

Journal of Performing Arts
Leadership in Higher Education

Volume XII
Fall 2021

Laurence Kaptain, co-editor
Mark Reimer, co-editor

ISSN 2151-2744 (online)
ISSN 2157-6874 (print)

Christopher Newport University
Newport News, Va.

The Journal of Performing Arts Leadership in Higher Education is a recognized academic journal published by Christopher Newport University, a public liberal arts institution in Newport News, Virginia. Copyright to each published article is owned jointly by the Rector and Visitors of Christopher Newport University and the author(s) of the article.

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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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THE EMBODIED MUSICIAN: AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE AND COLLEGIATE MUSIC PERFORMANCE INSTRUCTION

Many college-aged musicians choose to study at post-secondary institutions to prepare for careers as performing artists or educators, or simply to develop their musicianship as fully as possible. While students arrive at post-secondary music institutions already “competent performers” (Pranevičius 2019, 53) their practice and performance approaches are still developing. Some of these physical, mental, and behavioural approaches have allowed students to excel in their technical facility and artistic expression. Other habits, such as excess physical tension and negative thought patterns, may be at odds with optimal performance and wellbeing (Baadjou et al. 2016). Unfortunately, existing performance-related challenges can be exacerbated by the intense academic and performance pressures of post-secondary environments (Ioannou and Altenmüller 2015), and students have reported experiencing performance anxiety, pain, or injury (Butković et al. 2021; Cruder et al. 2020; Lupiáñez et al. 2021). Some student musicians have turned to complementary approaches, such as the Alexander Technique, to address these challenges and enhance performance practice (Williamson and Thompson 2006).

The Alexander Technique in Post-Secondary Music Institutions

The Alexander Technique (AT) was developed by the Australian actor F. M. Alexander. One of the central tenets of the AT is that how an individual uses their mind and body affects the way it functions. Through AT *explorations*, certified AT teachers ask their students to bring awareness to different areas of their bodies or to notice thought patterns that accompany their performance practice or daily habits. AT instructors also have a deep knowledge of anatomy and share insights into how the body is designed to move, as well as how thought patterns can support easeful physical coordination. By increasing awareness of neuromuscular-skeletal habits, consciously *inhibiting* faulty coordination, and purposefully *directing* “one’s body parts to change their spatial relations without overtly attempting to carry out those commands” (Hamel et al. 2016, 751), AT practitioners aim to improve “mobility, posture, performance and alertness and [relieve] chronic stiffness, tension and stress” (AmSAT Online n.d.). For musicians, correcting faulty habits of use can positively influence musical performance (Kleinman and Buckoke 2013).¹

The AT has been taught in post-secondary music programs and professional conservatory settings in the UK since the 1950s. Since then, the AT has been incorporated into music education curriculum all over

¹ For more information on the Alexander Technique and its application to music performance, we recommend “The Alexander Technique for Musicians” (Kleinman and Buckoke 2013).

the world, including the US and Canada (Lee 2019). The AT's support of student musician learning outcomes is well documented in research literature (Hoberg 2008; Kwon 2012; Davies 2019; Davies 2020). With respect to curriculum design, the AT is most frequently offered as individualized instruction in post-secondary music education settings. Students typically enroll in a series of private lessons with a certified AT teacher whose role is separate from performance faculty who teach music lessons and studio class. Some studio faculty are also experienced AT practitioners, use AT concepts in their teaching, and advocate for AT as a support to performance pedagogy. Others with an interest in, but limited familiarity with, the approach incorporate variations of AT instruction into their teaching (Neely 2012).

The Oslo Model of AT Instruction

The *Oslo Model* is an integrated teaching model that combines individual and group AT learning in the context of post-secondary music performance instruction. The model was developed at the Norwegian Academy of Music by AT instructor Stephen Parker and has been implemented at music institutions in Norway including the National Academy of Music and Norwegian College of Musical Theatre in Oslo, and the Grieg Academy in Bergen. The aim of the Oslo Model is to integrate and enhance an instrument teacher's learning methods with the concepts of the Alexander Technique, through the combined interaction of these two approaches simultaneously (Parker 2017). In this method, both students and their principal instrument teachers take private AT lessons with a certified AT instructor, and in additional joint sessions, the AT instructor and faculty member teach participating students collaboratively. Clarifying and reinforcing AT principles through shared instruction is intended to "maximise the benefits to the students" (Jørgensen 2015, 30).

Early findings demonstrate the effectiveness of this model to enhance learner outcomes, including building awareness and competency as performers of an embodied artistic discipline (Pranevičius 2019; Kvammen, Hagen, and Parker 2020). This model has not yet been studied in North America, presenting a gap in the research literature and an opportunity to explore its effectiveness in a North American post-secondary music institution.

Study Purpose

The purpose of this study was to analyze the reported experiences of post-secondary music students, their studio teachers, and a certified AT instructor participating in year-long Oslo Model Alexander Technique instruction at an American collegiate-level music school. Additionally, the study was designed to investigate the feasibility of student and faculty participation in instruction

offered as a supplemental psychophysical education protocol given the time constraints and demands of the post-secondary environment, and to determine whether students and faculty could be expected to apply the principles of AT into their daily activities in such a time-pressured environment.

Methodology

To holistically capture our participants' experiences (Patton 2002) we chose a qualitative case study design (Merriam 1998; Stake 1995). Our analysis relied on interpreting information gleaned from pre- and post-questionnaires, interviews, and observation notes, which we coded and analyzed for important themes (Creswell and Creswell 2018). To strengthen the validity of our qualitative findings, we used strategies including member-checking, where we asked select participants to review our analysis and confirm it "rings true" with their experiences and beliefs (Janesick 2000). We also reviewed our work with a qualified academic professional² outside of the study but familiar with the subject matter, a strategy known as "peer debriefing" (Denzin and Lincoln 2005). This study was overseen by an institutional Research Subjects Review Board.

We used snowball sampling to recruit one certified AT instructor, three music studio teachers, and three students per studio from a private, collegiate-level music school in the northeastern United States. The AT instructor approached faculty she had worked with before, and faculty chose students they felt would benefit from AT instruction for reasons including excess physical energy, mental self-criticism, slouching posture, and recovery from surgery.

Table 1. List of Study Participants³

Faculty	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3
Professor Michael Carson, Brass	Sean, graduate	Will, fourth year undergraduate	Evan, graduate
Professor George Harvey, Brass	Christopher, second year undergraduate	Claire, fourth year undergraduate	Luke, graduate
Professor Jane Merrill, Voice	Theresa, third year undergraduate	Connie, third year undergraduate	Maria, doctoral
Elizabeth (Liz) Vesta, Certified Alexander Technique Instructor			

² We are grateful to Tara Fenamore of Teachers College, Columbia University for her assistance as peer debriefer on this study.

³ Pseudonyms applied for all study subjects.

Context

Four important context conditions were in place when the study began, creating the maximum opportunity for implementation of the Oslo Model:

- The participants showed open-mindedness, commitment to the project, enthusiasm, and a strong willingness to learn.
- The faculty were interested in team teaching and even felt that the “guru mentality” could be limiting.
- Vivid descriptions of practice routines revealed learners at various stages of development in their practice strategies. Faculty members described individualized approaches they chose to address the needs of their students. Faculty felt that they too were lifelong learners and were still growing as teachers.
- Students and faculty at this institution had high expectations for musical achievement, and the fast-paced environment was universally described as “busy” or even “packed.”

Instruction

Integrated Alexander Technique instruction took place over the 2019–2020 academic year as a supplement to ongoing academic activities.⁴ All activities prior to March 10, 2020 took place in person and after, over Zoom video-conference due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Each participant took ten private 30-minute AT lessons, five per semester, and each studio participated in six collaborative group sessions, three each semester. Three large group meetings were held in August, December, and April for organizational purposes and to garner participant feedback. All participants received a copy of “The Alexander Technique for Musicians” (Kleinman and Buckoke 2013).

Findings

What Characterizes the Learning Environment of Integrated
Alexander Technique Instruction?

Students and faculty developing shared AT-related vocabulary

Students and faculty reported beginning to use a shared vocabulary based on AT principles in main instrument instruction. For instance, before the project,

⁴ For a detailed description of the instruction during the project, see Appendix A.

Christopher (INT)⁵ spoke with his main instrument teacher about “similar concepts but with more basic words,” but now he and his teacher “simply use AT terms freely.” Professor Merrill (INT, LGM 2) began noticing the difference in language and vocabulary used by the AT instructor and incorporating it into her teaching, for instance, with the visual field: “What if you felt it higher where the visual cortex really is?” Other phrases she incorporated into her teaching included: “Who owns this space?” and “Where are your feet? Are they on the Earth?” This finding is consistent with other examples (Pranevičius, 2019) in the related literature on the Oslo Model.

AT instructor becoming more central than peripheral

The AT instructor reported that integrating herself into regular group instruction allowed her to support the learners’ journeys more strongly than when she was working with students in isolation, on the “periphery” of academic work. Liz (INT) stated: “I felt so much more central, accessible, and alive as part of the program. Because I was working with the students and faculty much more frequently, I felt that I was in a better position to be helpful and supportive.”

Participants adopting practice strategies based on AT principles

Students and faculty began adopting Liz’s AT strategies for releasing tension and returning to greater freedom of movement and ease of mental processes. A range of AT tools made their way into participants’ practice and teaching routines including constructive rest, neutral awareness, *Inhibition*, *Direction*, and soft focus. Participants’ comments related to “trying things out” or experimenting, incorporating AT ideas into their regular practice routines, and even problem-solving with AT tools, which Professor Carson (INT) described as a “self-reminding mechanism.” As an example, Claire (INT) described a new approach to addressing one of her performance challenges:

If I’m focused too much on my music, my hand placement, my air, or something technical, it derails me. And so if I could focus on a touch point in my body, in myself, then it really helped me stay in that performance mode. And then [when I would get] nervous for [our wind ensemble], I would practice these Alexander techniques before rehearsal, especially if I had a solo or something, and it would help me face the nervousness of that. That was really helpful, too.

Participants began using language with themselves and their students that reflected Liz’s “gentle way” (Professor Carson, INT) and nonjudgmental approach, particularly in their shifting mental dialogue that emphasized “allowing” instead of “making” (Professor Harvey, INT).

⁵ For a complete list of abbreviations used to describe the sources of participants’ quoted data, please see Appendix B. For example, INT = Interview; PRE QU = Pre-Questionnaire; POST QU = Post-Questionnaire; and so on.

My biggest take away from Alexander has been finding release through changing my inner dialogue from one that is harsh and critical to one that is more gentle and loving. Simply changing my dialogue from me telling myself, “I have to do something” or “I must do something” and changing to asking myself, “Can I permit myself to do this?” or “Can I allow myself to do this?” really helped me attain a more positive mindset and healthier mental dialogue when practicing.
—Theresa (POST QU)

What Do Participants Report as the Benefits of Integrated Alexander Technique Instruction, if Any?

Heightened awareness of physical and mental habits enabling positive change

All participants reported a heightened awareness of their physical and mental habits. Connie (POST QU) mentioned: “When [practicing and performing] I have a heightened awareness of my anxieties and how they manifest in bodily tensions that prevent my sound from being its best.” As a practice strategy, Sean (POST QU) described a newfound intention of being “more conscious of tension in places related to movement in my playing, and how that affects air control and support.” When asked whether the way he experiences his body during playing has changed, Luke (INT) shared, “Definitely. . . I’m very much more aware of my body now.”

Luke (INT) also shared an example of how becoming more aware of his physical habits enabled a release of excess tension. At one point during the year, he began moving his shoulder unnecessarily as he played his instrument. His main instrument teacher, Professor Harvey (INT), remarked: “I don’t know where it came from. It just appeared. And, I said, ‘Let’s not move our shoulder when we play.’ And Liz said, ‘Okay! So, let’s try this.’” With his consent, Liz placed her hand on the student’s shoulder and said, “Now, give this muscle ease. Let it go.’ I don’t know. He wasn’t moving his shoulder. [Laughs.]” Professor Harvey mentioned that although this habit would sometimes come back, eventually it disappeared, which Luke confirmed in his interview. Professor Harvey shared that “now the student can draw on what Liz said to help him as well as what I said. The two worked hand in hand. They complemented each other.” Maria (POST QU) echoed this when she said: “Yes, Liz would. . . help me understand parts of my body were tense/over engaged. This would ultimately lead to an ability to release the identified spot.”

Increased accountability supporting learners’ journeys toward musical excellence

The Oslo Model seemed to foster an “inclusive” (Professor Carson, INT) community of learners that supported participants’ work toward musical excellence. This community was marked by shared personal journeys where

participants could learn by watching others work toward similar goals as themselves (e.g., reducing unnecessary tension to increase freedom, expression, and confidence in performance). Liz (POST QU) put it this way: “Shared experience, shared language, shared priority, shared commitment—I think this model increases the likelihood that the student will be able to learn and implement the material.”

Observing others’ journeys also helped participants identify their own “unhelpful habits” (Luke, INT). For instance, Will (INT) illustrated one of his own “aha” moments, drawn out from observing his peer in a collaborative group session:

The thing that I actually liked the most was sharing what I noticed in my peers. ... It was cool giving comments because I realized I have to understand this concept to explain it to someone. I told my friend Sean, “The minute you started thinking about this other thing, your shoulders dropped and you opened up and that changed [your sound]. The change was noticeable.” I didn’t put it together until I was talking to him about what had happened. [Chuckles.] I started playing with a mirror because I would be playing, and then all of a sudden, those kinds of comments that I was used to giving to other people, I would be giving to the person that I saw in the mirror, and then I would change those things.

Musical improvement

Participants described their progress on their instruments and, uniformly, how AT work was beneficial for their growth. “I just think it was effective. It definitely helped me musically, on the instrument,” Sean (INT) observed. Professor Carson (INT) remarked that his long-time colleague, a collaborative pianist, said, “You know, you sound different to me.’ So it was nice to have someone who knows my playing so well notice that there are some different things that I was doing in my playing. And most importantly, that they were coming out my instrument, you know, they were actually being made manifest.” Theresa (POST QU) felt that “[AT has] gotten me to much healthier place with my technique. I feel like I’m in a good place. The knowledge of the inner workings of my instrument and anatomy gave me the power to have better control over my instrument and emotions when singing and performing.”

Professor Harvey (INT) reminded the researchers that the students would still have improved over the course of a year in their performing abilities independently of the research protocol; however, he too felt that “AT has had a profound effect on myself and my playing” (LGM 3) and “each student was helped where they needed help” (INT).

More calm in participants’ daily lives

Over the course of the year, participants reported physical benefits, greater ease, heightened focus, and being calmer and more emotionally grounded. The

calm they received from exploring AT in their daily lives appeared as an antidote to a stressful academic environment. Evan (INT) shared, “I just feel less stressed out in general, and I feel I’ve learned to be more patient with myself.”

I didn't expect [AT] to impact my person as much as it has. I think me as Claire is impacted by this more than my playing or teaching self, but I'm very impacted in that way as well. ... Taking a no-go moment is helpful in an audition, but it's really helpful in life challenges. Just being a responsive person instead of a reactive person, that will always serve me. We're in the middle of a pandemic right now. These skills have helped me to center myself and to feel like I have control over my body and be more in touch with the sensations I have. —Claire (INT)

How do Participants Incorporate Supplemental Alexander Technique Instruction Using the Oslo Model into Ongoing Academic Work in a Post-Secondary Music Institution?

