out of the discipline than one merely described as "uses beautiful tone." While both evaluations could describe the same performance, the former description includes an assessment of elements of the desired outcome that allow at least some precision to be assigned beyond merely using adjectives.

## Potential Pitfalls

As with any process, there are potential problems along the way. Fortunately, many of these can be identified early in the planning process and controlled for with thoughtful planning and implementation. While each campus's (and likely each program's) process and results will be unique, there are some issues that will likely come up across many instances.

### Using Assessment as Proof rather than Planning

As discussed earlier, the best way to utilize a well-crafted assessment process is in the planning, review, and improvement of whatever is being assessed (courses, programs, administrative processes, etc.). Unfortunately, whether because of the need for immediate feedback, the desire to get the process done with as quickly as possible, or the general lack of understanding of effective uses, all too often data is collected that either does not answer the intended query, does not provide any useful feedback into how or what to change, or informs only the most minimal, and sometimes trivial, matters. Any of these results can allow a sense of frustration to infect the assessment process, and that sense can be hard to counteract or move away from.

## Using Final Course Grades as a Measure of Success

While it may be possible to utilize final grades in a course as data for
assessment, experts generally discourage the practice. The most compelling
reason to stay away from this is that the final grade often includes non-
content elements that influence the grade, such as attendance, class
participation, attending guest lectures, etc. While these are certainly
appropriate to include in the student's grade, they do not speak to acquisition
or understanding of content, therefore become unreliable in showing level of
mastery. A course that only includes measures of content mastery in a final
grade is an option, but it would be just as relevant to report the mastery level
as a unique element, so the final grade again becomes somewhat unnecessary,
at least in terms of the assessment report.

## Using Formative Measures at a Summative Stage

As previously defined, formative data are intended to show success along the
way. When such information is shared with the intent to show completion of
a process, it can misrepresent student success or completion. As mentioned
above, it would be inappropriate to suggest that students who have met
minimum expectations in an introductory skills class are ready to complete a
program. Likewise, a program that only evaluates students at the end of the
first course in a sequence is potentially setting itself up for hard discussions
with students, parents, and upper administration, who could easily question
the need for additional courses in the sequence if the only thing that matters
is a successful evaluation in the first course. While these are but two examples,
each would have been controlled for with a better understanding of the place
for and use of formative measures rather than summative measures.

## Incorporating "Non-Expert" Opinions in Assessment

Since our artforms serve a variety of purposes on our campuses, it is
appropriate to include a variety of measures to assess success across those
purposes. While valid, it can be difficult to incorporate the opinions of non-
experts (audience members or gallery patrons) into the process without
experiencing difficulties. One of the problems stems from the makeup of
the audience; the audience at a senior dance or music recital is likely to be
disproportionately comprised of friends and family, therefore the objectivity
of the reviewers may not be valid. Another stems from the overall subjectivity
of the performance our disciplines. While the faculty and other experts have

a valid sense of what success looks, feels, and sounds like in our disciplines, an amateur consumer may have a drastically different sense of that success. While this range is healthy and, in fact, is yet another reason to include the arts on our campuses, it also leads to data that can either be confounding to that provided in more expert settings, or may be of little use in assessing the success of a particular program or process. Finally, since our disciplines often include at least an introductory sense of using art to comment on society/culture, the results of that commenting, or recreating the comments of the original creator, can have audiences judging the comment rather than the performance medium used to make the comment. So, the gathering of audience or patron feedback is absolutely valid in the educational process, including the same results in the assessment of programs or courses can have drawbacks that may not be helpful to the overall goals of assessment.

### Stopping at One Example of Success

A potentially challenging characteristic of assessment in the arts is that, due to the relatively low student-teacher ratio and other factors inherent in our instructional models, assessing outcomes may show success quickly. Again, to an outside viewer, it could appear that goals are not set properly, methods are weak, or other matters are not interacting properly, but it is quite likely that our students are meeting our expectations well, thoroughly and efficiently. This is where a Continuous Improvement model can be utilized. When a particular goal is met, look for another, similar goal, or perhaps a subset of the goal which has already been met, in order to analyze more deeply and potentially provide even richer assessment data. For example, if instrumental music students consistently meet benchmarks for overall success in performance juries, focus on a particular area for additional measurement, such as sight-reading, repertoire from a specific style period, or similar. While these measures may show the same level of success (and therefore can be celebrated along with the original information,) they may also identify an area that, while not causing the overall success rate to decline, could be improved to further allow success for the students involved. Similarly, investigating understanding of time periods within an overall history sequence in any of our disciplines can serve to identify areas of understanding that can be improved by additional instruction and projects.

### In Closing

While the assessment of courses and programs in the arts can be a challenge, the results can provide valuable insight into effective instruction, interactions with campus and community, and many other useful metrics. Finding ways

to share information with colleagues and to construct assessment tools in order to provide the most useful information regarding your program will be beneficial in both short-term and long-term ways.

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**David Scott** is Professor of Music and Associate Dean of the College of Humanities, Social Sciences and Arts at Texas A&M University-Commerce. In addition to his administative role, his on-campus duties include teaching graduate courses in Music Education. Prior to his appointment with the College, he served as Head of the Department for Music for six years. Before joining the faculty at A&M-Commerce, Dr. Scott spent 14 years as Director of Bands and Head of the Department of Art and Music at Angelo State University in San Angelo, TX, and he also served six years as Director of Bands, Chair of the Woodwind, Brass and Percussion Division and Associate Professor of Music at the University of Wisconsin-Superior. Dr. Scott holds Bachelor's degrees in both Music Education and Music Performance from Baylor University, and a Master's degree in Instrumental Conducting and Ph.D. in Music Education from The Ohio State University.

## *SALAAM*: TRANSFORMING INDIVIDUALS
## AND COMMUNITIES THROUGH ARTS-BASED
## INTERCULTURAL LEARNING

Among the many intrinsic impacts that audiences attribute to arts events are their unique capacities to captivate and inspire, to create new perspectives and stimulate both mind and spirit.[1] In response, arts presenters aspire not just to entertain but to "transform" – presumably, to facilitate for our audiences a fresh perspective that adds value to their lives. But how realistic is this aspiration, and what are its practical implications? How do we define our terms and hold ourselves accountable? How can we know that our events surpass the just memorable, even impactful, to be truly transformative? And transformative of whom – individual audience members, or can we also positively change the ways those individuals interact with one another to shape a community?

We regularly observe how arts experiences spark curiosity, raise questions and start conversations; in fact, many of us highlight these impacts in our seasonal marketing materials. In the context of higher education, however, impactful experiences themselves are not the main or only desired outcome. We make decisions about arts programming, curricula and community outreach that are deeply informed by the institutional missions of our universities as well as the particular needs of our students, campuses and communities. For us, the arts-based "transformation" we seek goes beyond giving our audiences an enjoyable and gratifying evening, to include educating, informing, and building relationships among students, faculty, staff and the broader community. This kind of transformation requires ongoing effort, reciprocal relationships, and takes longer than one enchanting evening's performance.

*Salaam*: *Exploring Muslim Cultures* at Virginia Tech was a multi-year, multidisciplinary arts project that aimed to harness the transformational power of ongoing arts activities to promote intercultural engagement among students, faculty, staff and the community. Through performances, residencies and participatory art-making with exemplary artists, students and others in the wider Virginia Tech community gained a deeper understanding of the beauty and multiplicity of Muslim-majority world cultures. While there were plenty of transcendent moments, the project's most transformative effects were not accomplished through a single arresting performance or work of aesthetic transcendence, but rather in the multiple opportunities it provided for individuals to interact around the theme of Muslim cultures, over time, in diverse ways. In addition to showcasing underrepresented cultures, facilitating

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[1]  See Kevin McCarthy et al., 2004.

intercultural learning and fostering community relationships, *Salaam* provides an example of how the arts offer a doorway into public dialogue that many feel disempowered to enter.