Given all participants’ earnest intention to learn, hard-working nature, and the demanding academic environment, the way they incorporated their additional AT work is summed well by Christopher (POST QU): “I never have any free time anyway, so I just fit it in.” Commitments like private AT lessons and individual practice, where participants had more control over their schedules, were the easiest to integrate. Where participants had less control over scheduling, and were navigating more moving parts, they reported the greatest challenges and even frustration to integrating the project into their schedules. This related primarily to scheduling group sessions, which were often scheduled on consecutive weekends toward the end of the semester, and which, according to Maria (POST QU), was “not a good time for students and not enough time to process the information.” Most participants also felt that some of the sessions (e.g., 60-minute collaborative group sessions and 30-minute private AT lessons) were too short to thoroughly explore the material.

Discussion

Although participants remarked that their schedules were demanding, and they had to “just fit in” the supplemental instruction, all agreed that AT positively affected their well-being and supported their music instruction goals. Learning AT seemed to help them cope with the stressful environment, inside and outside of the practice room, and to support the development of sustainable performance practice strategies. This finding aligns with the aims of AT instruction (Kleinman and Buckoke 2013) and research that suggests AT teaches learners how to teach themselves (Jørgensen 2015).

This study found that group learning had added benefits. In the collaborative group sessions, students often had “aha” moments where they clarified their understanding of AT concepts or manifested them in performance in front of their peers. The multiple touchpoints of AT private lessons, group sessions, referencing AT in main instrument lessons, the “lifeline” of additional resources the AT instructor provided, and being accountable to one’s peers contributed to an environment conducive to learning AT principles. The AT instructor likewise felt that she could support her colleagues more fully from this central, rather than peripheral, role. Indeed, Pranevičius (2019) argued that integrated study was the ideal method of sharing information between student, studio teacher, and AT instructor, and Parker remarked that the “the true value of [AT] work is in integrating it” (2017, 52). This finding also corresponds to literature on the benefits of group instruction and team teaching, which include clarifying and broadening one’s perspectives, and gaining additional observational and reflective skill (Bjøntegaard 2015; Wöllner and Ginsborg 2011).

An important implication of this study is that success in the learning environment was marked by an open-mindedness on the part of all involved. In fact, it is likely that open-mindedness and teacher buy-in to team teaching influenced students’ receptiveness to new information from another instructor. As such, we contend that readiness for AT may be determined by open-mindedness and interest rather than age or academic level.

Given the positive response to the project, we recommend that post-secondary institutions consider offering integrated AT instruction using the Oslo Model. When time is limited, it may be useful to focus on immediately usable AT tools that introduce key concepts and whet learners’ appetites for future instruction. Parker (2017, 53) echoed this sentiment: “The key thought here is really ‘Keep it simple.’ We’re not trying to get into the deep aspects of the work—albeit we’re working with those implicitly.”

Comments from the three faculty members who participated in this study offer another perspective on the application of integrated AT instruction in collegiate studio teaching. These faculty members, all senior in rank and experience as tenured Full Professors, were willing to examine their own teaching practice and to invest time as learners along with their students. Integrated AT instruction following the model in this study has strong potential as professional development for junior faculty and for performance faculty with successful careers outside of academia who are hired for collegiate teaching with little pedagogical preparation.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the experiences of post-secondary music students, their studio teachers, and an AT instructor who participated in year-long supplemental Alexander Technique instruction using the Oslo Model and to investigate its feasibility at an American collegiate-level music school. We found that, through an earnest desire to learn and open-mindedness, building of shared vocabulary, and pre-existing interest in life-long learning from multiple perspectives, participants reported benefits of learning and practicing AT principles in an integrated environment. These benefits included developing performance practice strategies that emphasized more physical and mental ease through heightened awareness of body and mental processes, and more calm in their daily lives as an antidote to a stressful academic environment, which supported their musical and artistic goals. Given these benefits, we encourage leaders of collegiate music departments to consider integrating Alexander Technique instruction using the Oslo model into their programming.

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APPENDIX A: DESCRIPTION OF INSTRUCTION

Alexander Technique Private Lessons: What Took Place?

In her follow-up interview, certified AT instructor Elizabeth (Liz) Vesta (F. INT) described the challenge young musicians face while at post-secondary music institutions:

Say a student knows that they really want to perform well—that they want to perform the best they can. Maybe they even want it to be perfect. Maybe that wish is internal, coming from themselves. Maybe it's external, coming from the environment, people, institutions. That wish to be perfect, or to perform very well, or to be worried about making a mistake can produce a response that's counterproductive to musical excellence, to being able to express, and to being connected and creative and free.

In response to these challenges, Liz (F. INT) shared the following statement about the purpose of the Alexander Technique:

Part of what the training is, is meeting a stimulus that really pulls us down or tightens us or interferes with our beautiful natural coordination, and being able to interact and say, "No, I don't want that to happen. I want to do something different." It's certainly harder in a stressful environment, but that's the aim of the technique.

In building the curriculum for the year, Liz wanted to present participants with an overview of the tenets of the AT, including the following concepts:

**Table 3. Excerpted Glossary of Alexander Technique Terms
(Kleinman and Buckoke 2013, 290–291)**

Term	Definition
Inhibition	A moment of consciousness before you go into action when you acknowledge to yourself that you have choices. You ‘inhibit’ or decide to stop negative habitual or automatic behaviour. You can apply Inhibition continuously to avoid a negative habit when you are playing your instrument—it becomes part of your awareness.
Direction	A willing or wishing of parts of the body to move on a certain journey. The act of ‘directing’ affects the motor and balancing systems that predispose your body to change in the desired way.
End-Gaining	When you are more interested in the result or end than the means-whereby you might achieve that end. You become an end-gainer, in Alexander terms, if you are focused on the goal and not choosing how you do things.
Faulty Sensory Appreciation	The state of our sensory feedback when we feel we are doing something different to what we are actually doing.

Liz hoped that by the end of the project, “everyone would have a good idea of the principles of Alexander Technique and have some tools and resources for further exploration” (F. INT). She purposefully developed a curriculum that could be applied immediately to music performance, rather than pursuing a traditional approach to AT instruction that focused on mastering standard AT explorations away from the instrument before applying them to music performance. Liz made this decision based on previous experience teaching American students in short-term instructional settings. Aware of the limited time frame of the project, she created the following lesson schedule:

Table 2. Alexander Technique Instruction: Private Lesson Schedule

Fall Semester 2019				
Lesson 1 Constructive Rest	Lesson 2 Awareness	Lesson 3 AT Inhibition “No-Go Moments”	Lesson 4 AT Direction	Lesson 5 Fight-Flight- Freeze, End-Gaining, Faulty Sensory Appreciation
Spring Semester 2020				
Lesson 6 Breathing	Lesson 7 Visual System	Lesson 8 Visual System, cont.	Lesson 9 “Choose Your Own Adventure”	Lesson 10 “Choose Your Own Adventure”

Each lesson would begin with a check-in, where Liz asked participants to notice their physical sensations, feelings, and thoughts. These check-ins would typically take place during constructive rest, where participants would lie on their backs on a padded table with their knees bent, pointing upward, feet resting on the table (semi-supine position). Liz (INT) remarked how participants would usually be rushing in from other classes or rehearsals, always “on the go.” She felt “they so desperately seemed to need constructive rest, just to settle down.”

During these check-ins, Liz would ask participants if they had any questions about the AT concepts, and she would incorporate their questions or performance concerns into the lesson. When introducing AT concepts, Liz would share videos, quotations, and printed materials; demonstrate concepts on a miniature skeleton; or invite participants to try out an AT exploration.

As part of AT work, Liz invited students to draw awareness to different parts of their body and mental processes. Many times, these were parts of the body that were previously hidden from awareness: “[She was] bringing attention to things I wouldn’t notice and to spots like the tibia that I forgot existed,” wrote Christopher (POST QU). Through her “knowledge of anatomy,” Liz revealed “how the body works together and how it impacts us as musicians in ways that maybe weren’t super obvious to us” (Luke, INT).

Playing the instrument came toward the end of the sessions, if at all, due to time constraints. Liz took notes after each lesson, which she referred to the following time she met with each participant.

In addition to distributing an engaging handout after each AT lesson, sometimes Liz would send additional resources to follow up with participants about their questions. Professor Harvey (INT) described one such time: “I think

I'm a real high maintenance student for Liz, and she's so gracious. One time I asked her the craziest question about tongue placement, and [she created] extensive thoughtful notes that I now use in my teaching." Liz (INT) considered these resources a "lifeline" to help keep AT in participants' thoughts between lessons.

Collaborative Group Sessions: What Took Place?

While AT lessons were designed with themes based on AT principles, Liz allowed the collaborative group sessions to be more free-flowing. Group sessions would begin with a check-in where participants shared their progress, insights, and challenges, and asked any questions about AT concepts that had arisen since they last met. Sometimes the discussion would continue for the length of the session, or Liz would bring in a resource, such as a video on breathing, to share with the group. In most cases, however, participants would continue exploring a topic through AT procedures or performing for one another.

Whoever performed would receive feedback from the AT instructor, their main instrument teacher, and their peers. Professor Carson (INT) remarked that the group sessions "provided us with the opportunity to share common challenges and play for each other. This put students and teacher in the same boat, equalizing our experience." As one student performed and received feedback, the rest of the group observed the process.

Some students and faculty reported negotiating the challenge of building trust in these sessions. Sean (INT) explained that initially in his studio cohort, "no one really wanted to open up about the thing they were working on," although participants became more comfortable by the third session. One of his studio mates articulated that he struggled with "making AT/mindful changes to [his] playing...because [he] feared changing [his] habits out of fear of appearing weak or struggling in comparison to [his] peers." Despite some challenges, students including Evan (INT) shared, "It was really beneficial watching my cohort play and to see how their experiences are in relation to mine." Several participants also articulated breakthrough moments in their learning during these sessions, where they could try out and observe AT principles applied to music performance on their instrument.

Main Instrument Lessons: What Took Place?

Students continued with their allotted main instrument lessons—only now, teachers would check in with their students about their AT progress, as well as reference and experiment with helpful AT tools. With a growing shared vocabulary, teachers would "refer to specifically what went on in the lesson." As Professor Harvey (INT) said, "at one point I was trying to get a student to do something that she learned in one of our lessons. I told her, 'You've got to draw now on your inner Liz here.'"

Student and teacher would also problem-solve in main instrument lessons using AT tools. Christopher (INT) mentioned that “instead of trying to explain something himself, [Professor Harvey] might be like, ‘Remember in Alexander Technique lessons, talking about this concept? Okay. Apply it here.’” Teachers also remarked on how what they encountered as learners of AT would enter their teaching, and how it would not be restricted to study participants. “Some things were very helpful to take from personal lessons and apply to teaching. I found that very helpful and more surprising than I had imagined it would be,” iterated Professor Merrill (INT). Claire (INT) described Professor Harvey saying, “I’ve talked with Liz about this concept and I’m going to start working with you on this. And everybody should know about this idea.”

In this respect, teachers “leaned into” AT, which amplified and empowered their teaching (Maria, INT). Professor Carson (INT) shared a story of encouraging a student in a lesson to “give himself permission” to play with a sound he was imagining. “The way that [Liz] spoke about ‘giving yourself permission to’ inspired me to want to give him permission to—fill in the blank. I guess that was the best way of trying to take the kinds of things that we would have done in sessions together, especially group sessions, and try to really enact them in a way that suited the needs of the student.” Claire (INT) also reported that participating in the project had been “very validating” for her teacher. “He has things to draw on that help him to explain things...and it’s helped him to teach us better without Liz there, because he sees what Liz is seeing in us and how she’s handling that. And then he’s learning how to handle that with us later.”

APPENDIX B: LIST OF ABBREVIATION OF PARTICIPANTS’ CITED SOURCES

Table 4. List of Abbreviations of Participants’ Cited Sources

Tag	Source
PRE QU	Pre-Questionnaire
POST QU	Post-Questionnaire
LGM 2	Large Group Meeting (December 2019)
LGM 3	Large Group Meeting (April 2020)
INT	Interview
F. INT	Follow-Up Interview

Donna Brink Fox, PhD, is the Senior Associate Dean of Academic and Student Affairs at the Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester, in Rochester, New York. Dr. Fox has held a faculty appointment in Music Education since 1984 and was named Eisenhart Professor of Music Education in 1998, the first endowed professor to be named at the Eastman School. Dr. Fox has been appointed visiting faculty at Sydney Conservatorium in Australia and the Shenyang Conservatory in China, and was appointed in 2015 as Global Academic Advisor for the Cyprus Centre of Research and Study in Music Education. She founded and directed the summer Orff Schulwerk Teacher Education course from 1992–2019 and established the early childhood music program for the Eastman Community Music School, now in its 37th year. In 2016 she was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Susan B. Anthony Center at the University of Rochester.

Stephania Romaniuk has sung professionally with opera companies, as a soloist with orchestras and ensembles, and in recital in North America and Europe. She recently completed her M.A. in Music Education at the Eastman School of Music where she received the Catherine Filene Shouse Arts Leadership Program Certificate and was awarded the Teaching Assistant Prize for group voice instruction. In addition to working as a Community Ambassador for Calgary Opera, she has developed innovative curriculum as a Calgary Board of Education Resident Artist and teaching artist for the opera education organization “What Is Opera, Anyway?” She co-founded the Curriculum Development Collective for teaching artists, and her research has been published in Eastman Notes, the Eastman Journal, and the Eastman Case Studies.

GATEWAYS TO ENTRY AS BARRIERS TO DIVERSITY IN CLASSICAL CAREERS

What do you see in the following three lists? Or rather what do you *not* see?

For entrance into the undergraduate program at a number of American universities, an audition comprised of the following:

- a movement from a solo sonata, partita, or suite by Johann Sebastian Bach
- a movement of a standard concerto
- two contrasting works from the standard violin repertoire
- an etude and scales and arpeggios

The graduate entrance exam in music history at many American universities covers the entirety of *Western music history* (medieval period through the present). Students preparing for this exam should consult either:

- *A History of Western Music* (Grout/Palisca/Burkholder)
- *Norton Recorded Anthology of Western Music* (Burkholder)
- *Music in Western Civilization* (Wright/Simms)

For entrance into many American orchestras, excerpts to be chosen from:

- Beethoven: Symphony No. 3
- Brahms: Symphony No. 4
- Mendelssohn: A Midsummer Night's Dream – Scherzo
- Mozart: Symphony No. 39
- Schubert: Symphony No. 2
- Schumann: Symphony No. 2
- Shostakovich: Symphony No. 5
- Strauss: Don Juan
- Beethoven: Symphony No. 9
- Mahler: Symphony No. 1
- Tchaikovsky: Nutcracker Overture
- Rimsky-Korsakov: Scheherazade
- Bach: St. Matthew Passion
- Dvorak: Symphony No. 7
- Haydn: Symphony No. 104
- Hindemith: Mathis der Mahler

Each of these lists is part of a test or audition as an established gateway to professional training or employment in classical music in America: undergraduate and graduate education, or professional performing. The lists, drawn from the websites of universities and orchestras across the United States, are either current to 2022, or were current over the past decade.¹ Each of the lists reveals that music in the European tradition is what is expected to gain access to a university degree in classical music, or to an orchestra. Absent from these lists is any specific reference to the music of other cultures, music by living composers, music by under-represented populations, or music by females, transgender persons, or persons of color.