### Why Focus on Arts From Muslim-Majority Cultures?

What role can the arts play in combating bias against marginalized groups in American society? Bleich (2011, 1585) offers a working definition for the imperfect term "Islamophobia," as "indiscriminate negative attitudes or emotions directed at Islam or Muslims." Like other forms of bias, it is based in a generalized and undifferentiated stereotype applied to an individual who is perceived, accurately or not, to be a member of a feared or hated group. The Building Bridges program of the Doris Duke Foundation was created to combat bias against Muslims in the United States in the years following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Foregrounding the arts of Muslim-majority societies, the grantors reasoned, would help to humanize and transform negative attitudes toward Islam and Muslims in American society. The specific branch of Duke Foundation initiative that provided the funding for *Salaam* (Building Bridges: Arts Culture and Society, administered by the Association for Performing Arts Presenters[2]) solicited proposals from university-based organizations, building campus-community partnerships engaging a target population of young people (born after 1980).

Like other universities, Virginia Tech professes a campus-wide commitment to diversity and inclusion and has developed an extensive administrative infrastructure to support students and faculty from underrepresented groups. The *InclusiveVT* initiative, for example, is driven both by the university's core values as a public, land-grant university, as well as the expectations of faculty, staff, and students. From their 2014 survey of all incoming freshmen, Virginia Tech's Office of Assessment and Evaluation found that among 1,669 respondents (one-third of the entire class), 93.5% of students said that they "expect their college learning experiences to prepare them for a multicultural and global work environment." However, recent figures suggest that the university may not be performing as well as it could in this regard: 61% and 35% of graduating seniors on a 2017 survey self-reported that their proficiency compared to graduates of other colleges in "knowledge of global issues" and "ability to communicate with people different than [themselves]," respectively, was "average" or lower.[3]

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[2] https://www.apap365.org/Programs/Funding-Opportunities/Building-Bridges

[3] Virginia Tech Office of Assessment and Evaluation website. https://ads.vt.edu/surveys-and-results.html. (Accessed January 4, 2019)

Additionally, not every minority group, on campus and in the national population, is equally visible or understood. Typically, universities ask incoming students to provide information such as race/ethnicity, socioeconomic background and gender identification. Religious identification is less often asked, and categories for "race/ethnicity" typically do not include a category for individuals of Middle Eastern or North African ancestry. Thus, individuals who identify as "Arab" or "Muslim" are not typically identified or supported as a group, even though these individuals are subjected to stereotyping and bias based on their visible characteristics of appearance or dress. Pew Research Center estimates that Muslims in the U.S. number 3.45 million – approximately 1% of the total U.S. population, and growing. At the same time, their research shows that 50% of adults in the U.S. agree with the statement "Islam is not part of mainstream American society." Hate crimes against Muslims have increased sharply since 2015, and half of all Muslims in the United States now say that it has become more difficult to be an American Muslim (Pew Research Center 2017).[4]

Despite the nation's founding principles of religious liberty and an unbroken history of Muslim contributions to centuries of American public life (Fadel 2018), Muslim Americans are regularly required to defend their right to belong in this country. In a time of anti-immigrant rhetoric and "travel bans" on individuals from predominantly Muslim countries, performing while Muslim, with Muslims, and even publicly representing cultural products associated with Islam have become increasingly political acts. In this context, *Salaam* (and the Building Bridges program of the Doris Duke Foundation more generally, which provided funding for *Salaam*) was an effort to correct misconceptions and stereotypes that proliferate in public discourse about Islam and Muslims.

Framed in this way, *Salaam* aimed to accomplish what Stern and Seifert (2008) and others have referred to as "arts-based civic engagement. . . activities in which civic dialogue or engagement opportunities are embedded in or connected to the arts or humanities experience" (p. 13). While the project has goals in common with the growing field of "community cultural development" (see Goldfarb 2006), including promoting social inclusion and cultural vitality, our project differed from the kinds of case studies more commonly documented in the literature, which often focus on urban settings and engage target populations that are disadvantaged or culturally marginalized (For example, Stern and Seifert 2010). In contrast, *Salaam's* target population consisted of university students of diverse backgrounds (but, as Virginia Tech students, not "disadvantaged" as a group), including Muslims and non-Muslims, members of the Corps of Cadets, as well as other individuals from the surrounding community of Blacksburg, Virginia – a

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[4] For stories about this finding's impact on Muslim youth, see Semple 2015.

medium-sized college town in rural southwest Virginia. Within this setting,
we endeavored to raise awareness of cultural and religious diversity on campus
and in the community, and to bring into dialogue individuals of different
backgrounds who might not otherwise engage with one another.

Faith, religion, and spirituality are among many cultural threads woven
into the world's artistic traditions. While statistics are unavailable, it is clear
to those of us who pay attention to the arts of Muslim-majority cultures that
they are significantly underrepresented in U.S.-based performing arts. With
such infrequent representation, existing portrayals are subject to scrutiny for
how they uphold or subvert stereotypes that are typically applied to Muslims.[5]
As arts professionals, we need to recognize the power we have, as public
presenters, not only to spark curiosity and inspiration, but also to provide
catalysts, entry points, and vocabulary for respectfully bringing members
of diverse communities into dialogue. Indeed, it is our job to do all of these
things, simultaneously.

### *Salaam*: Exploring Muslim Cultures[6]

In 2013, the same year in which Moss Arts Center opened its doors at
Virginia Tech, executive director Ruth Waalkes assembled a team of
faculty, later joined by community members and students, to brainstorm
ideas focused on the arts of Muslim societies. Although initial applications
for outside funding were unsuccessful, in 2014-15 the team produced
the "Islamic Worlds Festival," a series of programming that included
performances, lectures, comedy, music, and food. This initiative's success
demonstrated a high level of interest across campus and laid the groundwork
for further activities in this area.

*Salaam: Exploring Muslim Cultures* was funded through the Association
of Performing Arts Professional's (APAP) "Building Bridges: Arts, Culture
and Identity" program, funded by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and
Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art. As one of seven campus grantees in
the 2016-19 grant cycle, Virginia Tech was awarded $204,000 to produce a
multidisciplinary series of performances, exhibits, and arts residency activities
culminating in a community performance of original work in March 2018.

*Salaam: Exploring Muslim Cultures* aimed to raise awareness and boost
representation of Muslim-majority cultures, to foster a more inclusive

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[5] While focused on the portrayal of Muslims and Muslim cultures on television rather than in live
performance, Ryzik (2016) offers a wide-ranging and frank discussion of some of the issues of ste-
reotypes and challenges in representing Muslims in popular culture.

[6] A documentary video about the *Salaam*: Exploring Muslim Cultures project can be viewed online
at https://vimeo.com/300794616

community at Virginia Tech, and to advance best practices in applying arts toward building cross-cultural understanding and communication. Planning for *Salaam* was premised upon three key types of impactful experiences that emerged from an (unpublished) internal qualitative study of undergraduate students' experience of the 2015 Islamic Worlds Festival (Halvorson-Fried, et al. 2015). The study found the following three types of activities were highly impactful for those who participated in them:

- Hands-on, ongoing, participatory arts engagements

- Co-curricular arts engagement in courses not specifically arts-related

- Opportunities to share stories and engage in dialogue with people of diverse cultural and religious backgrounds

These findings suggested that the significant impacts of intercultural arts projects lie less in particular transformative moments (such as a performance, or a discrete work of art), but instead in offering repeated and consistent opportunities to engage in the arts of an unfamiliar culture. In view of these findings, with *Salaam* we aimed to maximize opportunities for deep and repeated engagement, over time, in dialogue and participatory arts activities. We also believed that a culminating performance, created and performed by students and community members in collaboration with artists, would encourage a level of participant engagement that was deep, authentic, and ultimately transformative.

     Led by project director Jon Catherwood-Ginn, a core planning team of 21 students, faculty, community members, and Moss Arts Center staff met consistently over a period of a year and a half to brainstorm and develop the project. At the heart of the project design for *Salaam* were residencies by three artists, each of whom identify as Muslim, representing different cultural backgrounds and arts disciplines:

- Omar Offendum, Syrian-American spoken word poet and hip-hop performer

- Saba Taj, Pakistani-American mixed media visual artist

- Karim Nagi, Egyptian-American musician and folk dance performer

The residencies were structured so that each artist came to campus three times during the 2017-18 academic year, for a period of a week each time.

The first visit included an outdoor performance near student residence halls to raise awareness and engage students with the project. During each visit, the artists visited academic classes, conducted hands-on creative workshops, and spent time with each other and the project team to build the culminating *Salaam* event. The two musical artists collaborated with Itraab (Virginia Tech's Arabic music ensemble), and with the VT Percussion Ensemble, to develop pieces for the performance. Omar Offendum mentored students in poetry workshops and in the recitation of poetry in Arabic. Students and community members were invited to free public workshops, in which participants were mentored by the residency artists in a creative process and encouraged to create work to share in the *Salaam* culminating event. The project also included a new academic course, offered in the spring semester of 2018, called "Islam, Art and Social Change." Co-taught by faculty members in History and Arabic Studies, the course introduced students to Muslim cultures and civilizations through the lens of visual and performing arts, poetry, literature and popular culture, and required students to undertake their own creative project related to course themes.

*Salaam:* Exploring Muslim Cultures culminated in an original performance at Moss Arts Center on March 17, 2018. The event featured the artists-in-residence alongside students and community members performing music, dance and poetry. On display in the lobby were tapestries, inspired by Islamic stories and created by students and community members who had worked with Saba Taj. The performance was attended by an audience of approximately 400 drawn from Virginia Tech as well as the wider community. In total, we estimate that over 3000 individuals engaged with *Salaam* in 2017-18. Again, it is important to note that this number represents engagements through a wide array of campus events, exhibits, performances, workshops and classroom visits. The cumulative impact of numerous and varied engagements by a large number of individuals (many of whom engaged with *Salaam* in more than one way) was noteworthy and, in many circumstances, truly transformative.

## Methods[7]

Research on the impacts of *Salaam: Exploring Muslim Cultures* was led by Research Fellow Anne Elise Thomas with graduate assistant Katy Shepard and two other graduate students who assisted with data collection. We undertook a qualitative research design that included participant observation

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[7] All research with human subjects referenced in this article was approved by the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (IRB numbers 15-216, 17-741, 17-898 and 17-1237).

at nearly all residency activities, as well as qualitative surveys and focus groups with seven groups of 3-6 students who engaged with *Salaam* on a repeated basis. I also interviewed certain key project staff who were within the age range of our target population (ages 18-35). The focus groups and interview data were transcribed and coded according to key themes identified by members of the research team. All of the following italicized passages represent direct quotations from students and other *Salaam* participants.

### Transforming Individuals

Recent national survey data indicates that more than 60% of Americans report they "seldom" or "never" have conversations with Muslims and in fact may have never even met a Muslim (Cooper 2017). It comes as little surprise, then, that many of the students who engaged with *Salaam* did not have much or, in some cases, any experience with people from Muslim cultures. In surveys from classroom visits with *Salaam* artists, some students indicated that it was their first substantive exposure to the arts and artists from Muslim-majority cultures:

> *I really enjoyed it, and it truly opened my eyes to a Syrian-American. I've never heard so much Arabic at once before and it was really cool. I don't interact very often with those who have different religious, moral, and personal beliefs, and I found it extremely enlightening to actually meet and listen to the perspective of someone who lives a life that is both extremely different and extremely similar to mine.*

In undertaking the *Salaam* project with its goal of increasing intercultural understanding, we were very aware of the potential for selection bias – that the students and other individuals who would elect to attend project activities would be those who already had an interest in Muslim-majority cultures, or who were particularly attracted to cross-cultural learning opportunities. For this reason, we intentionally planned activities with groups that we thought would otherwise be unlikely to engage with the project.

One of these groups was the Virginia Tech Percussion Ensemble, consisting of undergraduate music majors. These students were already accomplished musicians and thus well prepared to learn concrete, performance-based skills from percussionist Karim Nagi. While the students had previously encountered "world music" traditions in their performance curriculum (through their professor's deep interest in West African percussion and, notably, other arts engagement events through the Moss Arts Center), none of them had extensive familiarity with Arabic percussion traditions, or with specific Arab or Muslim cultures. Indeed, focus group

discussions with these students indicated that their academic study and performance of music had focused almost exclusively on performance-based skills, with little exposure to discourses of cultural identity and diversity.

Their experiences with *Salaam* were invigorating, physically challenging and intellectually broadening. In workshops focusing on different percussion instruments (primarily frame drum and tambourine), Nagi asked them to add bodily movement to their drumming technique, which each student identified as particularly challenging, but also a significant takeaway that they expect to further apply as percussionists. As one student articulated in an interview:

> *Yeah, I think that adding the entire body really like – when we did it in the session it actually like solidified the rhythm and made it feel more, like, together and, like it had more rhythmic integrity because we added our whole bodies and I'd never realized like adding your body to your playing more could affect it in such a way? So I think that helped us all, like I said, realize that if you use more of your body then it can bring the music more to life than just like using your hands like we were used to before that. So that changed a lot of perspective for me, definitely.*

By putting the rhythms from an unfamiliar culture not only in their minds and in their hands, but also their bodies, the cultural experience was literally embodied for these percussionists in a way that was powerful and transformative.

These students also gained perspective in seeing new potential for instruments they already felt familiar with. One percussionist was awestruck at Nagi's performance skills on *sagat* (finger cymbals):

> *I would've loved to have had an hour lesson on finger cymbal technique, because that was awesome, I'd never seen anything like that. . . So that's what intrigued me, I was like, 'wow, ok, finger cymbals are, like, hard to learn now!' I couldn't believe how many different sounds he could get out of that instrument."*[8]

Another percussionist, a music education student, related that the frame drum skills Nagi imparted were immediately applicable in his student teaching:

> *One thing that I really enjoyed, from what [Nagi] taught us, was how to actually play the frame drums. Because, this past semester I've been*

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8 For an example of Nagi performing on sagat (finger cymbals), see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6G5T_hWWrF4.

*interning at a local elementary school, in Roanoke, and they have these frame drums, and [the classroom teachers] just thought they were regular drums, but I could actually teach them, like, how to use them. And that was a nice element to be able to pass on, because, kind of the whole point of culturally responsive teaching is being able to use these instruments in the way they should be used.*

Examples like this illustrate one of the ongoing impact of *Salaam* activities on communities – through *Salaam*, this future music educator has gained culturally-specific knowledge and skills which will inform his (and likely others') teaching in the years ahead.

A less concrete, but equally powerful area of impact for several of these percussionists was gaining an awareness of a "meditative" element of Arabic percussion performance, which they felt they could apply to their percussion practice more generally. In his final workshop session with the percussionists, Nagi explained how the particular rhythmic pattern they were performing at the time was imbued in certain Arab cultures with meditative and spiritual meaning. While Nagi did not explicitly link his remarks, or the rhythm he was presenting, to a particular tradition within the Arab world (such as practices of Sufi *dhikr* or the spiritual healing practices of Egyptian *zar* ritual), several of the students found personal relevance in the idea, encountered in different cultural settings, that drumming could be used for meditative or mental health purposes:

> *[A] lot of the stuff we did is religiously-oriented, and a lot of it is ways for prayers, and a lot of it is like meditation, and I thought that was really cool, and, there would be times that [Nagi] would, like, stand in front of us and be like, "If you're ever having a bad day, and you just aren't feeling it and, like, don't go do anything crazy, just like, go play drums" and that – like, you hear "go play music if you're upset" a lot, but that was really cool and enlightening.*

Another student framed her takeaway from the same moment slightly differently:

> *Yeah that was also probably my favorite part, was that, like, little talk he gave us, about how, if you're. . . drumming and doing motions with that, that you really can't think about anything else, because you have to think about that coordination, then after you're done thinking about that then hopefully, you'll be over whatever grief or something that you've had previously.*

For these students, this specific example of using music for meditative and healing purposes, grounded in Arabic percussion tradition, was useful and revelatory. While these specific comments point to changes in perspective that may seem interesting but modest in scope, I would argue that in an intercultural encounter, it may be precisely the accumulation of such small but useful insights that continue to impact, and eventually transform, an individual's understanding and attitude about the value of engaging with individuals with different cultural experience.