The discernable reality is that the gateways to entrance at three critical junctures—undergraduate, graduate, and professional—and in two important aspects of an American classical music career— academics and performance— continue to rely on traditions that were developed in the early 20th century. These traditions exclude composers and styles that are increasingly emphasized, touted as “inclusively American,” and that are representative of important diverse populations and cultures on the planet.²

We know that, in times past, male dominance in the field of music performance brought with it an emphasis upon the music of male composers. White dominance in the field at the same time similarly yielded a bias against people of color and their creative efforts. The reality, that is increasingly addressed by authors and speakers across America, is that “times present” are not dramatically different.³ As of four years ago, only 2% of American orchestra conductors were Black or Latine, as were only 1% of orchestral

¹ For a collection of orchestral audition repertoire lists from the past 12 years, see “Orchestral Audition Repertoire Lists,” *All is Yar*, <https://allisyar.com/orchestral-audition-lists/>. The excerpts cited here appear on most of those lists.

² University and conservatory entrance auditions continue to focus upon traditional models, although some are beginning to change, as will be elaborated later in this article. The textbooks listed do cover female composers and composers of color; however, as I have asked my graduates about their entrance exams at a number of graduate schools, they confirm that their entrance exams uniformly tested European music by the traditional canon of composers with little jazz, no non-Western music, and almost no emphasis upon under-represented musicians. The most recent *American Music Teacher* has a relevant article by Leah Claiborne that mentions a recent MTNA Junior piano competition in which all repertoire was by deceased, white, European male composers. Claiborne mentions in this article that, for the first time in 2022-23, Ebony Music Inc. will sponsor a prize for the best performance of a piano piece by a Black composer in the MTNA national competition. Leah Claiborne, “What Ifs: Intentional Inclusion of Music by Black Composers in Music Education,” *AMT*, 71 no. 4 (Feb/March 2022), 22.

³ See, as a start, some of the following articles and books: “Why is American Classical Music so White?” <https://www.npr.org/sections/deceptivecadence/2019/09/20/762514169/why-is-american-classical-music-so-white>, “Black Artists on How to Change Classical Music,” <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/16/arts/music/black-classical-music-opera.html>, “Could Diversity Get us More Attention?” <https://www.artsjournal.com/sandow/2019/02/could-diversity-get-us-more-attention.html>, and Joseph Horowitz’ book: *Dvorak’s Prophecy and the Vexed Fate of Black Classical Music* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2021).

executive directors, and in that year almost no music by BIPOC composers was programmed by major orchestras. While evidence is appearing over the past two years of initial efforts to explore diverse programming, and to express more tangibly the importance of diversity in the arts, this article focuses upon three specific gateways to a career in classical music that still hold too closely to traditions, and need review and revision.

The history behind these gateways

In 2018, Alex Ross of the *New Yorker* wrote, “The whiteness of classical music is, above all, an American problem. The racial and ethnic makeup of the canon is hardly surprising, given European demographics before the twentieth century. But, when that tradition was transplanted to the multicultural United States, it blended into the racial hierarchy that had governed the country from its founding. The white majority tended to adopt European music as a badge of its supremacy.... Little effort was made to cultivate American composers; it seemed more important to manufacture a fantasy of Beethovenian grandeur.”⁴

America was largely a frontier nation through the nineteenth century, with only a few cultural centers existing mostly on the east coast in cities such as New York, Boston, Baltimore, and Philadelphia. Where urbanization could support culture, the established repertoire of Europe’s concert halls was imported. A few American composers—including Alexander Reinagle, Anthony Philip Heinrich, William Henry Fry, and George Frederick Bristow—contributed importantly to the nascent music scene, but largely in styles that were equivalent to those from Europe at the time.⁵ As late as the early 20th century, white American composers (with Charles Ives as a lone exception) recreated the equivalent sounds of earlier European masters. John Knowles Paine, along with Amy Cheney Beach, George Chadwick, Horatio Parker, Edward MacDowell, Charles Tomlinson Griffes, were among those whose music stood staunchly in the European sound spectrum of Schumann, Wagner, Bruckner, Grieg, Smetana, Brahms, or Debussy, and offered only the occasional aspect of “Americanism” at moments a trained ear might appreciate.

During their lifetimes, even these American composers were eclipsed by established Europeans. By the 1870s, the European tradition in music was so entrenched in America that, at the 1876 Centennial concert celebrating America’s independence as a nation, the majority of music for its program came from the established canon of European composers. Other concerts of the time

⁴ Alex Ross, “The Rediscovery of Florence Price: How an African-American composer’s works were saved from destruction,” *New Yorker* online edition, January 29, 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/02/05/the-rediscovery-of-florence-price>, accessed January 18, 2022.

⁵ Louis Moreau Gottschalk was an outlier, foreshadowing ragtime and jazz in his style more than European classical traditions.

followed suit.⁶ A century later, this dominant tradition had calcified Europe's foothold in American concert programming. Wealthy white Americans of recent European heritage controlled the purse strings of classical organizations, and thereby controlled the repertoire and the social norms surrounding its performance. The music heard in Europe's halls was seen as a mark of sophistication for American audiences: orchestras performed it and soloists toured with it. Among them, Artur Schnabel, Artur Schnabel, Jascha Heifetz, Nathan Milstein, Maria Callas, Enrico Caruso, and Mstislav Rostropovich were classical icons. Orchestras were conducted by European immigrants such as Georg Szell, Erich Leinsdorf, Eugene Ormandy, or Georg Solti. It is a reality that continues to the present day.⁷ The gateways to these ensembles emphasized the European repertoire they programmed. Audition lists were established, and they remain largely unchanged.

Higher education saw the value of further educating its principally white student body in the music with which they were already familiar and that offered the most likely career prospects. It established curricula to explore both the performance and the intellectual aspects of European music beyond a basic aural recognition. The idea of a liberal education as an exposure to diverse ideas and fields of study became focused quickly and easily upon a limited canon of music. While some women and people of color managed to navigate this environment to achieve a degree of success, overall, American women and people of color faced stiff resistance and numerous obstacles to a classical career. It is facile to say that women and composers of color from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds have lived their history in classical music swimming against a current of racism, bigotry, and entrenched traditions. The issue before us in 2022 is that they still do, especially since, from the 1970s at the latest, immigration patterns have shifted, the ratio of females to males in the nation slightly favors females, and the national voice has risen in urgency concerning equality, fairness, representation, and justice.⁸ The immediacy of a European cultural background has also faded as earlier emigres' connection to Europe recedes into ancestral history. Fair representation, that was not at issue in the past, has risen to become central to serious conversations about classical music's future.

While true equity among sexes, races, ethnicities, and gender identities is yet in the future, composers of color are enjoying a renaissance of interest,

⁶ Richard Wagner was commissioned to compose the featured *Centennial March* for the 1876 concert. The 1869 Peace Jubilee concert featured 100% European composers. The inaugural concert of Carnegie Hall in 1891 brought Tchaikovsky to the country as the featured musician and, in three days of concerts, featured exclusively European music.

⁷ The top 5 orchestras are still led by foreigners in 2022: New York: Jaap van Zweden (from Holland); Chicago: Riccardo Muti (Italy); Cleveland: Franz Welser-Möst (Austria); Philadelphia, and also the Metropolitan Opera: Yanick Nezet-Seguin (Quebec); Boston: Andris Nelsons (Latvia).

⁸ As of 2020, across the total population, there were 97.5 males per 100 females in America. *Knoema.com*, <https://knoema.com/atlas/United-States-of-America/topics/Demographics/Population/Male-to-female-ratio>, accessed February 8, 2022.

led by current conversations and social awareness, and assisted in part by the rediscovery of a trove of Florence Price's compositions.⁹ A shift in culture is also happening as Americans accept and support a wider spectrum of individuality. Prospects are increasing for women, and gender-fluid individuals that were previously closed to them and, in this environment, they are creating opportunities to express themselves in increasingly powerful and meaningful ways. A performance or educational paradigm dominated by white male composers is no longer representative of current demographics, or of cultural interests.

There are awkward implications for a repertoire that is 80-300 years old still being used almost exclusively at gateway points to enter either a musical education or a performing organization in the 21st century, and we must ask ourselves why we perpetuate models that are clearly not aligned with our current social consciousness? In order to address this question, we need to acknowledge yet more of the traditions in our business.

Classical music needs to move beyond the 20th century ideal of an ivory tower repertoire.

An antiquated classical canon of repertoire speaks in part to the reality that, for a century, the intersection of scholarship and the composition/performance of music dominated the classical landscape. Composers pursued ever more avidly a course of intellectualism in music that wowed a narrowing coterie of enthusiasts even as it alienated the more general music lover. New music that lacked intellectual rigor was viewed as “weak” or “populist,” and was sidelined. The “new” in music increasingly orbited its own suns. Many music lovers reacted by digging in their heels and entrenching traditions that focused upon older, more accessible styles. Classical performing organizations, backed by wealthy donors, held tight to traditions as a way to remain viable. Over this same time period, Broadway, movie music, gaming music, and all the popular genres found ways to evolve, remain exciting, and appeal to wide audiences, all while generating strong revenues.

Moving forward, classical music needs to find or create new expressions of art music that intersect a diverse spectrum of styles in ways that interest the public. It needs to incorporate diverse styles into its own language, and engage a wider audience without sacrificing aesthetic integrity. Put another way, if Broadway can bring the rap/hip-hop style to the stage successfully and artistically, why can't orchestras succeed similarly in their symphonic and concerto repertoire? Some recent classical compositions—for example by composers like Jessie Montgomery, Gabriela Lena Frank, Caroline Shaw, Daniel Bernard Roumain, and others—are doing this: combining accessible,

⁹ See: Ross, “The Rediscovery of Florence Price.”

yet thoughtful, music with diverse cultural styles in ways that would have met resistance a generation ago. Examples from this new repertoire need to appear at career gateways—to be suggested or requested at auditions, and specifically mentioned as repertoire to be understood on placement or entrance exams.

Classical music needs to embrace novelty, and do so repeatedly.

Tradition dies hard. Charles Rosen posits, in Chapter 2 of *Freedom and the Arts*, that abrupt or radical changes to an accepted canon of repertoire are nearly impossible to achieve because “old values spring immediately back into place once the new ideology’s back is turned. Introducing new figures into the canon is therefore, with few exceptions, a slow process....”¹⁰ Continuing in this vein, one poster on the music blog *Quora* writes, “If you don’t hear it on a regular basis, you don’t appreciate it.”¹¹ Rosen continues, “When Mozart was played in Paris in the early nineteenth century, he was popular neither with the critics nor with the public, but his music kept being frequently performed until both the critics and the public came around.”¹²

To combat classical music’s “tradition problem,” it needs to embrace novelty unabashedly, celebrating diverse composers from all eras, but especially living composers. It needs to remember that the music of living composers formed the *only* classical music for centuries. Educational and performing organizations that have emphasized tradition in the past can adopt a mantle of activism in this area with pride and visibility that promotes new music and trends. Examples of this are proliferating, and yet traditions remain in place at key gateways that create friction against modernization.

Understandably, some music seems to transcend its period, but that may be *in part* because it is performed so constantly that it cannot help but seem current. If we have never heard of William Dawson’s *Negro Folk Symphony*, or Amy Beach’s *Gaelic Symphony*, how can we feel anything at all toward them? If orchestras performed Dawson’s or Beach’s symphonies every season, might they not feel as current to our ears as Beethoven and Tchaikovsky already do? If we required excerpts from these symphonies as a part of the gateway to entrance of a modern orchestra, might orchestra musicians champion them, as they do the current repertoire featured on auditions? If orchestras performed these pieces consistently, might it also make sense to study them in collegiate history courses and to test knowledge of them at the graduate level, thereby adding broader audience awareness and understanding?

¹⁰ Charles Rosen, *Freedom and the Arts: Essays on Music and Literature*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012): 20.

¹¹ Nikkei Simmer, “Why isn’t classical music very widely appreciated anymore?” answered October 22, 2021, *Quora*, <https://www.quora.com/Why-isnt-classical-music-very-widely-appreciated-anymore>, accessed January 23, 2022.

¹² Rosen, *Freedom*, 23-24.

Until, and unless, new and more diverse composers are *repeatedly* represented on concert programs and in classrooms, creating *new* traditions, the level of public awareness is unlikely to rise to the level necessary to generate appreciation and maintain interest. Repeated contact with new music can and should begin in elementary school, but certainly no later than the professional audition.

**Classical music needs to move away from spotlighting
elite performances of established repertoire.**

Because a spotlight has been focused for decades upon a narrow and ever-aging canon, in one respect novel repertoire was, over a period of decades, supplanted by novel interpretations. The focus upon interpretation yielded phenomenal accuracy and compelling performances from musical artists, presented with ever-better sonic fidelity and, as appropriate, authentic performance practice. Ironically, after an initial period of interpretational flexibility, a counterintuitive perception that interpretational *liberties* narrowed in acceptability also evolved. In other words, novelty in performances ultimately engendered a new set of entrenched traditions—not only did repertoire experience a narrowing of diversity, but a parallel narrowing of acceptable interpretations also occurred, once initial novelties were absorbed. In the context of gateways to admission, it is decidedly easier to compare a candidate's performance for admission to a degree or performing organization using an established repertoire that affords a narrow range of interpretations than to determine eligibility based upon unknown repertoire with no established interpretation.¹³

Working through the problems involving interpretation and its established traditions will require, at least for a while, a bold emphasis at an institutional level (both educational and orchestral) on skilled interpretations of new repertoire instead of “celestial” interpretations of traditional repertoire. Some university auditions already encourage this diversity of repertoire and interpretation. Orchestral auditions, for the moment, appear to need to catch up.

**Classical music needs to move purposefully away from
the “cult of the masterpiece” and embrace diversity and new
music as prime reasons for presenting concerts.**

Because it has aimed an increasingly focused spotlight on an increasingly select repertoire, classical music currently struggles with a debate centered around *quality versus diversity*. Debate hinges in part upon what constitutes “worthwhile” concert music. Should we expend our energy performing and

¹³ As a concertmaster who sits behind a screen evaluating violin candidates, I have over 30 years of experience comparing one performance of an excerpt to another. Comparison cannot be avoided in auditions, but must comparison only happen within a repertoire that is not diverse?

hearing only the best of the best, as defined by a tradition that has supposedly already separated the chaff from the wheat? Will audiences only support concerts featuring established warhorses? Or are we giving them too little credit for their sense of adventure? And does a wider focus necessarily carry with it a decrease in quality? This question becomes especially relevant when addressing issues of under-representation for women, people of color, and gender fluid artists.