## Transforming Community

Although Blacksburg, a town in rural southwest Virginia, has not historically had a large Muslim community, this population is growing. The town currently is home to two different mosques, and the campus community includes two Muslim student organizations with membership of over 200 students and an active and visible presence on campus. Notably, the university is not the only driver of recent growth in Blacksburg's Muslim population (as had been the case in the past). Scientists and researchers of Muslim backgrounds have been attracted to increasing business and entrepreneurial opportunities in Blacksburg. In addition, in 2016, an interfaith group called the "Blacksburg Refugee Partnership" was formed to sponsor and support the resettlement in Blacksburg of international refugees. Currently, several families from Syria and Afghanistan have settled in Blacksburg, and members of the *Salaam* project planning team made it a priority to engage these families with project activities. A special event was planned for two of the residency artists to share a meal and present an informal performance with the families; this event was deeply impactful for both the families and the artists. In addition, the resettled families were invited to all public *Salaam* events, and one Syrian teenager was a consistent participant and performed on stage with Itraab. Members of the resettled families were deeply moved by engaging with the resident artists, and felt a profound connection to home through the performances of Omar Offendum and Karim Nagi.

In considering how intercultural arts projects can advance a more inclusive community, one of *Salaam's* most intriguing impacts relates to individuals' observations of the diverse audience for the culminating *Salaam* event. A graduate student who acted in a staffing role for the Salaam project remarked how, at the performance:

> *I think I was surprised to see how many different cultures – I'm not positive if they all identify as Muslims, but I think I was just surprised with the*

> *amount of different cultures that are in Blacksburg, and . . . seeing that at*
> *the performance, whether they're in the audience, or whether they're in the*
> *performance, I was definitely surprised by that.*

One undergraduate student described her experience of seeing the audience
for the *Salaam* performance, and imagining how it looked from the
perspective of a newcomer to the community:

> *And so when I went in there, I was like, this is like a great community. .*
> *. it looked like people feel like they felt so welcome, and they're coming, like*
> *especially refugees, they're coming to this like place that's completely different*
> *from what they know. . . I hope what they got from the performance was*
> *that they are truly welcomed. And I personally thought it was just going*
> *to be a performance that like our class went to, and other faculty and stuff*
> *like that. I even saw President [of Virginia Tech, Timothy] Sands there too,*
> *and I thought like that was really important that he showed up, because*
> *then he's representing, like, we represent, well like this class and the larger*
> *community represents like acceptance and things like that. So, it really*
> *touched me that it was crowded.*

While the resettled families were not publicly recognized or welcomed
from the stage, a surprisingly large number of audience members seemed
to understand who this large, multigenerational Syrian family was, and the
significance of their being present at this event. Noting the diversity in the
audience, one percussionist mused about what someone from another culture
might observe about their performance:

> *I think one of my biggest observations of that was the crowd . . . (the lights*
> *were kind of bright but) I saw a bunch of different people that looked like*
> *they came from different places, and, I don't know if we necessarily changed*
> *any minds, but I feel like . . . us exposing our combination of the two things,*
> *our culture with Karim's, could lead them to go out into the world and*
> *tell them like, "hey, we saw this really cool thing, where people that aren't*
> *necessarily Muslim or from the Arabic culture could do it too, be involved*
> *with it just as readily.*

Each of these anecdotes from individual students represents an act of
imagination, of attempting to understand and empathize with a stranger's
experience, and by this action, overcoming some of the "strangeness" that is
a primary obstacle in intercultural encounters. While a detailed examination
of this mental activity is beyond the scope of this article, I would suggest
that these acts of imagining another's perspective are constitutive of the

ways an individual personalizes and reifies the abstract idea of belonging to a community. In this context, my point is to underscore that it is not only the arts activities themselves that are transformative, but also the groups of people that are brought together through and around the arts, and the ways these groups perceive one another. An event can inspire people to re-imagine their sense of belonging to a community.

For other individuals, the experience of performing on the stage, and of sharing their story with a community, was deeply personally transformative. One Muslim student (who wears *hijab*, a headscarf that some Muslim women choose to wear) described in a focus group several incidents in which she had confronted prejudice and racism during her time on the Virginia Tech campus. For the culminating *Salaam* performance, this student delivered an original poem she wrote about wearing the scarf and its meanings for her. She had initially been hesitant to perform a piece carrying such intimate and personal meaning, but was strongly encouraged by the artists and her professor. The poem (excerpted) states:

> *See, it, is much more than one thousand threads*
> *It is my ancestors*
> *It is my mother*
> *Every time I ask God what heaven looks like*
> *I see my mother's face in the night sky*
> *Her eyes twinkle, like the constellations*
> *It is my grandmother's soft embrace*
> *Her rattling bones wrapped around me, shielding me from any harm*
> *. . .*
> *Know this: it is not a noose around my neck*
> *It does not suffocate me*
> *It does not stay on while I shower*
> *It does not feel heavy*
> *Olive today, maybe lavender tomorrow*
> *I choose to, every single day, so that I can pray*
> *And praise God, wherever I am[9]*

After the performance, one (non-Muslim) audience member expressed to her how deeply affected she was by the poem, saying that she had never heard this kind of first-person explanation of the meanings of *hijab*. The stranger's reaction surprised the student but also gave her a deep sense of encouragement in representing her identity in such a visible and often

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[9] The full poem, as performed, may be viewed online at https://youtu.be/NKdBJmKTwi4.

difficult way. Reflecting on what it had meant to her to participate in Salaam, she related,

> *I think that it reminded me that I am capable. Because with everything going on, as much as you don't want [biased attitudes toward Muslims] to bother you or as much as you can pretend [they don't] . . . it still affects you . . . I'll remember that, that no matter what, I can [do it], I'm fine.*

This student gained from performing in *Salaam* a durable sense of confidence in her abilities, and in expressing her identity. Her performance likewise transformed her community, as audience members gained insight into this young woman's experience, so that they had deeper understanding of her values and her choices.

### Transforming the Arts Field Through Its Leaders (Current and Future)

In projects designed to serve students and communities, evaluation efforts are typically directed at, and limited to, these target groups. With *Salaam*, we also observed profound impacts upon those who directed, planned, and staffed project events. In interviews, staff and graduate students involved with *Salaam* shared reflections and insights they gained through the project. As this group collectively spent significant time with the residency artists, and observed and participated in *Salaam* in a variety of roles and settings, it follows that this group would be deeply impacted by the project. Indeed, I would argue that it is this area in which the *Salaam* project will have its most significant transformative effects, as graduate students and younger professionals will continue to draw upon their experience with *Salaam* in their future roles as arts leaders.

Two students from Virginia Tech's master of fine arts program in Arts Leadership, as well as one from the Alliance for Political, Ethical and Cultural Thought (ASPECT) interdisciplinary doctoral program, were assigned to work on the *Salaam* project as part of their graduate assistantships. Prior to *Salaam*, none of these students had particular knowledge of Islam, or even acquaintance with individuals from Muslim-majority cultures. During *Salaam*, these students were party to some of the most extensive and in-depth intercultural interactions – their own, with residency artists (escorting them to campus engagements and staffing artist workshops) as well as between the artists, students and participants (observing and collecting surveys at classes and workshops, and conducting interviews and focus groups with these students later). All three graduate students also played integral roles in the *Salaam* culminating performance – one participated as a performer, one acted as stage manager, and the third

played a dual role as performer and manager. And all three reported deeply personal impacts from *Salaam* that will inform their future careers in the arts.

The two Arts Leadership students were initially attracted to the *Salaam* project because of its emphases on community engagement and intercultural dialogue. Each of the three graduate students articulated feeling (prior to their work on *Salaam*) that they had very limited knowledge about Muslim cultures, which made them feel unequipped to enter into dialogue and build connections with Muslims. *Salaam* gave them a "way in" - a context and opportunity to get to know individuals from Muslim-majority cultures, and to enter into dialogue with them via the arts –a familiar, comfortable, and inspiring topic for each of them. As one of the students described,

> Because I think, you talk a lot about people being scared of the unfamiliar, and I think arts are such, kind of an innocuous way to sneak people into that intercultural activity, because, what can be dangerous or scary about making a mosaic together, or learning this song together? And through that act of learning you've not only made a connection with the other people in the room but you've learned something about their culture. . . I think it's so important, because we need to find ways for people to come in at their own level, and I think art is such a great way to do that, and such an important way to do that. And so this project, I think really tried to offer those different levels of engagement, whether it was, you know, "you don't need to know anything about Arabic percussion, but come to this thing, and we'll hand you a drum!"

Each graduate student spoke of challenging themselves and overcoming their initial discomfort as they entered new spaces (two of these students were inspired to visit the mosque), built relationships, participated in unfamiliar modes of cultural expression, asked questions, and gained deeper personal understanding of the experiences of Muslims in America.

All three students also identified ways that their experience with *Salaam* will shape their future careers. For the student quoted above, the experience illuminated ways to build communities by providing opportunities and different paths for individuals of various backgrounds to participate in intercultural arts projects. The other Arts Leadership student valued the example of *Salaam* as an arts project that grew out of and successfully engaged an existing community, and felt that this approach will be replicable in her future work, likely at a non-profit arts organization. The third student found focus and inspiration in *Salaam* for her own practice as a visual artist, and developed strategies for engaging in dialogue about identity through

making art.

Beyond the graduate students (ostensibly still in their "formative" years), *Salaam* also provided Moss Arts Center staff with a unique intercultural encounter. None of the full-time staff of Moss Arts Center identify as Muslim. Like the graduate students, members of *Salaam* project staff articulated feeling initially hesitant to ask questions that might reveal an uninformed opinion or inadvertent cultural insensitivity. Throughout the project, they felt increasingly empowered to initiate dialogue with and advocate for Muslims and other individuals from unfamiliar cultural backgrounds.

For those on the project leadership team, it was necessary to develop a deeper and more nuanced understanding of issues of importance in dialogue around representing Muslims in American public spaces. During the planning process, there were frequently strong differences of opinions between individuals identifying as Muslim about which artists and traditions would be a part of *Salaam* programming. Some individuals invoked an orthodox "mainstream" of Islam that did not accept representing certain topics (such as Sufism, feminism or queerness) under an umbrella of "Muslim cultures." Ultimately, the majority of planning team members felt that Moss Arts Center had a responsibility to be as inclusive as possible in representing Muslim identities and experiences, although it was important to hear various perspectives, and to have these discussions publicly and transparently. Negotiating between opposing positions taken by individual Muslims in the community required Moss Arts Center staff members to make difficult choices about which artists and traditions to include in programming and highlight on stage, with the knowledge that all members of the Muslim community would not agree with these choices. Needless to say, engaging respectfully, thoughtfully and with recognition of the diversity of opinions within any community is crucially important in intercultural arts programming.

## Discussion, Conclusions, and Further Directions

Over multiple years, *Salaam: Exploring Muslim Cultures* at Virginia Tech (and the Islamic Worlds Festival that preceded it) has had a transformative impact on the students and community members who have engaged as participants and audience members. It has transformed individual lives by offering a wide variety of ongoing opportunities for arts-based intercultural engagement. Moreover, there is evidence of transformation at the community level, as participants and audience members indicated shifts in the ways they perceive and interact with others around them.

In considering how the arts can transform lives and communities, it

is important not to limit our view of what that transformation may look like. While the "wow" factor of a single performance event or arts exhibit may be powerful and memorable, fostering repeated, consistent arts-based intercultural engagement maximizes the potential to build knowledge and relationships that impact individuals and communities in ways that are deeper and more durable. This view is supported by Kevin McCarthy et. al's (2004) observation that "frequent participants [in the arts] are those whose experiences engage them in multiple ways – mentally, emotionally, and socially. The more intense that engagement is, the more gratifying the experience" (p. 57). As with the "gateway experiences" identified by McCarthy et al. (53), individuals may initially be drawn to participate in an intercultural arts experience because of an expectation of enjoyment or pleasure. More substantive impacts (in this case, intercultural knowledge, relationships, or increased empathy) are more likely to result from repeated or continued engagement. Community impacts accrue as individuals develop relationships and social capital as a result of their engagement, and the accumulated shifts in perspectives can eventually impact culture and cultural policy.

As in impact assessment in the arts more broadly, it can be difficult or impossible to document or measure these traces over time. It is much easier to administer a survey to gather individual audience members' response to a particularly inspiring performance immediately after that event than it is to track what is retained and how individuals' refer back to a more complex set of experiences over intervals of time.[10] Even when this can be accomplished, the data can be largely anecdotal and self-selective.[11] It is clear that further research is needed to gather robust data from comparable projects to determine the unique assets and avenues the arts offer to advance intercultural engagement and dialogue.

As I referenced earlier, the work that led to *Salaam* was premised, at least in part, on the theory that engaging with the arts and culture of a marginalized group has the potential to positively impact the attitudes of a broader public toward that group. In undertaking this project we aspired that we could possibly, through the arts, affect the attitudes of individuals who harbored negative and even "Islamophobic" perspectives. Our research has not produced evidence of this kind of result. What the *Salaam* research

[10] This assessment project did include collection of (qualitative) survey data at all performances, workshops, and class visits. We intend to collect additional qualitative data in Spring 2019 (one year following project activities) from those students who were most deeply involved in *Salaam*.

[11] The need for better tools in analyzing and assessing the impacts of arts engagement has been the subject of a great deal of productive discussion in recent years. For an excellent summary of this discussion, as well as useful prescriptive advice, I refer readers to Kim Dunphy's chapter "A Holistic Framework of Evaluation for Arts Engagement" in *Making Culture Count: The Politics of Cultural Measurement* (London: Palgrave, 2015).

does suggest is that arts experiences can provide an entry point for those who have little or no prior knowledge of these groups or cultures to begin to build a store of understanding and experience, to differentiate their generalized perceptions and to provide specific grounding for further dialogue and intercultural communication. As one of the graduate students who was deeply involved with the project expressed,

> *I think so much of [my experience with Salaam] has been kind of wrestling with what makes me uncomfortable, and why, and leaning into that. . . So this has been definitely a journey, for me, and I'm not anywhere near a finish line . . . And if this is something that I decided to make a larger part of my life, it could happen, and there's ways to connect beyond what I had thought there were.*

It can be hard to initiate dialogue about cultural difference. For many, the prospect of engaging an acquaintance in conversation to learn about their culture can be intimidating. Others may feel they already know enough, that there is no need to engage. In contrast, arts experiences invite people into the same room and assemble a transient but tangible representation of "community." Together they may experience aesthetic enjoyment, engage in collaborative creation, or gain fresh insight into another person's perspective. For each *Salaam* participant who wrestled with discomfort in an intercultural encounter, and eventually realized "ways to connect beyond what I had thought there were," the project achieved its most important goal.

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# PROMOTING INTERDISCIPLINARITY:
## ITS PURPOSE AND PRACTICE IN ARTS PROGRAMMING

Each discipline provides education and society with a unique perspective of the world, yet independently, disciplines can only go so far when attempting to address our greatest challenges. To go beyond the limits of the discipline, one must employ interdisciplinary approaches, which include being driven by complex questions, seeking collaboration from multiple disciplines, and integrating their understandings by finding common ground. The arts create an amazing opportunity for interdisciplinary exploration and development with other disciplines which benefits arts leaders and educators, students and departments in higher education, and the local community. This article seeks to explore interdisciplinarity and its benefits by providing diverse, successful case studies including a performance salon, talk back, symposium, recital, and exhibition where the arts, science, religion, culture, and technology work together to enhance one another and lead to fruitful results.

### Introduction

Albert Einstein began playing the violin at age six, and through two world wars and two marriages, fifteen violins, all affectionately called "Lina," and the most universe-altering discoveries of the twentieth century, music was the genius' constant companion. "I live my daydreams in music. I see my life in terms of music," he said.[1] His daydreams led him into thought experiments about riding on a light beam or an elevator through space. To Einstein, Mozart's sonatas were so perfect in their form that it seemed his music had always existed in the universe, and that Mozart had been its discoverer. His lifelong endeavor, in the words of biographer Walter Isaacson, was to discover his own piece of this "harmonious reality underlying the laws of the universe."[2] Music was the key unlocking those secrets. Supposed to have been responding to the origin of the theory of relativity, Einstein said, "It occurred to me by intuition, and music was the driving force behind that intuition. My discovery was the result of musical perception."[3]

　　Interdisciplinarity refers to a way of thinking about and studying the world that privileges creative connections between multiple ways of thinking, connections like the ones Einstein saw between Mozart's sonatas and the nature of light or the space-time continuum. Interdisciplinarity invites collaboration as a rule rather than an exception and offers a way forward as

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[1] Justin Wildridge, "Albert Einstein: His Musical Life," CMuse. December 2017, https://www.cmuse.org/albert-einstein-music/.