On the one side, as Charles Rosen states, “The efficacy of tradition...can be weakened by swamping it with a host of minor figures...” He continues, “Concerts of music by Locatelli, Albinoni, or Graun are bearable only for those music lovers for whom period style is more important than quality.”¹⁴ (But even here Rosen only includes white European male composers in his list of “forgettable.”)¹⁵

Alex Ross cast a shadow on Rosen’s perspective, writing in the *New Yorker* in 2018, “In progressive musicological circles these days, you hear much talk about the canon and about the bad assumptions that underpin it. Classical music, perhaps more than any other field, suffers from what the acidulous critic-composer Virgil Thomson liked to call the “masterpiece cult....The adulation of the master, the genius, the divinely gifted creator all too easily lapses into a cult of the white-male hero, to whom such traits are almost unthinkingly attached.”¹⁶

Opposing this perspective, the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) states in its Mission and Vision statements: “As our country becomes increasingly diverse, it is important for students in every school setting to study a wide variety of musical styles, cultures, and genres. *Our Position: A well-rounded and comprehensive music education program, as envisioned in the 2014 National Music Standards, should exist in every American school; should be built on a curricular framework that promotes awareness of, respect for, and responsiveness to the variety and diversity of cultures; and should be delivered by teachers whose culturally responsive pedagogy enables them to successfully design and implement such an inclusive curricular framework.*”¹⁷

As with interpretations, surmounting the problem of an established canon of masterpieces will require bold initiatives to program and market novel music, and to do it repeatedly. Performing organizations and higher education can work in tandem to discover, perform, and educate new repertoire. Orchestras that already host “composers-in-residence” can perform their new compositions more

¹⁴ Rosen, *Freedom*, 21.

¹⁵ For initial lists of female composers and composers of African descent, see the following two Wikipedia sites: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_women_composers_by_birth_date#17th_century and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_composers_of_African_descent

¹⁶ Ross, “The Rediscovery of Florence Price.”

¹⁷ “Inclusivity and Diversity in Music Education: A Position Statement of the National Association for Music Education,” *NAfME*, website, <https://nafme.org/about/position-statements/inclusivity-diversity/>, accessed January 3, 2022.

than a few times and find ways to excerpt those compositions onto audition lists. Actions such as these not only champion the featured composers, they also make each orchestra unique in its audition repertoire. Uniqueness that is championed is one step toward establishing a new repertoire that may eventually escape its niche to be accepted into the canon of “standards.” Collegiate bands and choirs already feature living composers to a greater degree than orchestras do, and the “standards” for these ensembles often include music written in the past 30 years. Bands and choirs are already models for success in inclusivity and cultural relevance.

Classical ensembles need to work with composers, publishers, and estates to navigate copyright restrictions for gateway auditions.

More recent compositions and some older repertoire by historically underrepresented composers can be protected by copyright and available via rental only. Historically, music on orchestral audition lists has existed in the public domain, as evinced by the lists referenced to begin this article. Rental music under current copyright could be included on auditions, yet recent audition lists indicate it is usually avoided. Orchestra managements understandably balk at requiring candidates to rent music in order to take an audition. Renting music increases the complexity of audition preparations, and it introduces a potential element of inequity if it adds additional costs to an audition that cause some applicants to be excluded. Larger budget ensembles may “own” permanent rental copies and can copy portions of them to distribute for auditions. Other orchestras may not own such repertoire, or may decide that it is preferable simply to identify audition selections and leave the procurement of parts to the auditionee. Many orchestras likely default to public domain music simply because it is the easiest, most safe, inexpensive, and efficient way to select repertoire that challenges the techniques and musicianship they wish to test prior to admitting a candidate to the ensemble.

Traditional repertoire does indeed possess the challenges that illuminate a candidate’s ability to perform a wide spectrum of technical and musical skills. As mentioned above, since it is well known, it is easy to compare a performance against a tradition or standard. Is it really possible, though, that *no single piece* by an African American or female composer can illustrate a similar technical or musical level of accomplishment?¹⁸

Copyright license restrictions are one potential challenge that new repertoire faces in gaining traction on modern audition lists. That said, I wonder how many living composers (or the estates of deceased underrepresented

¹⁸ Leah Claiborne provides a short list of diverse examples from *piano* literature that could replace traditional pieces with similar challenges in future MTNA competitions. Claiborne, “What Ifs,” 23. A similar list of orchestral audition “replacement” repertoire would be interesting to see.

composers) would balk at providing a “fair use” portion of their current music to orchestras for audition purposes, especially if doing so brought their music into greater visibility? The fair use of a portion of a composition on an audition might increase the likelihood of its being rented for a complete performance by the same ensemble. A copyright problem may be surmounted with little more than devising mutually beneficial relationships between performing organizations and publishing houses or composer estates. If copyright presents a roadblock to modernized audition lists, it should be addressed immediately to find a solution to the issue.

Classical music needs to encourage and propel its string and keyboard subdivisions in particular toward more modern repertoire.

At heart, an emphasis upon diverse repertoire and the music of living composers is really a string/orchestra/keyboard issue. In the 19th century, while the wind and brass instrument families were evolving to their current instrument configurations, a wide repertoire became established for strings and keyboard. Continued performance of that repertoire contributed to a “cult of masterpiece” status that is less frequently held by music for brass, winds, and percussion. Flute, percussion, brass instruments, choirs, and bands all currently teach and program diverse music, and feature compositions by living composers. Their audition requirements at universities also tend toward stipulating “two contrasting pieces of your choice,” which allows a wider spectrum of music and time period than the delimiting term “standard concerto” implies.

History aside, professional orchestras, and a large segment of music school programs, depend upon strings and piano for their performing success or program completeness. Perhaps that will change as demographics change as well. Perhaps the piano and the violin family will fade into marginality, replaced by guitar, band instruments, and others. If so, the traditions that hamper diversity will fade along with the instruments that perpetuate them. If orchestras intend to remain relevant, with a core of string musicians, their repertoire will need to adapt to current demographics, or it will face increasingly stiff resistance from younger audiences. This problem requires that teachers of string and keyboard instruments make a conscious effort to locate and instruct newer repertoire.

Classical music needs to create profitable opportunities for living composers to write pedagogical works in current styles.

In the past, method books used well-known classical melodies to instruct youth in a variety of instruments. Simplified pieces by Beethoven, Debussy, Bizet, Brahms, Mendelssohn, Rossini, and others formed the backbone of pedagogic methods, teaching youth how to navigate an instrument while locking the tunes into their memory. Classical tunes, heard repeatedly from youth,

smoothed access to the music of these composers later in life. A modern solution will depend upon composers writing and making available (either through traditional publishers or via Open Access channels) interesting new pieces for a wide level of technical abilities that introduce their styles to young people who then will feel at home with their style in more advanced music later on. (Recall Bartok's pedagogical string duets from 1931 that were current in style in their day.) Once young musicians encounter "cool" *new* music at the student level, it should make the transition to professional compositions by the same composer in a similar style easier to accept and champion as adults. Encouraging these new pieces to become representative competition repertoire at different levels, or entrance requirements in higher education, could open a door to visibility and familiarity.

**Remodeling established, traditional gateways to entry:
some important early efforts**

Demographics of all sorts—from immigration patterns to patterns of consumption—require that classical music adapt to build a new and current performance tradition. Returning to the opening lists in this article, the gateways to entry we have established as tradition over a century of practice are currently a barrier to changing the diverse landscape in American classical music. In order to adapt, classical music must modernize its gateways to entry. Some likely paths that will need to be explored include, but are not limited to:

- explicitly requiring knowledge and performance of music by living composers on gateway exams and auditions
- explicitly requiring knowledge of jazz and music of global cultures on entrance exams at the graduate level
- expanding educational content to treat living classical composers as we treat living pop icons, actors, and authors.

A few conservatories and universities are beginning to shift toward an emphasis upon diversity in their gateways to admission. These bear highlighting here, and should be considered as overtures for other music programs across the nation to model. (This short list is not exhaustive.)

- The Cleveland Institute of Music states on its online website: "Many areas below allow you to showcase a work(s) of your choosing. Where there is flexibility in requirements, we encourage you to expand beyond the traditional canon and explore the expansive repertoire options. CIM's Program Advisory Committee has put together a database of resources and repertoire that focuses on underrepresented composers in classical music."¹⁹

¹⁹ "Audition repertoire," Cleveland Institute of Music, <https://www.cim.edu/admissions/audition/repertoire>, accessed January 12, 2022.

This is a necessary beginning step. Still, across all instruments on CIM's audition page, only the cello audition page specifically *asks for* a “short piece, of your choosing, composed after 1950 by a Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) composer,” and this piece is only asked after a candidate has passed a prescreening audition that consists exclusively of standard European repertoire.

- The Juilliard School is also initiating awareness of more diverse composers. Its website states, “In the Music Division, we are also taking important steps to broaden our knowledge by creating a faculty-researched list of works by Black composers to embrace and work toward a more representative world of classical music.”²⁰ On the resource page appears a statement by the provost and interim dean and a series of instrument-specific lists that are stated as introductory and not exhaustive, provided by department chairs for each instrument.
- The Curtis Institute is broadening its gateway to admission at the graduate level by requiring a commissioned piece by a current student composer at Curtis. This piece will be composed expressly for the audition, and will be under five minutes in length, according to the website.²¹ At this writing, the requirement is *only* for violin candidates at the Masters degree level, yet it is a small and important step toward opening doors for living composers, building future lives in music, and widening repertoires.
- Bard College Conservatory is taking steps to broaden training in music from other cultures on its campus. A specific US-China degree option brings Chinese instruments and qualified professors to campus. Bard's website specifically addresses the historic tradition and how it is working to break down established barriers: “Historically, classical music education has foregrounded European practices of the 17th through 20th centuries. As we become accountable for discriminations relating to that narrow focus, we affirm our intention to break down those boundaries of exclusion. Actionable steps towards equity include: the long-term cultivation of a diverse faculty, staff, and student body that is inclusive of a diverse range of races, ethnicities, genders, and LGBTQ+ identities; the practice of respectful listening and communication within and between our programs; the regular review

²⁰ “Opportunity and Artistry,” *Juilliard: Music*, <https://www.juilliard.edu/music>, accessed January 18, 2022.

²¹ “Audition,” *Curtis Institute of Music*, <https://www.curtis.edu/admissions/audition/>, accessed January 18, 2022.

of curricula and their successful inclusion of multiple perspectives; the presentation of diverse musical programming that features and furthers collaborations across the Bard campus; and the forging of initiatives that engage with underserved communities and underrepresented populations.”²²

These schools of music see the future with eyes wide open and will likely thrive as the demographics and culture of this country continue to shift away from a Euro-centric history. Collaborations between musical styles and instruments from global cultures may well result in new compositions that appeal to diverse audiences in ways we cannot predict. They may well generate musical styles unique to the 21st century. The new, diverse, and collaborative styles will be debated and discussed—in academic classrooms, and in the press—and ultimately, they will be taught and tested in future collegiate programs. Early efforts by influential programs will expand, and as they do, they will influence programming across multiple campuses and professional ensembles.

Orchestras across the nation are also beginning to see the necessity and feel the interest to shift away from Euro-centric programming toward new styles. Emphasizing these new works will interest audiences in ways that build numbers as well as patron loyalty in a new era. The initial, sometimes tentative, steps many orchestras are taking at this time will become more assured as repertoire is heard over and over, establishing it as part of a new canon of exciting and exceptional music. The shift toward diverse music in the collegiate classroom will then stabilize the newer repertoire as it is discussed, analyzed, and tested.²³

Why this matters now

A blending of diverse styles is nothing new in classical music history. During the Medieval era, Arabic and European styles met, intersected, and cross-fertilized one another in art, music, and architecture. A millennium later, the results of these blended styles attract global visitors who exclaim in awe and photograph the hybrid art as if it is the most wonderful thing. They listen raptly to street musicians in foreign countries who perform in styles that are not traditional to their tourist backgrounds. Composers of the past—from Medieval troubadours to Haydn, Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, and Bartok, to name but a

²² “Diversity, Equity and Inclusion from the Bard College Music Community,” *Bard Conservatory*, <https://www.bard.edu/conservatory/dei/>, accessed January 20, 2022.

²³ Several websites, in addition to those accessed through the music school websites mentioned above, provide starting places for research into a wider and more diverse repertoire of classical music. Among them: Online lists of women composers: <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/page/women-composers-by-time-period>, and <https://www.psaudio.com/copper/article/women-composers-of-early-music/> Online databases (not exhaustive) of the music of American composers of color: <https://www.musicbyblackcomposers.org/>, and <https://www.composerdiversity.com/>

few—also incorporated ethnically diverse styles into their compositions, creating music that has withstood the test of time. Dvorak proclaimed African songs and spirituals to be the future of American classical music, if only composers would use them.

More recently, classical music, in comparison to many of its sister arts, has tended to glorify the past while the other arts glorify the present. At this moment in history, we need a stronger emphasis upon new and more diverse music in ways that generate a new canon of art music, and build the opportunity for a more universal cultural interest in it. That, in turn, may generate new relevance for it in a larger segment of the American public than the average 8.6% of the American population that has been shown to be interested in it, as of 2017.²⁴

Modifying traditional gateways must not be the *only* effort made to move classical music toward a greater diversity and current relevance; however, it is one reasonable, practical, and *doable* action that can impact classical music and its future. It is a way forward. Modifying gateways to entrance into degree programs and professional organizations is one simple way to shift an institution's emphasis visibly and tangibly.

Administrators and orchestral executives can begin the process of updating their gateways by creating opportunities in their organizations to ask and discuss a variety of important questions. We might begin by asking if a review and update of departmental Vision and Mission statements, as needed, might impact practical updates to our audition processes, but discussion should only be a first step only for any institution—stopping at language modification is an easy route to stymied real progress in the long run.

We might consider how degree entrance exams and auditions can be broadened in scope to represent more recent, diverse, and global repertoire. It should not be enough merely to state a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion on an institutional homepage. Prospective candidates should also see the *practical* applications of these ideals in a department's expectations for admission. They need to see what a university asks its candidates to bring to their gateway audition and how those initial expectations will be expanded upon throughout their degree program.

Faculty conversations around the repertoire they teach, and a purposeful exploration of new repertoire with departmental support can also be considered. It is past time to abandon the “How and what I teach perpetuates how and what I learned from my own teachers” approach to musical instruction. It is reasonable to discuss whether departments wish to implement, without compromising faculty autonomy, new standards that the music of women and BIPOC composers must be encountered/studied/performed by students at various times

²⁴ “The 2017 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts,” *National Endowment for the Arts*, <https://www.arts.gov/impact/research/arts-data-profile-series/adp-18>, accessed February 8, 2022.

and places across their degrees. Syllabi can be reviewed collectively to determine if diversity is integrated broadly or only sporadically across the department. Departmental areas that are ahead in their diversity teaching and pedagogy can be engaged to work with areas that need to update. Additionally, department meetings provide a viable time and place to share publicly some of the innovative efforts already underway at several schools (for example, those mentioned in this article), stimulate breakout discussions, and generate conversations around diversity and curriculum. Such conversations may motivate further committee action within the department.

Performing organizations can look at similar issues in their own gateways to admission. It is past time to abandon the “This is how auditions have always gone” model for professional orchestras. The music director and principal chair musicians can identify new excerpts that meet the technical and musical standards of the ensemble while also broadening its repertoire. They can contact composers, copyright holders, or estates to discuss licensing excerpts (or fair use options), and then update their audition lists. Conversations involving new programming, new marketing plans, and new ideas for educational outreach by the ensemble that orient to broader and more diverse audiences can happen as well.