[2] Walter Isaacson, *Einstein: His Life and Universe*, (New York: Simon & Shuster, 2007), 3.

[3] Justin Wildridge, "Albert Einstein: His Musical Life," December 2017, CMuse, https://www.cmuse.org/albert-einstein-music/.

we grapple with challenges so grand in nature that they cannot be solved through any single lens. Performing arts leaders and educators have a unique role to play in expanding the reach of interdisciplinarity in undergraduate institutions, by which they can transform the role of arts departments at universities and a generation of future leaders.

## Interdisciplinarity Defined

Interdisciplinary research was defined in 2005 by the National Academy of Sciences as that which, "integrates information, data, techniques, tools, perspectives, concepts, and/or theories from two or more disciplines or bodies of specialized knowledge to advance fundamental understanding or to solve problems whose solutions are beyond the scope of a single discipline or area of research practice."[4] The three foundational aspects of interdisciplinarity that emerge are that interdisciplinary endeavors must revolve around a complex question, have contributions from multiple disciplines, and somehow integrate those contributions. Any interdisciplinary pursuit is driven by questions and issues that cannot be answered within a single discipline, issues like climate change, global migration, and cyber-attacks. Otherwise, there is no need to cross long-entrenched disciplinary borders. Participants from multiple disciplines bring the psychological, ecological, economic, political, and aesthetic causes and effects of a problem to light. A "multidisciplinary" approach becomes interdisciplinary when the approaches are integrated, as Newell states: "By definition, interdisciplinary study draws insights from relevant disciplines and *integrates* those insights into a more comprehensive understanding"[5].

What interdisciplinary studies researcher Allen Repko calls the "mysterious black box" of integration is creating common ground.[6] He defines interdisciplinary common ground as "one or more theories, concepts, and assumptions by which conflicting insights can be reconciled and integrated. Creating common ground involves bringing out potential commonalities underlying the conflicting and theory-based insights so that these can be reconciled and ultimately integrated."[7] Kockelmans highlights its importance: "The search for a common ground is the fundamental element of all [interdisciplinary] investigation. Without such common ground,…genuine

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[4] *Facilitating Interdisciplinary Research*, (Washington D.C.: National Academies Press, 2005), 2.

[5] William H. Newell, "A Theory of Interdisciplinary Studies," *Issues in Integrative Studies*, no. 19 (2001): 2.

[6] Allen F. Repko, "Integrating Interdisciplinarity," *Issues in Integrative Studies*, no. 25 (2007): 13.

[7] Allen F. Repko, *Interdisciplinary Research: Process and Theory*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2008), 272.

communication between those who participate in the discussion would be impossible."[8]

## Purpose: Interdisciplinarity's Benefits

Interdisciplinarity benefits individuals, organizations, and universities. The opportunity to connect multiple passions or interests frees individuals from the rigid disciplinary structure of "ivory towers" and helps develop critical thinking and creative problem solving. Creativity is vital for innovation. In the sciences, P.B. Medawar says, forming a hypothesis is "an imaginative or inspirational act."[9] Interdisciplinary events, performances, and projects feed the imagination and inspire undergraduates seeking to carve a new path for how they may influence change. For Myra Strober, Professor Emerita at Stanford, the "inherent rewards" of interdisciplinarity for foundations and businesses are creativity, productivity, and better problem-solving.[10] The National Academy of Sciences found that among university students, interdisciplinary courses, especially socially relevant ones, are popular.[11] Newell puts forward seven benefits of interdisciplinary study to the university that range from its philosophical goals to pragmatic administrative considerations:

[Interdisciplinary] courses promote desirable liberal education outcomes for students, and faculty development for their teachers. Interdisciplinary study prepares future professionals to confront the complex behaviors they will face on the job. It produces new knowledge by synthesizing insights from old knowledge about specific complex systems and by freeing scholars to ask new questions about them. It facilitates fundamental critique…and it reduces the pressure for complete "coverage" of each discipline, thus eliminating an obstacle to downsizing.[12]

In the university environment, performing arts leaders and educators collaborating with other departments increases opportunities to share resources and personnel, increases access to technology and supplies, and increases the visibility of arts departments on campus. It also creates new audiences by engaging faculty from other departments that invite their

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[8] Joseph J. Kockelmans, "The search for a…" in "Integrating Interdisciplinarity," by Allen F. Repko, *Issues in Integrative Studies*, no. 25 (2007): 15.

[9] P.B. Medawar, "An imaginative or inspirational act," in J. Linn Mackey, "Rules are Not the Way to Do Interdisciplinarity," *Issues in Integrative Studies* no. 20 (2002): 127.

[10] *Myra Strober: Interdisciplinarity: The Four-Wheel Drive Approach to Complex Problems*, video file, 14:50, posted 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yd0QlFBuZxk.

[11] *Facilitating Interdisciplinary Research,* (Washington D.C.: National Academies Press, 2005), 2.

[12] Newell, "A Theory," 5.

students to attend performances and community leaders that help spread the word. Each member of an interdisciplinary team brings the necessary depth and understanding of their discipline. Their expertise, combined with fundamental knowledge of other disciplines, allows interdisciplinary endeavors to flourish and achieve their maximum potential.

## Practice: Case Studies

Performing arts leaders and educators have the opportunity to invite people with diverse strengths to create with them by uncovering common ground that paves the way for creativity and better problem-solving. The process is more simple and natural than it may appear; collaboration helps leaders share the burden and the benefits flow organically. The process begins when you ask, "To what does this piece of art connect? What other disciplines could contribute?" Reaching out to leaders across the campus or community and developing complementary programming can elevate any part of your existing season—an art installation, music recital, dance concert, theatrical production, or a performance festival—and engage audiences on a higher level. Posing an interdisciplinary challenge in the classroom can create research and performance opportunities for students. The following case studies of an interdisciplinary salon, talk back, symposium, recital, and exhibition demonstrate how arts leaders and educators in Hampton Roads and Richmond, Virginia created dynamic interdisciplinary events for their audience and students. They explored complex questions, invited collaboration from multiple disciplines, and integrated those disciplines into a more comprehensive understanding. In doing so, they discovered common ground and reaped the benefits of inter-department relationships, community partnerships, broader audience bases, and they created dynamic educational experiences for many undergraduate students. They immersed their students and audiences in a deeper understanding of multiple disciplines by including experts in the creative process, rather than relying on their individual knowledge bases and secondary research. All of these events were part of a course or a regular season, and exploring them moves the formal case for interdisciplinarity in arts programming into practical guidance. How can interdisciplinary collaboration inspire and enrich your next season?

## 1. Theater Performance Salon

Performance salons can expand a performing arts organization's programming and add to an audience's experience. Salons bring people together through conversation and encourage questions, civil discourse, and the communication of ideas. Each salon's structure can differ greatly and

it can cover a range of interdisciplinary topics so long as its specific focus is clearly defined. When determining a salon possibility, performing arts leaders can ask the question, what other academic disciplines or community partners can connect with this event and enhance it?

TheaterCNU at Christopher Newport University in Newport News, Virginia answered that question when they produced *Silent Sky* by Lauren Gunderson and created an interdisciplinary salon to complement the production. *Silent Sky* tells the story of several female astronomers at the Harvard Observatory during the early twentieth century. The play centers around the life and work of Henrietta Leavitt, whose discovery of the period-luminosity relation enabled Edwin Hubble to prove the universe's extent beyond the Milky Way. The *Silent Sky* salon invited local speakers from the NASA/Langley Visitor Center and the local Living Museum and Planetarium along with several CNU faculty. Building community partnerships with local organizations can create lasting relationships that enhance your audience and their patrons as well. Such interdisciplinary relationships were the backbone of the *Silent Sky* salon, in which experts delivered pre-show talks for the audience illuminating a specific theme within the show. Speakers included professors in Astronomy, Physics, History, English and Art, an astronomy curator at the Virginia Living Museum, and the STEM Education Specialist at the Virginia Air and Space Center. One talk given by Dr. Anna DeJong entitled "Female Role Models Needed: How to change attitudes about women in Physics, Engineering and Computer Science" stressed the importance of encouraging girls and young women in the STEM fields.