If music maintains its traditional approach to its entry gateways—perpetuating audition and entrance exam models that were established decades ago with different demographics—it will coerce the next generation of young musicians either to keep its focus upon a non-representative aspect of a diverse musical landscape, or to select a different type of repertoire and performing experience altogether. While the repertoire itself is not at fault, and should continue to be performed in the same spirit as masterpieces of art are viewed in a museum—both for their intrinsic merit and as symbols of a past time—ensembles and educational institutions must broaden their scope to encourage new compositions into the canon, and to allow living composers from all genders, sexes, races, and ethnicities to flourish. It is really the only way to modernize the classical concert scene with music that people from all backgrounds will be excited to hear.

Modernized gateways across the classical career path are but one change that can and should happen now. They should happen in concert with deeper discussions, greater visibility of the issues, and a host of other important avenues for building an inclusive and diverse life and career in music. I maintain, however, that if only the conversations happen while the gateways remain unchanged, the effect will be to stall the progress of diversity at several critical junctures along a career track.

This isn't about saving face or maintaining budgets. It is about survival and continued relevance in an evolving nation. Classical music needs to adapt, or else

to fade into a form of inconsequence as “museum music.” This does not mean that orchestras or institutions of higher education cannot continue to perform or to teach acknowledged masterpieces from history in some fashion. It does mean that the occasional “dipping of the toe” into the waters of multiculturalism and equitable representation will simply not suffice for two reasons:

- 1) it will not satisfy the interests of the next generation that views itself more holistically and demands representation for its individuality; and
- 2) occasionality will not place works currently outside the traditional repertoire into the ears of listeners and performers often enough to bring them into the canon of works people demand to hear time and again.

Change needs to involve recalibrations that replace outdated procedures and models with currently relevant ones. Current demographics, immigration patterns, and self-identity/orientation in younger generations indicate a future that will not continue along the same trajectories possible in the past. If we do not take risks at this time in history, we hazard writing ourselves into a corner from which it will be difficult to extricate ourselves. Perhaps we already have. As we continue our focused conversations on the issues of race and equity in classical music, it is time to examine with a critical eye the repertoire, curricula, textbooks, and testing we have traditionally upheld as gateways to a profession, and to replace them with new and current examples that better represent our evolving nation, its people, its interests, and its future.

Now is the time to engage in system-wide discussions—between academics, composers, critics, performers, universities, orchestras, estates, and publishing houses—on ways to erode traditional barriers and redesign the models for how classical music is taught in higher education and performed professionally, from the audition to the concert stage. Alex Ross wrote, “Classical music can overcome the shadows of its past only if it commits itself more strongly to the present. A deeper reckoning would require wholesale changes in how orchestras canvass talent, conservatories recruit students, institutions hire executives, and marketers approach audiences.”²⁵

Gateways are literally the points of entry into an education or career. If they remain mired in tradition and historic models, they will send a message that, though the world is changing, the classical music scene is not, even if it says it is. If we engage in conversations but make no tangible changes to our past paradigms, we risk not being taken seriously, and we risk losing credibility in the very changes we say we prioritize.

²⁵ Ross, “The Rediscovery of Florence Price...”

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**TEACHING FROM “SUM TOTAL:”
COMMEMORATING THE HOLOCAUST THROUGH
CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCE**

There is divine beauty in learning just as there is human beauty in tolerance. To learn means to accept the postulate that life did not begin at my birth. Others have been here before me, and I walk in their footsteps. The books I have read were composed by generations of fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, teachers and disciples. I am the sum total of their experiences, their quests. And so are you.

Elie Wiesel¹

In recent years, calls to address racism and inequity have been amplified across our country; and institutions of higher learning, in particular, have given pause to reflect on their role as educators toward justice, tolerance, and parity. Great strides have been made to uncover the accouterments of established racism that has bristled in colleges and universities for decades.² These calls urge higher education leaders to define and understand racism, defend and empower its victims, and develop institutional accountability and periodic reviews.³ While numerous higher education institutions pledge for racial equity⁴, reevaluate and reshape their teaching curriculum, this paper begs leaders in performing arts higher institutions to consider the performance of music emerged from marginalized and oppressed people during the Holocaust as means to commemorate, combat various forms of racism, and preserve history while educating students and local communities about music born of struggle.

The recent (2021) music program at Christopher Newport University⁵ serves as a touchstone for this exploration, as emblematic of universities' best

¹ Elie Wiesel, "Have you learned the Most Important Lesson of All?" *Parade Magazine* 24 (1992): 4-5.

² Council for Higher Education Accreditation, "Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statement," *CHEA*, May 3, 2021, <https://www.chea.org/sites/default/files/2021-05/DEI-Value-Statement-May-2021.pdf>

³ Kseniia Pirnavskaia and Cornelius Kalenzi, "3 Vital Steps for Uprooting Racism on University Campuses," *World Economic Forum*, Sept. 7, 2021, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/09/racism-university-higher-education>. One of many articles that emerged in 2021 to address specific inequities in higher education. Published in the *World Economic Forum*, researchers at the *KAIST-Korea Policy Center for the Fourth Industrial Revolution* stress the imperative that university campuses take immediate steps toward uprooting racism.

⁴ Oyin Adedoyin, "How can Colleges Advance Pledges of Racial Equity? A New Report Suggests Strategies," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Nov. 17, 2021, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/how-can-colleges-advance-pledges-of-racial-equity-a-new-report-suggests-strategies>

⁵ Christopher Newport University (Virginia), Department of Theater and Dance, "Reflections of the Holocaust," *OperaCNU*, Nov. 4-7, 2021, <https://cnu.edu/reflectionsevent/>

practices for espousing thoughtful, communal experience by showcasing music of oppressed peoples across learner levels and orientation. By engaging several academic departments, local community, and other regional organizations, such programs support an important task – specifically, the endeavor to safeguard and perform music composed during the Holocaust, and within the curriculum, explore antiracist instruction, composition, and performance on campus and beyond. Harvesting lessons learned from the recent *OperaCNU*, *TheatreCNU*, and *The Virginia Children's Chorus* production during November 2021, this paper explores selected compositions borne from repressed composers and artists across a spectrum of time, and considers the cultural and sociopolitical import of teaching and performing such music as a way to bring together individuals from diverse communities to the concert hall, and for a brief moment in time, come together as one supportive community.

Prelude

Christopher Newport University, November 2021

Hundreds of people from the peninsula of Newport News, Virginia gathered to remember and reflect upon the events of the Holocaust as Christopher Newport University played host to four evenings of performance involving two successional operas: *Brundibár*ⁱ and *The Trial of God*. *Brundibár*, a children's opera by Hans Krásaⁱⁱ (a Prague composer of Jewish descent who was murdered during the Holocaust at Auschwitz) featured first, immediately followed (no intermission) by a locally-commissioned operatic compositionⁱⁱⁱ of Elie Wiesel's 1979 play.⁶ Several local organizations participated in sponsoring this series^{iv}, which included art exhibits, guest lectures, and musical performances throughout the 2021 fall semester.^v The idea to bring *Brundibár* to the local stage was introduced to Professor Mark Reimer of CNU, two years prior to its production, at the suggestion of an Israeli colleague who had just conducted it abroad. Shortly afterwards, program administrators and faculty across multiple academic departments began devoting many months of coordinated effort and visionary leadership to bring the ideas into implementation, and commemorate the musical and literary resistance that arose from Terezin and Auschwitz, to Newport News Virginia's Christopher Newport University.

How History Unfolds into Music and Song

Brundibár in Prague & Terezín (1938-1944)

There are many ways to tell a story of persistence amidst harsh circumstances in the camps, and *Brundibár* is an excellent example of a resistance and survival story. Of all musical works composed and performed by artists incarcerated in concentration camps during the Holocaust, *Brundibár*, an

⁶ Elie Wiesel, *The Trial of God (as it was held on February 25, 1649, in Shamgorod)* (New York: Random House, 1979).

expression in the form of opera, made for children and performed by children, carries a unique testimony and orientation. At the heart of this piece is the fact that children, the most innocent and vulnerable of all, were victimized by perpetrators. The opera’s composer, Hans Krása, was an established, award-winning Czechoslovakian composer whose prominence reached the United States in the first half of the twentieth century and his music was performed by the Boston Symphony⁷. It was from Krása’s 1938 collaboration with Adolf Hoffmeister, a social activist, poet, and illustrator that this protest-opera originated.⁸

Brundibár premiered in Nazi-occupied Prague and was performed by the children of a Jewish orphanage on Belgicka Street⁹. The performance was followed by another in 1942, with mass deportations of Bohemian and Moravian Jews to Terezín. In 1943, a copy of *Brundibár*’s score was smuggled into the camp. Krása, who was deported there, re-orchestrated the score for the musicians able to play, and it premiered in Terezín on September 23, 1943, in the hall of the Magdeburg Barracks.¹⁰ The opera was so popular in Terezín that it was later staged for the purposes of Nazi propaganda in a film^{vi} produced and directed by Kurt Gerron in 1944. Later that year, it was performed for the 55th time during an inspection of the camp by the International Red Cross.¹¹ A few weeks after, in October 1944, a mass deportation of Terezín prisoners to Auschwitz and other camps in the East marked the ending of *Brundibár*’s production and the death of many of its performers and musicians including its beloved composer, Hans Krása.¹²

Brundibár Today

Brundibár is a universal story of hope, survival, and communal support. It is a composition that can be performed anywhere in the world and carry a resounding, wide-ranging message of encouragement, trust, love of community, unified purpose, and triumph. Both meaningful and malleable, it is an asset for music departments seeking to stage inspiring compositions of resiliency, empathy, community engagement, and drama. The orchestration is minimal and easily adaptable for various ensembles, depending on the scope and aptitude of a music program orchestra. The opera serves as a perfect educational platform today, just as it was in the Prague orphanage and Terezín concentration camp so many years ago. It is a tale about a poor family and a testament to the power

⁷ Joža Karas, *Music in Terezin 1941-1945* (Hillsdale: Pendragon Press, 2008), 103-110.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁹ Joseph Toltz, “Brundibár: Introduction and Brief History,” *Music and the Holocaust*. <https://holocaustmusic.ort.org/places/theresienstadt/brundibar/>

¹⁰ Karas, 93.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 98.

¹² *Ibid.*, 110.

of teamwork and communal support. The main characters are siblings, Aninka and Pepíček, whose mother is sick. The children go on a journey to the town's marketplace to look for milk (prescribed by the doctor) that might save their mother. Unfortunately, they lack the money needed to purchase the milk. Then they notice *Brundibár*, the old organ grinder who plays at the street corner and receives coins. They, too, begin to sing in hopes of earning milk-money, but they are unsuccessful. No one listens to them and *Brundibár* chases them away. Three animals arrive to their rescue: a sparrow, a cat, and a dog. The animals help recruit other children to join in Aninka and Pepíček's choir. The following morning, all the children and animals begin vibrant communal singing. Their beautiful songs endear the support of townsfolk and Aninka and Pepíček have the money for milk. Suddenly, *Brundibár* sneaks in to steal it. All the children and animals chase him to recover the milk money. The story concludes in a victory song about conquering the wicked *Brundibár*.¹³

Pedagogical Possibilities of Testimony & Witnessing

What kind of testimony does this opera give its listeners, and what kind of significance can it hold within music programming in higher education? Dr. Kurt Singer, a Berlin-born musicologist deported to Terezín (and who died there in 1944), published one of the first demonstrations of *Brundibár*'s pedagogical possibilities and advocated for the study and performance of the opera:

Brundibár shows how a short opera of today should look and sound, how it can unite the highest in artistic taste with originality of concept, and modern character with viable tunes. We have here a theme which has appeal for children and grown-ups alike, a moral plot motif recalling the old fairy tales, popular singing kept simple in choral sections but occasionally becoming quite complex in duets and trios, and a sensitive balance of dynamics maintained between a dozen instruments and three dozen singers. We have also a Czech national coloration, music-making without recourse to modern experimentation (at which Krása is a master), a clever balance of scenic effects between the orchestra pit and the stage, an orchestra used with taste and economy and a singing line which is never obscured or smothered by the instruments.... In this little opera, born of a serious mind and yet so pleasant to the ear, idea and form, thought and preparation, concept and execution are joined in a fruitful marriage of mutual collaboration: whether it be cast in a large or small form, whether it be song

¹³ Sofia Pantouvaki, "Repetition and Performance: The Case of Children's Opera Brundibar Today," *Repeat Conference, Centre for Practice as Research in the Arts*, 2007: 2. <http://www.cpara.co.uk/events/repeatrepeat/embodiment.html>

or symphony, chorus or opera, there can be no higher praise for a work of art.¹⁴

Singer’s review of the opera could not be more timely or relevant today.

Many of Terezín’s children were murdered in the Holocaust, as was composer Krása and many of *Brundibár’s* performers. What we are left with is the spirited testimony of musical resistance from the depths of Hell. When those children could not express their agony in words – could not fight their outrageous circumstance in action – they chose to sing.



Figure 1. *Brundibár* cast in the Terezín concentration camp.¹⁵
(Photograph property of the Jewish Museum in Prague
<https://www.jewishmuseum.cz/>)

Brundibár is a simple story with powerful meaning. It is about hope and social justice, and as such, it provided solace and ephemeral comfort to those enjoying its performance, as well as to those endeavoring to bring it to life. Today, it endows audiences with much of the same, albeit from a contemporary perspective: an allegorical telling of victory over a tyrant; music that is approachable, memorable, and enjoyable; and an orchestration that is delicate and challenging enough to provide entertainment for sophisticated

¹⁴ Karas, 99.

¹⁵ Tereza Štěpková, “Brundibár,” *Institut Terezínské Iniciativy*, Aug. 21, 2011. <https://www.holocaust.cz/en/history/events/brundibar/>

and inexperienced ears alike. This testimony – and its witnessing by both music students and general audiences – is aligned with learning objectives and civic engagement initiatives commonly charted in music curricula and program accreditations, and can make for rich and robust discourse in the classroom and beyond it.

Teaching the historical events of the Holocaust and its artistic reverberations is critical at this time. Often, music generated out of oppressive and discriminatory circumstance (political or otherwise) is a survival tool, a form of physical and spiritual resistance. Performing arts leaders in colleges and universities are continuously tasked with developing novel ways for inclusion. While institutional efforts continue on a trajectory toward promoting inclusion and equity, arts administrators know that musical multiculturalism and diversity allow for a deeper understanding of aesthetics, authenticity, and values. And yet, hate crimes (particularly antisemitism) continue to rise¹⁶. Recent surveys, too, have shown an alarming lack of knowledge about the Holocaust,¹⁷ suggesting significant unfamiliarity with the kind of delegitimizing behavior that can lead to genocidal atrocities of a most horrific scale. The musical perspective is a multisensory approach to teaching about humanity and inhumanity, and compositions such as *Brundibár* provide testimony to the experience and legacy of those whose lives were brutally cut short. Music leaders in higher education might embrace works like *Brundibár* (or one of the many others composed in Nazi-occupied Europe) and promote their performances beyond campus community.

CNU's 2021 production of *Brundibár* (see fig. 2 & 3) gave audiences the opportunity to explore an artistic response (sound and text) to struggles endured by its composer and original cast. How can millennial audiences possibly understand what Hans Krása, and his child-performers encountered while imprisoned? Those who came to observe these performances listened to the music as a story told in sound - collective testimony in song - and, for a brief moment in time, personally communicated with and connected to what might have otherwise remained a remote and “other-person’s” history.

¹⁶ Avi Mayer, “Hate is on the Rise: Antisemitism Surges on America’s Far Left and Far Right,” *USA Today*, Oct. 26, 2021, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2021/10/26/antisemitism-rises-far-left-and-right/6138796001/?gnt-cfr=1>

¹⁷ Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany, Inc. (Claims Conference), “First-ever 50-State Survey on Holocaust Knowledge of American Millennials and Gen Z Reveals Shocking Results,” *Claims Conference*, Sept. 16, 2020, <https://www.claimscon.org/millennial-study/>



Figure 2. Virginia Children’s Chorus performing *Brundibár* at Peebles Theatre, Nov. 4, 2021. Photograph by Ryan Bible, Lecturer of Lighting and Sound, Christopher Newport University



Figure 3. Virginia Children’s Chorus performing *Brundibár* at Peebles Theatre, Nov. 4, 2021. Photograph by Ryan Bible, Lecturer of Lighting and Sound, Christopher Newport University

The Art of Musical Resistance

Musicians in Terezín

When it came to spiritual and artistic resistance, Terezín was like no other. Less than an hour drive north of Prague, the Terezín camp and ghetto (also known as, *Theresienstadt*) served several purposes during the Second World War. It was a fortress town repurposed in 1941 by the Schutzstaffel (or, the SS). With an adjacent prison, Terezín functioned as both a concentration camp (receiving 144,000 deportees bound for labor camps and the gas chambers of Auschwitz) and a retirement settlement for older Jews, many of whom were successful and quite prominent. Jews from across Europe arrived in its first year. Unlike other camps, which were more transient, Terezín inmates were held for longer periods of time before ultimately sent out to other sites. Because of this, the camp was able to establish its own community, with its own administrative practices, and committees to help create and encourage a rich cultural life there. This life included numerous concert performances, lectures, and education programs for children and adults. It was all part of the collective consciousness and intention of prisoners to make their lives worth living, enriched with spiritual and intellectual significance.¹⁸ *Brundibár* was not the only opera performed in Terezín. In fact, camp prisoners enjoyed several operas composed and produced within its walls. Among these is Bedřich Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*, a comic opera inspired by the folk traditions of his Czechoslovakian village. This three-act opera featuring Czech songs and dances brought "home" to the incarcerated prisoners, who longed so desperately to return. Other repertory favorites in this genre included Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* and *The Magic Flute*, *La Serva Padrona* by Giovanni Battista Pergolesi, Verdi's *Rigoletto*, Puccini's *Tosca*, and Bizet's *Carmen*. Perhaps the most notable Terezín opera, on par with *Brundibár* for younger audiences, is Viktor Ullmann's *The Emperor of Atlantis*, composed and rehearsed there but never performed because the singers and musicians were all sent to the Auschwitz gas chambers before its debut. Years of incarceration in Terezín are reflected in Ullman's reflections on the spiritual and mental significance of making music there:

*It must be emphasized that Theresienstadt has served to enhance, not to impede, my musical activities, that by no means did we sit weeping on the banks of the waters of Babylon, and that our endeavor with respect to arts was commensurate with our will to live. And I am convinced that all those who, in life and in art, were fighting to force form upon resisting matter, will agree with me.*¹⁹

¹⁸ Hans Günther Adler and Jeremy Adler, *Theresienstadt 1941-1945: The Face of a Coerced Community* (Cambridge University Press, 2017), 517.

¹⁹ Rachel Bergman, "Creativity in Captivity: Viktor Ullmann's 'Der Kaiser von Atlantis,'" *Opera Journal* 38, no. 2 (2005): 3-19.

Today, Ullmann’s *Emperor* is revitalized in music departments and community theaters across the country.

Reviving Testimonies through Music **Elie Wiesel’s *The Trial of God***

While CNU’s 2021 production of *Brundibár* gave audiences a light-hearted and hopeful show of triumph, its subsequent opera invited viewers to consider a world apart – a dark, pessimistic survivor’s view of life and torturous doubt. The idea to adapt Elie Wiesel’s play, *The Trial of God* (based on Wiesel’s experience in Auschwitz) to music, came from a community member, Professor Theodore Reiff, who established the Reiff Center for Human Rights and Conflict Resolution at Christopher Newport University in 2013. Professor Reiff’s idea was set in motion when CNU reached out to Andrew Scott Bell, a successful LA-based film composer and notable alumnus, and Professor Jason Carney from CNU’s English department. Engaging these two young artists in the work of preserving memory and testimony of the Holocaust resulted in the opera entitled *The Trial of God*. In the opera, Scott Bell and Carney reflect upon the testimony of a broken man who has lost his family, community, and former life. The program’s listeners experienced a chasmic shift from a child’s hope to an adult’s despair. Alone, Wiesel’s play raises existential questions about the human condition and the resilience of a man (how far can a man go in challenging long-cherished religious and cultural beliefs?), but in contrast to Krása’s childlike reverie, the succeeding work comes to stage as a shock.

Sixteen-year-old Elie Wiesel was in Auschwitz when he witnessed three Jewish scholars put God on trial. The verdict finds God guilty of crimes against creation and humankind. After announcing the decision, there is silence, and as evening approaches, all members go off to pray the Jewish evening prayer, *Maariv*, in the evening service. Wiesel remembers this while contemplating questions of his own as to why God allowed such catastrophic human suffering. Wiesel takes his audience through his childhood experiences during the invasion and later as an imprisoned teen in Auschwitz, further into the broken hearts of destroyed and shattered Jewish towns across Europe. *Shamgorod*, the village at the heart of Wiesel’s play, could be any town destroyed at the hand of an enemy throughout the course of world history; therefore, its local performance is relevant and timely, especially transforming his testimonial reflection into a story told in sound under the superior craftsmanship of both Scott Bell and Carney. Central to Wiesel’s subjective and objective inquiry are questions anyone, in any town, might ask. Why did God allow entire communities to be destroyed? Why did children die, why were women raped, and why were whole towns and villages slaughtered? The opera, as the play, does not provide the answers to

these questions; rather, through Wiesel's historic text, Scott Bell and Carney give voice to his inner thoughts and questions to continue the skillful crafting of his characters through new lyrical and rhythmic content. To a modern audience perhaps unfamiliar with Wiesel's experience, this opera offers yet another opportunity to listen, commemorate, and better understand the effects of the Holocaust through the sung dialogues and testimonies, thus providing an invaluable contribution to learning about the holocaust through music listening.

The setting of the opera, as the play, is a fictional ruin. Shamgorod is a Jewish town in Europe prior to the war. Its name divides into two languages: *sham* in Hebrew means *there*, and *gorod* in Russian means *town*. Characters too, dressed in seventeenth-century style, bring the modern audience promptly into collective, imaginative reckoning: *Inside the kingdom of night, I witnessed a strange trial. Three Rabbis - all erudite and pious men - decided one winter evening to indict God for allowing his children to be massacred. I remember: I was there, and I felt like crying. But there nobody cried.*

Wiesel, followed by Scott Bell's musical setting, and Carney's libretto take audiences back to 1649, after a pogrom where death has triumphed. The annihilated village is buried in dust and darkness. Only a few people survive, and they sit alone in an inn where many atrocities took place. The rabbis Wiesel witnessed in the camp are now three fictional minstrels in the play: Mendel, Avrémel, and Yankel. They all seem unaware and disconnected, both physically and viscerally, to the atrocities that took place in the town. Other characters include Berish, the innkeeper, who is sorrowful and angry. He lost his entire family with the exception of his daughter, Hanna, who has been raped for hours by an angry mob. Berish was forced to watch this and is now witness to her transformation as a weak, disconnected, and fragile woman. Maria, a servant at the inn, is a humiliated soul as well. A Russian orthodox priest who attempts to direct Berish and his daughter to the Cross in an attempt to save them from another massacre. The minstrels come to the inn, hoping to exchange some laughter and play for food, but as soon as they realize that there are no Jews left in the town and witness the angry and mournful state of Berish, they decide (in minstrel fashion) to put God on trial. Finally, audiences are given Sam, a satanic character who does not reveal his identity and who, it seems, is vaguely familiar to each character on stage. He is slippery and ubiquitous; his presence perhaps felt in other fallen towns. Sam comes in, calculatingly defending God, in what feels like another diabolic act. His character is corrupt and destructive.

Throughout the opera, questions are loud and persistent. The power of God is doubted and Jewish tradition – long-told and cherished by generations for thousands of years – is questioned. Audiences are tested of sacred understandings and cultural identifications in ways that are challenging and at times offensive. Through the character of Berish, provocative questions that

challenge Jewish tradition and years of faith, practice, and religious tradition are presented, asking audiences to reflect, evaluate, and reconsider their beliefs in light of this event. This is a single testimony made up of many stories, meant to prod and poke at established and dearly-held views of past and present.

Through lyrical and textual depths, Andrew Scott Bell and Jason Carney transform Wiesel’s thematic elements to bring the story into fresh and clear relief, such that its essence occupies the stage in ways that help us picture this testimony in our minds and through our senses.

Lessons Learned and Future Possibilities

CNU’s recent production of *Brundibár* and the *Trial of God* serves a constant reminder to other institutions, on the essential role that music programs in higher education institutions hold when they collectively collaborate toward projects that embark on the celebration of human rights. Lessons learned from this, and other performances would reach a wide-range of learners where they are; rather than slow-based, didactic lecturing or disassociate texts, music penetrates layers of human existence beyond the factual level, and transcendent of space and time.²⁰ Student and college-town communities can learn about these events together through generative listening practice outside the familiar, self-identified contexts of age, culture, and ethnicity.

It was therefore unfortunate that due to restrictions made by Elie Wiesel’s estate, CNU’s production of *The Trial of God*, was not permitted to be recorded or shared publicly in any capacity, and as a result, this unique, real-time theatrical experience was unfortunately short-lived. The musical setting gave Wiesel’s textual testimony life through Andrew Scott Bell’s mastery composition and Jason Carney’s unswerving libretto. Wiesel’s work, transformed into an operatic form also gave fresh new voice to young performers, and listening opportunities to audiences that would have never experienced these testimonies otherwise. And yet, the experience was to be held and hallowed within the theater walls. The end of the final show on November 8th, 2022, marked the End - leaving no remnant or digital imprint of this commemoration. A lesson to be learned in this experiment: future interpretations and derivatives are unencumbered by previous performances, or otherwise composed contingent on further performance and reproductions thus allowing the content to carry on perpetually refreshed, reinterpreted and appreciated anew.

Fruitful Partnerships Among Diverse Organizations

Within the past few decades, various higher education institutions and

²⁰ Rebecca Rovit, “The ‘Brundibár’ Project: Memorializing Theresienstadt Children’s Opera,” *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 22, no. 2 (2000): 111-122. <http://www.dx.doi.org/10.2307/3245896>

local performing arts organizations programmed *Brundibár* solely, or along with other smaller-scale works. Some paired *Brundibár* with short works previously composed by marginalized composers, while others paired it with newly commissioned works by living composers inspired by the events of the Holocaust. One important lesson to be learned from all past productions was the fact that all savored considerable support and partnership from local organizations, Jewish federations, and private donors. Such partnerships proved to be fruitful and productive thus promoting the educational goals of the music.

One such 2011 production by the University of Kentucky Opera, centered *Brundibár* at its heart, and enjoined by Holocaust survivor Ela Weissberger, a child performer from the original cast in Terezin.²¹ Later that year, assisted by the University of Kentucky Opera, the Philharmonic orchestra in Evansville, Indiana partnered with *Cypress*, a local committee promoting respect in schools and jointly produced *Brundibár*. The Evansville production too, invited Ela Weissberger as its guest. Evansville's production too, was assisted by Richard Kagey who served as the set designer for the University of Kentucky Opera.²² Another *Brundibár* production in Indiana (2016) was made possible by a local non-profit theatre in Bloomington, producing *Brundibár* along with Tony Kushner's curtain raiser: *But the Giraffe*.²³ This production too conducted a collaboration between Stages Bloomington and the Jewish Theatre of Bloomington.²⁴

Other endeavors to commemorate the Holocaust through *Brundibár* include the 2014 Cincinnati Chamber Opera. Accompanied by the Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra, this production paired *Brundibár* with *Der Kaiser Von Atlantis (The Emperor of Atlantis)*, another widely performed opera, also composed in Terezin by imprisoned composer Viktor Ullmann who collaborated there with the young Jewish poet and artist Petr Kien. *The Emperor of Atlantis* perfectly fits within a performance program for its approximately one-hour length, and compelling parallel to *Brundibár*.²⁵ Comparably to CNU and others, Cincinnati's production too, was made possible due to support from local organizations such as the Jewish Federation of Cincinnati, Arts Wave Cincinnati, and the Holocaust and Humanity Center.²⁶

Upcoming 2022 productions of *Brundibár* include the Indianapolis Opera

²¹ An appearance by one of the production's original performers, Holocaust survivor Ela Weissberger.

²² Roger McBain, "Brundibar" leaves storybook look behind for concentration camp reality," *Courier and Press*. <https://archive.courierpress.com/features/brundibar-leaves-storybook-look-behind-for-concentration-camp-reality-ep-445605631-324689551.html/>

²³ Tony Kushner. "But the Giraffe." *The Virginia Quarterly Review*. Fall 2006, Volume 82. Published September 17, 2006. <https://www.vqronline.org/play/giraffe>

²⁴ Stages Bloomington, <https://www.stagesbloomington.org/brundibar>

²⁵ Orchestral and vocal scores by Eulenburg publishers widely available for purchase especially from Schott Music Website (www.schott-music.com)

²⁶ Jewish Federation of Cincinnati, <https://jewishcincinnati.org/calendar/community-calendar/theresienstadt-opera-project>.

Company whose main mission is to “educate, inspire and entertain through the creation and presentation of musical storytelling for our diverse Hoosier community.”²⁷ As such, the Indianapolis opera programmed *Brundibár* along with composer Lori Laitman’s *Vedem*, a theatrical oratorio describing events experienced in Terezin by a group of imprisoned boys who founded an underground newspaper of poetry and essays titled: *Vedem* (translated from Czech: “In the Lead”).²⁸

Postlude

As the Christopher Newport University community gathered to share four evenings of opera, it witnessed together the shared testimony of Holocaust victims through the lens of Hans Krása, Adolf Hoffmeister, and Elie Wiesel, and through the artful and faithful interpretations of Andrew Scott Bell and James Carney. A Small university with restrictive budgets was able to bring to the stage a production such as this, with its high level of performance, direction, conducting, and acting.

Such successful production offers other institutions of higher education a lesson on positive cross departmental collaboration, fundraising efforts reaching out to diverse donors, from private family funds to human rights organizations, and state funds. With the support of those local and state organizations, and with the university’s president council on diversity and inclusion that supported the first Jewish studies faculty member, the music department was able to initiate, execute, and support the performance series, which attracted hundreds of people from both inside the institution and out. Arts leaders in higher education can trace the steps taken by CNU, and other institutions and local theatre and opera companies mentioned above, and learn a lesson: If a small, liberal arts university can do this, any could.