In an interview, Dr. DeJong praised the production and salon, saying, "I wish we would see more things like this (*Silent Sky*). It's a great way to teach both young boys and young girls what it's been like in the past. The more that we can get it out there too, because even society as a whole needs to be more accepting of female scientists."[13] Dr. DeJong's salon talk and the production created a powerful forum to discuss women's contributions to science and the need for female role models to inspire future scientists.

These diverse talks deepened the interdisciplinary engagement of the production through partnerships with other academic departments and community organizations. This salon brought together artists, academics, and audience to share a conversational common ground within a public performance place.

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[13] Samantha Camiletti, "Cast Members Discover the Science Behind 'Silent'," Captain's Log (Newport News, Virginia), Nov. 11, 2015, https://issuu.com/thecaptainslog9/docs/issue_10.

## 2. Theater Festival Talk Back

Originating in 2005, the Richmond, VA Acts of Faith Festival is the largest faith-based theater festival in the United States, providing a prime example of a successful interdisciplinary event that integrates the arts and spirituality. Local theater practitioners Jeff Gallagher, Daniel Moore, and Bruce Miller joined together as a way to bring people of all faiths together in a safe space to discuss their beliefs.[14] Over twenty local, established theaters participate in the festival with associated and fringe productions as well. Sponsored in part by local churches, each production holds talk backs, engaging the audience after the performance in a discussion with the cast and director centering on the aspects of faith raised or explored in the play. Performances for festival productions are some of the most well attended in the Richmond theater community, with strong attendance on talk back show dates to participate in the Q&A session led by a festival member with the cast and director exploring the topics of faith broached by the play and the characters. The "festival is ecumenical and inclusive, assuming a very broad understanding of faith…[the] hope that folks walk away from the shows with a desire to take their faith deeper and recognize that even in our differences, we are all the same in our humanity."[15]

The Acts of Faith Festival highlights the interdisciplinary idea of exploring and addressing complex questions. From rehearsal conversations to talk backs during the run of the shows, the complex questions find active participants from various backgrounds and faiths who seek understanding of the ideas broached in the play. The plays in the festival create the common ground for audience members to discuss matters of faith. Richmond theater practitioner Zack Owen has participated in five Acts of Faith Festival productions in various capacities. Owen's commitment to the festival lies in his belief that "at its most basic level, art is about communication. It creates a safe space for us to talk about issues that are not always easy to discuss in everyday life. Religion and faith…can be taboo in everyday conversation, especially when two people disagree…This festival inspires people to step outside of their comfort zone and engage with works that they might not otherwise…When people are forced to explore difficult topics head on, some of the best breakthroughs happen."[16] The interdisciplinary Acts of Faith Festival adds value to the community, increases theater attendance, and broadens the role of local, professional theater.

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[14] "Acts of Faith Theater Festival," August 9, 2018, Acts of Faith Festival, http://www.theactsoffaith.org/about.html.
[15] "Acts of Faith Theater Festival."
[16] Zack Owen, email interview with Danielle Hartman, August 3, 2018.

### 3. Dance Symposium

A modern symposium conjures images of lecture halls, conference tables, and poster presentations, but the term comes from the ancient Greek drinking party that followed a fine meal, and in the sixteenth century referred to "a convivial gathering of the educated."[17] Ann Mazzocca and Dr. Elizabeth Moran, Professors of Dance and Art History, respectively, at CNU, have created an annual interdisciplinary symposium that draws on these roots. The Symposium on the African and Caribbean Diaspora, now in its fifth year, seeks to "educate our CNU and greater community about African and African diaspora cultures and cultural products. It seeks to explore the ways in which Africanist elements are part of our own culture and exist among us, reflecting culture that already is a part of CNU and our greater Hampton Roads community."[18] The free, public, one-day event presents scholarship in concert with music and dance performances, and has included faculty from Theater and Dance, Art and Art History, Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures, Anthropology and Sociology, and History, as well as a guest presenter from the Departments of Theater and Africana Studies at William and Mary. Mazzocca described some of the events that have comprised this "convivial gathering":

Dr. Artisia Green (Theater, Africana Studies) from William and Mary presented on the orishas and Yoruba influence in August Wilson's *Fences.* [Mazzocca's] students presented choreography in process that incorporated Africanist elements within a contemporary context including spoken word recitation of Nikki Giovanni's "Ego Tripping." Dr. Johnny Finn (Geography) has presented on Cuba and [Mazzocca's] students have presented Afro-Cuban folkloric dance. Often there is a fine art component that also speaks to the symbolism embedded within images and how those symbols reflect larger elements of religious syncretism and embodiment -- all aspects of Africanist philosophical and aesthetic approaches to being. [19]

These side-by-side lectures and performances presented an example of integration, as audience members came to a "more comprehensive understanding" of the African diaspora through multiple disciplines.[20] A lecture alone may tell audiences that African and African diaspora influences surround them and make up their own cultural landscape, but a dance performance with recognizable elements is irreplaceable for helping audiences

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[17] *Online Etymology Dictionary*, 2018 Douglas Harper, "symposium (n.)," https://www.etymonline. com/word/symposium.

[18] Ann Mazzocca, email interview with Shannon McNeely, October 21, 2017.

[19] Ann Mazzocca, email interview.

[20] Newell, "A Theory," 2.

identify those influences. A movement piece may contain within it great cultural significance, but without an expert illuminating it, the audience will see only through their current lens. Interdisciplinary integration gives audiences news tools for engaging the world around them whether it be the mural on the street corner or the new coworker across the conference room table, and it does not have to result from months-long research studies. What faculty on campus would benefit from a musical or movement-based illumination of their most recent research? What influences in your own work may others at your university have studied from different angles? The common ground that you discover in creating and presenting together may hold the seed from which an undergraduate student's performance or project grows.

## 4. Music Recital

The music recital is a mainstay of any performing arts programming and a regular feature on many college campuses. The recital fulfills many functions and provides a performance opportunity for the novice or seasoned musician or vocalist. Contemporary audiences are challenging arts organizations and educators to find innovative and interactive ways of presenting both the classical and contemporary music repertoire within the recital format. Some performing arts programmers and educators find new forms of engagement by looking through a historical lens to reveal performance contexts from the past that provides the engagement contemporary audiences are craving through integrating music and history.

Dr. Danielle Ward-Griffin, Assistant Professor of Music in the Department of Music at CNU, created an assignment for her upper level seminar class with the goal of helping students see the processes of researching and writing as vital steps to becoming articulate musicians and scholars. Ward-Griffin arranged for students to view and then select a song from the Josephine L. Hughes Collection of American sheet music at the Paul and Rosemary Trible Library at CNU. This special collection holding of over 5,000 compositions dates from 1797 to the 1940s. After viewing them, she instructed students to research and "write a 'backstory'" that both historically contextualized it and used the object as a jumping off point for telling a broader history of American music."[21] Ward-Griffin took inspiration for this assignment from a popular radio program *Backstory with the American History Guys* on National Public Radio. The program takes a given subject and then gives listeners many historical perspectives on it.

Once the assignments were complete, Ward-Griffin collaborated with

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[21] James O'Leary and Danielle Ward-Griffin, "Digging in Your Own Back Yard: Archives in the Music History Classroom," *Journal of Music History Pedagogy* 7, no. 2 (2017): 6.

the Department of Music and Amy Boykin, Instruction Librarian at Trible Library, and the students presented their research and then performed their selected works in a public history event. *Parlor Song: A Musical Soirée in the Josephine L. Hughes Collection,* was performed by candlelight in the intimate drawing room environment of the Blechman Room in the Trible Library. Amy Boykin commented on the performance's interdisciplinarity:

… there were so many approaches to the music, not just sheet music itself and an appreciation of the music in general (from the 1800's), but the history and culture that would have surrounded its composition and use in the American home from that time period were also explored. I think this multi-part assignment (along with the Soiree) gave students a fuller picture of the music and its context rather than just writing a research paper and the assignment ending there.[22]

*Parlor Songs* is an excellent example of how undergraduate students can integrate multiple disciplines to gain a richer understanding of the subject and how the work students create within a course can extend well beyond the classroom to create an interdisciplinary performance event.