As many who have studied the historical events of the Holocaust know, the testimonies of its survivors are rich and varied, just as there are many ways for one to listen and comprehend. These artful expressions of the unthinkable transcend place and time in potent ways that connect people of diverse backgrounds, faiths, and races. While the experience of the Holocaust cannot be understood through one story, one lesson, one movie, or one musical piece, music educators and leaders can find that engagement in different types of testimony brings students and audiences momentarily closer to the horrors of the time – a time when humanity revealed its worst. Unique to individual experience, these stories encourage us to delve into an ugly past while sanctifying and blessing the lives of those murdered in its grips. They are our living and breathing inheritance,

²⁷ Indianapolis Opera, <https://www.indyopera.org/>

²⁸ <http://artsongs.squarespace.com/vedem/>

our “sum total,” and vital to understanding the whole of human experience and our places in it long after we exit the theater.

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ⁱ Directed by John A. McGuire, conducted by J. Lynn Thompson, and enjoined by the Virginia Children’s Chorus (Carol Thomas Downing, Director).

ⁱⁱ *Brundibár’s* librettist was poet, illustrator, and social activist Adolf Hoffmeister.

ⁱⁱⁱ Andrew Scott Bell, film composer and distinguished CNU alumnus, was commissioned the composition of this opera along with CNU English professor, Jason Carney, whose libretto of the opera was derivative of Wiesel’s play.

^{iv} *Reflections of the Holocaust* is a series of performances, lectures, and commemorations resulting from years of coordinated vision and effort. Several individuals raised ideas to bring music associated with the Holocaust into relief and communal appreciation from the stage; one of whom is Professor Theodore R. Reiff, a local retired physician and founder of the *Reiff Center for Human Rights and Conflict Resolution* <https://cnu.edu/reiffcenter/> and president of the *Genocide Education Project* <https://genocideeducation.org/>. Dr. Reiff suggested that Wiesel’s play be adapted to opera.

^v These include, but are not limited to: the Diamonstein Family Charitable Fund, the Barbara and Ralph Goldstein Charitable Fund, the Eugene and Betty Levin Family Philanthropic Fund, the Reiff Center for Human Rights and Conflict Resolution, the Tidewater Jewish Foundation, the United Jewish Community of Virginia Peninsula Endowment, Inc., and the United Jewish Community of the Virginia Peninsula.

^{vi} The film’s unofficial title was, *The Führer Gives a City to the Jews*.

...

A pianist of international acclaim, **Dr. Galit Gertsenzon** is a music historian, educator, and advocate for music and musicians of the Holocaust. Born and raised in Israel, she studied piano performance and musicology at the Buchman-Mehta School of Music in Tel Aviv. For more than two decades, Dr. Gertsenzon has studied and performed music from the cultural, political, and social aspects of those who make it. Earning her Doctorate in Musical Arts in Piano Performance from the University of Cincinnati’s College-Conservatory of Music in 2012, her research continues to examine the compositions, performances, and musicians of World War II and the Holocaust. Her ethnomusicological insights and applications are featured in the peer-reviewed literature of music, Honors Education, Judaic studies, and Holocaust Studies.

Dr. Gertsenzon is an Honors College professor at Ball State University (Indiana), where she delivers global studies curricula integrating music and society. Named the recipient of The Vander Hill Distinguished Honors Educator Award (2018) for her course, *Forbidden Sounds: Music of the Holocaust*, Dr. Gertsenzon maintains an active career lecturing and performing across the US and beyond. Dr. Gertsenzon can be reached by email: ggertsenzon@bsu.edu

DEVELOPMENT OF HEARING HEALTH MODELS IN PERFORMING ARTS INSTITUTIONS

There is a culture in performing arts environments that has long persisted around overwork, lack of sleep, and relentless focus, sometimes called “hustle” or “grind”. While we know that this type of culture and mindset is not good for an artist’s physical or mental health, culture change takes time to create. When Eastman Performing Arts Medicine was established at the University of Rochester, one of our first goals was to support musician wellness. In this article we will share how we are collaborating with our music school students, medical colleagues, and campus community to create a culture of wellness for performing artists, beginning with hearing conservation, as this sense cannot be recovered once it is lost.

Let’s be honest – hearing conservation is not sexy, or even visible. Yet hearing is at the heart of everything we do in music. In industrial settings, it is a matter of employer liability to be certain employees are staying within permissible exposure limits (PELs) of noise exposure. Both NIOSH¹ and OSHA²’s PEL over an 8-hour shift is 85 decibels, or roughly the same as a garbage disposal or food blender.³ Often, annual hearing tests are scheduled per workplace safety, hearing protection devices are provided or mandated, and sound levels are monitored in the work environment. Comparatively in the music industry, few of these same conservation efforts exist. The paradox for the professional or student-musician is that music, which is intended to be listened to and enjoyed as the result of their efforts, is also an occupational hazard, at times. Unlike industrial settings, sound levels can and do vary frequently and the means of accurately measuring a musician’s total noise exposure is often challenging. Evidence suggests even brief samples of musicians’ exposure levels during rehearsals and performance put them at risk for music-induced hearing loss and hearing disorders.⁴ There can be a stigma around using hearing protection on stage (e.g.: ear plugs, sound baffles) for many groups of musicians⁵. Both the lack of quality hearing conservation programs for musicians and a culture which stigmatizes hearing protection can be dangerous for musicians and their careers. How then can performing arts education institutions improve hearing health perspectives and outcomes for their community presently and in

¹ CDC. “Reducing Noise Exposure: Guidance & Regulations”, <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/noise/reducenoiseexposure/regsguidance.html/>.

² OSHA. “Occupational Noise Exposure”, <https://www.osha.gov/noise#:~:text=With%20noise%2C%20OSHA%20permissible%20exposure,dose%20is%20cut%20in%20half/>.

³ “Comparative Examples of Noise Levels”, <https://www.iacacoustics.com/blog-full/comparative-examples-of-noise-levels.html/>.

⁴ Graham Westmore, Ian Eversden, “Noise-Induced Hearing Loss and Orchestral Musicians,” *Arch Otolaryngology* 107 (December 1981): 764.

⁵ Ashleigh Callahan, Norman Lass, Lindsay Foster, Jessica Poe, et al, “Collegiate Musicians’ Noise Exposure and Attitudes on Hearing Protection,” *Hearing Conservation* (June 2011): 42.

the future? We propose establishing a robust educational outreach program and opportunities for regular hearing evaluations may be, in part, an opportunity to address this question.

Advice From Music Audiologists for Our Industry

In 2020, the American Academy of Audiology released the Clinical Consensus Document⁶ which outlines the current problems facing artists and music industry professionals and offers recommendations and strategies for best practices in hearing loss prevention for this population. Similar to the industrial example given above, music induced hearing loss (MIHL) is characterized by a temporary or permanent loss of hearing sensitivity from overexposure to music.⁷ Another challenge presented is that, unlike industrial noise exposure, music exposure happens over irregular hours making it significantly more difficult to monitor. For example, a musician's exposure levels across performance, rehearsals, practice, teaching, and personal music listening can change substantially over days, weeks, and months.⁸ The authors of the Consensus Document name the implications of excessive sound exposure this way: Beyond the many psychosocial impacts of hearing loss affecting communication and daily life, significant decreases in hearing sensitivity can dramatically reduce one's ability to hear his or her own performances as well as others when performing in ensembles.⁹ In addition to hearing loss, some common music induced hearing disorders (MIHD) include tinnitus, decreased sound tolerance, as well as diplacusis and dysacusis (types of inaccuracy in perceiving pitch).¹⁰ Given that these symptoms can be permanent and that there is a clear risk of exposure, prevention measures and hearing health literacy are key for healthful music making.

The Consensus Document recommends annual audiometric evaluation utilizing higher frequency fields than typically used in standard communication assessments¹¹. It also suggests teaching the musician about the audiogram, a representation of an individual's hearing levels at various frequencies. With counseling from a qualified audiologist, a musician can better understand their hearing levels over time, risks of music induced hearing loss, and how to actively

⁶ *ibid*, 36.

⁷ Gholamreza Pouryaghoub, Ramin Mehrdad, and Saeed Pourhosein, "Noise-Induced Hearing Loss Among Professional Musicians," *Journal of Occupational Health* 59:33-37.

⁸ Vanessa Miller, Michael Stewart, and Mark Lehman, "Noise Exposure Levels for Student Musicians," *Medical Problems of Performing Artists* 22 (2007): 165.

⁹ Graham Westmore and Ian Eversden, "Noise-Induced Hearing Loss and Orchestral Musicians," *Arch Otoalyn* 107 (December 1981): 764.

¹⁰ E. Jansen, H. Helleman, W. Dreschler and J. Laats, "Noise Induced Hearing Loss and Other Hearing Complaints Among Musicians of Symphony Orchestras," *Int Arch Occup Environ Health* 82 (2009):153-164.

¹¹ *Consensus Document*, 9.

mitigate those risks.¹² An audiologist may also be able to connect musicians to information about hearing protection, an important line of defense in preventing MIHD, and help them to understand the different options available. The document authors also stress the need to ear train to any hearing protection device like ear plugs or in-ear monitors, because of the strong auditory memory of music professionals.¹³

How can we encourage healthful behavior around hearing conversation at our own school?

Anecdotally, people will only seek help once there is a problem. Knowing this, we ask how to engage young musicians in advance of problems arising, and to focus on making hearing conservation a part of their music school training and culture.

There is currently no annual audiometric testing requirement for musicians at many higher education institutions or in the professional music world. Not much is understood yet about how to best motivate music students to adopt healthful, protective behaviors concerning their hearing conservation.¹⁴ However, we know that music students are at risk for exposure to greater durations and intensities of sound exposure¹⁵ Their daily combined exposure may rival that of the industrial worker, but capturing noise exposure levels for individuals proves challenging due vastly differing schedules for student musicians.

Despite the NASM-PAMA 2011 advisory for schools of music to educate students on the dangers of Music Induced Hearing Loss (MIHL)¹⁶, there is a lack of evidence that students are truly understanding what steps they can take to benefit themselves and their careers for the long term.¹⁷ And for those who do take initial steps to use hearing protection devices like earplugs, there needs to be ear training to the devices for appropriate adaptation to the new perception of sounds. We propose three main thrusts in reaching our students: education, access to hearing health services, and role models.

Education

At the University of Rochester's Eastman School of Music, the written NASM/PAMA recommendations on hearing health¹⁸ are given to all incoming

¹² Callahan, Lass, Foster, et al, "Collegiate Musicians' Noise Exposure," 42.

¹³ *Consensus* 17.

¹⁴ *Consensus*, 24.

¹⁵ Matilde Rodrigues, Marisa Freitas, Maria Neves, and Manuela Silva, "Evaluation of the Noise Exposure of Symphonic Orchestra Musicians," *Noise and Health* 16, no. 68 (Jan-Feb 2014): 40.

¹⁶ NASM/PAMA, "Basic Information on Hearing Health: Information and Recommendations for Administrators and Faculty in Schools of Music," November 2011.

¹⁷ Miller, Stewart, Mark Lehman, "Noise Exposure Levels," 162.

¹⁸ NASM/PAMA, "Information and Recommendations for Administrators and Faculty in Schools of Music," (2011).

students, who then read and sign a document stating that they have understood the material. As Eastman Performing Arts Medicine developed a greater interest in promoting musician wellness, we sought examples of programs and departments that take NASM guidelines as the basic requirement and expand upon them to develop a culture that promotes hearing health and conservation as an ongoing process for students and faculty alike. We found one such example in our Sound Engineering Department, which hosts regular education about hearing conservation and the opportunity for getting impressions made for custom earplugs and in-ear-monitors.

Over the course of the fall semester, the University's Health Promotion Office held tabling events to offer education on hearing health, and offered free, high-quality OTC earplugs along with demonstrations of how to properly insert them. The NIOSH app for measuring sound exposure was recommended and a QR code on informational materials made it possible for students to use their phones to immediately connect with the app store for a free download.

Access to Hearing Health Services

Partnering with the University of Rochester Medicine Audiology, we developed a plan to host free hearing screenings during the orientation week for all first-year and new graduate students. We chose to bring the clinic to the campus because one simple barrier to accessing this service is the geographic distance and lack of transportation options for first-year students who typically arrive without cars. To facilitate seeing as many people as possible during the window of time, an audiologist utilized both a sound isolation booth and a portable automated testing device. We were able to have the portable device in the same general area as the sound booth, so that students with appointments and walk-ins could be seen at the same time. After the brief case history form was completed by the student-musicians, they underwent screening audiometry by the audiologist or automated screener. The audiologist then followed-up with each student, providing appropriate literature and recommendations. We were able to screen 20 students in 3 hours that day. The students were asked to complete a short survey following the audiogram review where 95% agreed or strongly agreed they had a better understanding of what their hearing health status, 75% agreed or strongly agreed they better understood how to protect their hearing.

The portable hearing screening device was rented for the fall semester, with the hope of hosting more hearing screening days and offering a way for students to self-test by appointment in the nurse's office. During the semester, we discovered barriers that may be instructive to other institutions looking to develop a hearing conservation program. Without designated follow up and

evaluation of the audiogram, there was resistance to allowing students to self-test with the portable device. Our nurse's office was able to host the device, but after learning that there were a few steps to setting up the app, it was felt there was not enough time for the staff on hand to be responsible for properly starting the app and maintaining other users' confidential information. Note that we are piloting this idea while still in a pandemic, and for the Eastman School, this meant that our nurse's office hours were cut to three weekdays. Adding this extra task into the nurse's day at this unusual time created more complexity of piloting the program.

The sound booth was lent to us by a university researcher who is conducting a study that requires the sound isolation booth. We brought our own testing device from University of Rochester Medicine Audiology to maintain control over the calibration and availability of the device during the testing date. Digital and paper advertisements were set up around the residence hall starting with the arrival of students, and residential advisors were recruited to help encourage students to sign up for the tests. On the day of the event, a Health Promotion Office staff member engaged with the students at the first group meeting of the day and reminded them of the opportunity to have a free hearing screening. The staff member was also available to escort the students, who were new to our campus, to the testing site. While an online registration site was set up, nearly all the students who participated walked-in during the event.

Role Models, Modeling Professional Behaviors

It is important to note that hearing screenings are just one step in our plan to increase healthy behaviors toward hearing conservation on our campus. We are fortunate that the conducting staff at the Eastman School are pro-active about hearing protection and encourage students to use earplugs. "In our wind ensemble rehearsals, I will ask right at the start, 'do you have your earplugs in?' Getting used to hearing protection takes time and practice, just like anything we do well on stage. It's important to me that we make this a regular part of our rehearsals and conversations." – Dr. Mark Scatterday, director of the Eastman Wind Ensemble. Learning to play with hearing protection takes time as the ears adjust. Having role models in your faculty makes a world of difference. Michael Burritt, professor of percussion at the Eastman School, stresses wearing hearing protection when practicing as well as when on stage and hosts educational sessions with UR Medicine audiologist, Dr. Brendan Fitzgerald. "Percussion students take hearing protection seriously and my studio mainly uses custom plugs. The hours students spend in practice rooms adds to the total sound exposure they get in their very busy days at Eastman."

Rob LaVaque, professor of electrical and computer engineering at the Beal Institute for Film Music and Contemporary Media at the Eastman School,

agrees that “As a former touring musician, I have noted a general lack of hearing health awareness with professionals and my own pupils. For anyone around the creation and performance of music, their ears are the most important asset they possess. It only makes sense to ensure our students are well-educated about hearing conservation and have access to the best equipment to protect their auditory system.”

Conclusion

There is no one “perfect” way to begin changing the culture that has long existed in the music industry around health and wellness. We propose that by collaborating with faculty, medical professionals, your campus’ health promotions team and students directly, we can start to encourage healthful behaviors with our emerging professional artists. At the Eastman School, we have chosen to begin with hearing health, as this sense is the foundation of our work in music.