## 5. Art Exhibition

Finding partnerships and building interdisciplinary connections can be as easy as knowing what future events are being planned in your community. Alan Skees, an Assistant Professor of Digital Arts and New Media at CNU, partnered with the Peninsula Fine Art Center (PFAC) in Newport News, Virginia on a NASA exhibition that coincided with the NASA Langley Centennial celebration. *Soaring: Work from NASA's Art Collection* featured works of art created by Robert McCall, Andy Warhol, Annie Leibovitz, Nam June Paik, William Wegman, and Chakaia Booker. Skees approached PFAC about having his printmaking students create an additional educational project to add to the NASA art exhibition. PFAC agreed and welcomed the opportunity to have a STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math) event partner with the NASA exhibition. They planned a free community day to open the exhibit, to which Skees' students contributed a large-scale printmaking demonstration.

Inspired by the NASA art collection, Skees incorporated a STEAM project into his printmaking course and assigned his students to design and carve a huge 4 x 8 foot relief wood block whose theme was "the future." Students approached this challenge in a number of ways conceptually and touched on topics of climate change, politics, pollution, space, and

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[22] Amy Boykin, email interview with Denise Gillman, October 25, 2017.

bio-medical technology. Skees shared that, "One student did images in her portfolio based on future technology in the areas of biology and human augmentation. Another student took a cyberpunk and/or social class approach and played with ideas of only the wealthy extending or improving their lives through body enhancements. There was also exploration of catastrophic natural disasters caused by humans by other students. One student did a series of images of bridges being swept away by waves."[23] As the NASA Langley celebration day approached, Skees reached out to BASIC, a local construction company, who happily donated a steamroller and crew to help students with the printmaking process. On the free community day, the steamroller turned the wood carvings into huge prints—the students' finished product.

The NASA art exhibition and the STEAM educational project had over 700 visitors of all ages who visited both events. Skees shared that the PFAC director and curators, and NASA Langley Directors were impressed with the printmaking part of the event. The community partnership forged between NASA, PFAC, Skees, and his students made this a successful interdisciplinary STEAM event that displayed a powerful fusion between art, science and technology.

## Conclusion

The arts provide a unique opportunity for interdisciplinary work to develop through the three foundations: complex questions, multiple disciplines, and integration. Interdisciplinarity, a way of thinking about and studying the world that privileges creative connections between multiple ways of thinking, allows for an approach in a variety of ways through the creation of common ground. This common ground not only unites those involved, it also allows greater access to multiple fields of study for students and draws in new participants, patrons, and audience members bringing in more revenue and promoting the arts organization. The use of interdisciplinary performances or works in the fine and performing arts allows one to expand marketing to those who may not frequent such events, but will find interest in one of the disciplines explored or incorporated. On college and university campuses this increases diversity in student and faculty attendance and draws in new community members. With a larger and more diverse audience, one can develop relationships with other departments and local organizations who can enhance and support future interdisciplinary events through participation during the production process. The case studies explored here demonstrate the success of such endeavors.

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[23] Alan Skees, email interview with Denise Gillman, July 17, 2018.

The aspects of interdisciplinary work and the creation of common ground found success through the fine and performing arts. Arts leaders and educators frequently use their craft to explore ideas outside of themselves, and it is time to expand their interdisciplinary endeavors to benefit their programs, universities, and communities.

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**Shannon Farrow McNeely** writes and researches on science-themed theater and STEAM education. With Gillman and Hartman, she co-authored the article "How Science Plays Are Building Interdisciplinary Bridges in the Classroom and Inspiring Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity (URSCA)" published in *Scholarship and Practice of Undergraduate Research* (2018). McNeely played the role of Henrietta Leavitt in the collegiate premiere of Lauren Gunderson's science-themed play *Silent Sky* at Christopher Newport University. Her thesis research "Act Like a Scientist: Science Theater as a Creative Approach to Address Gender Disparity in STEM Careers" was presented at the *Paideia* Conference (2016) and the Comparative Drama Conference (2017), received Christopher Newport's Cupola Award, and is published in their journal of undergraduate research (2016). She graduated from Christopher Newport with her B.A. in Fine and Performing Arts (2016) and her M.A. in teaching (2017). McNeely teaches third grade in Henrico County, Virginia.

**Denise Gillman** is an Associate Professor of Directing & Dramatic Literature at Christopher Newport University (CNU) in Newport News, VA and a Stage Directors and Choreographers Union member. Science-themed plays are a major focus of her teaching, research and scholarship and both her professional and educational directing activity. At CNU, she teaches her signature course "Science on the Stage" for the Honors Program. Nationwide, she is one of only a few professors teaching a course that promotes interdisciplinarity between the arts, humanities and sciences. She has given many science play presentations at regional, national and international conferences. Ms. Gillman received the 2014 Association for Theater in Higher Education and Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival Prize for Teaching Innovation for discovering new pathways for student success in the field of theater through her teaching, directing and scholarship on science-themed plays. She has created, along with some former and current students, a science plays catalogue website (scienceplays.org) that provides information about published science plays.

**Danielle Hartman** received a BA in theater and English from CNU and an MFA in theater pedagogy from Virginia Commonwealth University, where she wrote her thesis, "In Pursuit of Women Scientists: Using Science Plays to Promote Women Entering STEM Disciplines." This work received the American College Theater Festival/Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival prize for Innovative Graduate Studies in 2016. Her play *Core of Temptation* won the 42nd Annual National Playwriting Competition hosted by Wichita State University, where it was produced in 2016. Her play tackles the question of religion versus science in the creation of the universe. She currently works as an educator at Virginia Commonwealth University and University of Mary Washington and has presented her work at several regional and national conferences including Southeastern Theater Conference and the Comparative Drama Conference.

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The *Journal of Performing Arts Leadership in Higher Education* (JPALHE), published once a year, presents a wide range of topics relevant to visionary leadership in the performing arts in higher education. Topics include, but are not limited to, curriculum development, assessment, goal setting, career preparation, governance, friend raising, technology, retention and recruitment. As a peer-reviewed journal, JPALHE presents articles that are supported by facts and cited appropriately, using the latest edition of *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, by Kate L. Turabian. Articles for consideration are submitted electronically to the editor and must be in the 12-point font of Times New Roman, double-spaced and no longer than 12 pages. The author's name must not appear on the attached article. Submissions from all countries are welcome, although the journal is published in English. Authors are responsible for securing all copyright clearance.

Each submitted article is forwarded by the editor to three members of the Editorial Board, with at least two of the three members specializing in the subject area of the article (dance, music, theatre). The deadline for submission is December 15, and notification of acceptance, deferral or denial is January 30. The accepted articles are posted on the website and sent to the printer on April 1.

Submissions are to be sent via email, with the article as an attachment, to:

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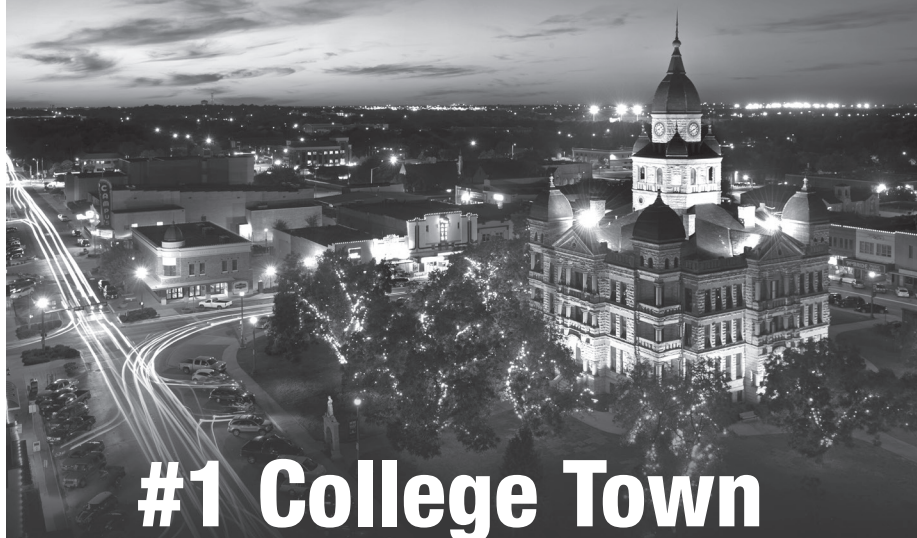
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