...

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PERSPECTIVES ON THE NEW NORMAL: MUSICIANS TALK ABOUT THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Do you remember life before mask mandates? Do you look at pictures and marvel at how we sang, made music, and went to live performances without being socially distanced? We are almost two years to the day when America and most of the other nations of this earth shut down in a fashion I have never witnessed before.¹ March of 2020 is one of those moments like 9/11, the assassination of JFK, or the Challenger explosion where most people can remember what they were doing on that fateful day. In March of 2022, we were told to go home and listen to the news for when it is safe to resume life, but it never happened. Musicians particularly lost something that some may not understand. We lost a part of our soul, we lost music. I do not need to tell this group about how important music is. I do not need to tell this group about how music is a basic human function. I do not need to tell this group why we continue to choose to make music a central part of our existence. “We believe music to be a powerful thing, and we hope that the experiences of the current crisis have helped people realise just how important music and music education are in the lives of our young people.”²

I share this experience with my fellow musicians. We lost the ability to respond, create, and perform in public venues. We lost the ability to share this extraordinary gift with our students, our colleagues, and our community. While I share the loss with you, I am not fully aware of *your* perceptions during the pandemic, how this loss impacted *your* life, but more importantly, how *you* have overcome and started to move on. In this article, you will read about the experiences of a variety of musicians over the past two years during the COVID pandemic. This article aims to address the challenges presented to traditional and non-traditional, sacred, and secular musicians, vocalists, instructors of voice, music teachers and students. It is my thinking that the past two years have brought some sort of difficulty to the lives of everyone. The challenges presented were not always apparent at first, but in these two years we have had the time to reflect on how we have overcome these times and moved on as musicians, teachers, and leaders.

In Days Gone By

Musicians and teachers of music are accustomed to living in a world of highs and lows. Some live more precariously than others, but performers

¹ Katarina Habe, Michele Biasutti, and Tanja Kajtna, “Wellbeing and Flow in Sport and Music Students during the COVID-19 Pandemic,” *Think Skills Creat.* 39, 100798 (March 2021), accessed January 13, 2022, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7874927/>.

² Alison Daubney and Martin Fautley, “Editorial Research: Music Education in a Time of Pandemic,” *British Journal of Music Education*, 37 (2020): 113, accessed January 26, 2022, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/british-journal-of-music-education/article/abs/editorial-research-music-education-in-a-time-of-pandemic/40874E520FB7F34F1F8BEC178379F173>.

and educators usually feel a sense of enjoyment and privilege in their music positions.³ Prior to 2020 and the onset of the COVID pandemic, there were many looming perils for musicians and instructors. Job insecurity, poor work conditions, taxing work demands, small support systems, being overworked, complex relationships and self-criticism are hazards most performing arts professionals face in their career at one time or another.⁴ And yet we continue to make the most of these circumstances because of the passion we have. Before the pandemic, many of the musicians I spoke with talked about the energy and joyfulness they or their students experienced in their positions.

My teaching environment before COVID was all in-person with large classes (up to 88 students), so there was always quite a bit of energy in the room.⁵

One of the biggest differences that I have noticed in hindsight is that before COVID, musicians had more energy and desire to perform outside of mandatory class times. Small ensembles were full of vocal students, rather than instrumentalists and non-majors like they are now. There was excitement about making music with each other before COVID.⁶

The students' only focus was their growth as musicians and their joy in the music and also their joy as they looked forward to their futures.⁷

In my church environment, we had many volunteers; three full worship teams, musicians, and singers, as well as a choir. Volunteers were active and engaged.⁸

The students' only focus was their growth as musicians and their joy in the music and also their joy as they looked forward to their futures.⁹

³ Roy D. Wood, "Correlation of Conductor Leadership Style, Musician Employment Status, Organizational Participation to Orchestra Musician Job Satisfaction" (PhD diss., University of Phoenix, 2010), 168, accessed February 24, 2022, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/911029205?pq-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=true>.

⁴ Neta Spiro et al., "The Effects of COVID-19 Lockdown 1.0 on Working Patterns, Income, and Wellbeing Among Performing Arts Professionals in the United Kingdom (April–June 2020)," *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11 (2021), accessed January 26, 2022, <https://www.frontiersin.org/article/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.594086>.

⁵ Christina Bartholomew, e-mail message to author, February 25, 2022.

⁶ Karen Laws, e-mail message to author, February 25, 2022.

⁷ Nancy Klein, e-mail message to author, February 25, 2022.

⁸ Lerin Gables, e-mail message to author, February 25, 2022.

⁹ Brian Nedvin, e-mail message to author, February 10, 2022.

Music educators and performers are known to think outside the box and “make it work”. In the face of challenging situations, we have learned to adapt to survive. This may have been the silver lining for vocal performers and instructors during the onset of COVID-19. Maybe you or a colleague or your students adopted measures to get back to a more normal life. In an analysis of how COVID impacted the arts community, Guibert and Hyde list the measures arts communities instituted until conditions were more conducive to in-person engagement returns.

Some of those changes included:

- Reconfiguring seating and performance spaces to align with social distancing requirements
- Installing new filtration systems, plexiglass dividers, and hand sanitizer stations
- Adopting COVID-19 testing protocols and isolation “bubbles” for artists and production crew
- Securing outdoor spaces for events; and
- Identifying technology solutions that can bring live or recorded performances to those unable or unwilling to attend arts events in person.¹⁰

Similarly, Brian, a university vocal studio instructor told me,

Presently I teach only in my studio, face-to-face with the HEPA filter and I wear an N95 mask, clean my hands, and the collaborative artist wears a mask and disinfects the keyboard when she arrives.¹¹

The Library and Information Science Network states that adaptation is essential to survive. When humans can adapt, it affords them “a greater opportunity to get what they want and what they need.”¹² Whatever measures you took, I am sure

¹⁰ COVID-19 RSFLG Data and Assessment Working Group, *ANALYSIS: COVID-19's Impacts on Arts and Culture*, Greg Guibert and Iain Hyde. (Argonne National Laboratory, 2021), 9, accessed February 25, 2022, <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/COVID-Outlook-Week-of-1.4.2021-revised.pdf>.

¹¹ Nedvin, e-mail to author.

¹² “How Do You Adapt to Your Environment,” Lisbdnet.com, December 2021. accessed February 25, 2022, <https://lisbdnet.com/how-do-you-adapt-to-your-environment/#:~:text=Adaptation%20is%20essential%20in%20order,want%20and%20what%20they%20need.>

it was at a cost. I asked Hillary, a private vocal student and songwriter, about her thoughts of music making before COVID. “Before COVID, the physicality of singing was such a given that subsequent realities – like the need for a student and teacher to be in close physical proximity and even occasionally touch – were **taken for granted.**” This last statement really struck me. There is so much that was taken for granted prior to March of 2020.

A New Level of Anxiety

The COVID-19 pandemic brought a level of stress and mental anxiety to the American population at large. People were not used to seeing their loved ones get sick, teaching their children from home, and being too scared to leave their homes. Akat and Karatas write, “It has been reported that COVID-19 epidemic has many mental problems including anxiety, depression and stress; as well as psychological problems including PTSD, sleep disorders.”¹³ The music performer/educator community was not immune to the fear. In fact, being a musician might have made this situation a bit worse. Anthony Kemp, an author and researcher specializing in the psychology and personalities of musicians, found that in a comparison to non-musicians, musicians have been shown to be more anxious, more sensitive, and therefore more vulnerable to stressful situations.¹⁴ Is it any wonder, then, that the pandemic presented a situation where many musicians, music educators, and studio instructors started to feel a higher sense of anxiety than some of our non-musician counterparts? Brian, a university voice instructor, told me, “When this first started, and knowing that singers were super-spreaders, I was quite anxious and taught the first semester back (Fall 2020) via Zoom. That was horrific but it was the best that I was able to do. I was able to help the student progress as much as possible in these circumstances but nowhere near as much as when we were in the studio together.”¹⁵

Music students also suffered from high anxiety for several reasons. The status-quo was changed. Normal face-to-face lessons were gone, normal ensemble rehearsals were gone, and live performances were gone. We went from being extremely busy and extremely collaborative to all normal music activities being canceled.¹⁶

¹³ Muhammed Akat & Kasim Karatas, “Psychological Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic on Society and Its Reflections on Education,” *TurkishStudies*, 15 (2020): 4, accessed January 26, 2022, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343976009_Psychological_Effects_of_COVID-19_Pandemic_on_Society_and_Its_Reflections_on_Education.

¹⁴ Anthony Kemp, *The Musical Temperament: Psychology and Personality of Musicians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

¹⁵ Nedvin, e-mail to author.

¹⁶ Akat, “Psychological Effects of COVID-19,” 1-13; Habe, “Wellbeing and Flow.”

Much like my students appear to be, I feel a bit more distant from my community – even when we are in the same room together.¹⁷

COVID has definitely introduced anxiety into the music making process. I find myself straining vocally whenever I'm wearing a mask or interacting over the phone or video conference.¹⁸

It's hard to feel like making music has any purpose while people are dying by the hundreds of thousands from COVID. The stress of my environment at school doesn't exactly inspire me or allow for much fun in my music making.¹⁹

I feel as long as we are having to sing with masks, we are never free of the fear connected to COVID.²⁰

It does feel overwhelming many days, but as I stated before, we are musicians, and ready to find ways to make it all work. Lerin, a music educator and worship leader, says she is not completely given over to being anxious. Why? "Because I'm a teacher at heart. Willing to work with anyone and excited about seeing those who are here, active, and serving to continue to grow."²¹

The New Status Quo

Many worry if we will ever get a handle on the COVID-19 pandemic. Are we ready for any new variants of the virus? How many boosters are in our future? Will the mask mandates end? Are we ready for the mask mandates to end? So many questions without solid answers. There are just as many questions we can ask about the long-term effects of the last two years. Three areas, in particular, will continue to impact musicians and music educators as we move forward: education, performing, and emotional health.

Education

Pandemic learning presented many challenges to music educators and studio instructors. Shortcomings in sound production and performance technique, the inability to have live performances, and lack of productivity in

¹⁷ Bartholomew, e-mail to author.

¹⁸ Hillary Hellman, e-mail message to author, February 22, 2022.

¹⁹ Laws, e-mail to author.

²⁰ Klein, e-mail to author.

²¹ Gables, e-mail to author.

ensemble settings were just a few of the issues music educators faced.²² Another huge challenge that faced instructors and students was (and still is) motivation.

Now, I feel like I'm having to rely on logic to keep me going. When I don't want to go to choir, I have to tell myself that it's a mandatory class, I'm getting graded, and I need to go because I need a good grade.²³

I have also been reconsidering/revamping some of my teaching methods and the material I present because students seem to have a difficult time staying motivated and on top of their responsibilities this year in particular.²⁴

Most of the above challenges began when we went to a virtual learning environment that many were not prepared for. "The absence of physical proximity, which is indispensable for learning and maintaining a specific posture while playing an instrument, was also relevant."²⁵ One voice instructor put it this way, "I had extra work, but I saw less results." Nancy, a university professor of choral education is still frustrated on how to help her singers. "They can't produce sound with the masks so they can't hear. So blending or dynamic variance is affected by the masks. I can't see their mouths, so I can't make changes. I am stunted in how I can help."²⁶ Akat and Karatas write,

According to Reimers (2020) for the vast majority of children who lose opportunities to learn because of the pandemic, it will be hard to recover from those losses, the harder the longer the period of physical isolation from other students and teachers. The educational disadvantage such losses generate will beget more educational, and eventually economic and social disadvantage. Because these losses will be experienced by large segments of the population, societies will suffer as their productivity is diminished.²⁷

²² Habe, "Wellbeing and Flow"; Magdalena Rosset, Baumann Eva, Altenmüller Eckart, "Studying Music During the Coronavirus Pandemic: Conditions of Studying and Health-Related Challenges," *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12 (2021), accessed January 26, 2022, <https://www.frontiersin.org/article/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.651393>.

²³ Laws, e-mail to author.

²⁴ Bartholomew, e-mail to author.

²⁵ Habe, "Wellbeing and Flow."

²⁶ Klein, e-mail to author.

²⁷ Akat, "Psychological Effects of COVID-19," 7.

Cristina, a music educator and graduate student said this, “I think one of the most important things we can be thinking about as educators is the collective trauma our students have suffered during the pandemic, what it looks like, and how we can adapt our teaching methods to deliver instruction in a trauma-informed, responsive way.”²⁸ Lerin, also a music educator and worship leader, provided some solid advice, however, as we navigate how to best serve our music students. “Have realistic expectations. Because of COVID, times have changed, culture has changed, and so must our expectations. If not, you’re going to drive yourself crazy chasing after things that have changed using the same methods before COVID.”²⁹

Performing

I asked several musicians and educators what success looks like for them being two years into the pandemic. A lot of their answers deal with the aftermath of the COVID shutdown and how they or their students currently perform music.

The pandemic essentially shut my entire content area down, and it is still shut down in many areas. Choirs are just now starting to make music together again, and singers are just now starting to feel comfortable singing in shared spaces together again. This has affected my job - some schools and churches have completely eliminated their choirs until further notice, which not only affects what jobs are available to me, but also enrollment numbers in my private studio.³⁰

My performances are most successful when I am having fun and enjoying myself. And I think that’s part of what made making music so hard for me during the pandemic; even if I was singing everything correctly, I didn’t feel like I was succeeding because I wasn’t finding joy. That has been a challenge for me for the past two years.³¹

Multiple performing opportunities have been canceled or postponed due to COVID but I was lucky in the past year to do a national presentation (virtually) and a live performance with the Virginia Symphony Orchestra.³²

²⁸ Cristina Loyola, e-mail message to author, February 22, 2022.

²⁹ Gables, e-mail to author.

³⁰ Loyola, e-mail to author.

³¹ Laws, e-mail to author.

³² Nedvin, e-mail to author.

Musically, success is different than before COVID. Now it's having notes learned and having students freely sing a song as we prepare for a performance setting. Before success was taking the song to the highest level. I am glad that we can get through it.³³

Success to me is personal growth in those I'm working with, teaching, and developing. Seeing them use their gifts to the best of their abilities. Using their gifts to glorify God and inspire/encourage others.³⁴

Although after two years of a worldwide crisis in which all of us had to give up on "normal," fighting to find a way to return to a healthy and normal vocal life can feel selfish and like I'm fighting for something trivial – and I sometimes worry that others will perceive it that way, too. But, at the end of the day, that's what success would mean to me.³⁵

There is good news on the performing front. Venues are opening. Live concerts are starting to take place once again. Hope is on the horizon. In recent research conducted by Americans for the Arts, "63% of arts attendees are already attending in-person programs as of December 2021—up from 38% in September and 17% in April 2021—with 37% expecting to do so in January 2022 or beyond."³⁶ Of course we want to go back to "normal" and perform in and attend as many performances as we used to. In the meantime, however, what we all need to be mindful of is the shift from the traditional performance and/or concert-centric teaching to other important performance goals. Such goals can be "achieving vocal and artistic vocal gains,"³⁷ "coming away excited about the material and understanding it well enough to apply what they (the students) learned to their daily experiences with music,"³⁸ or "having fun and enjoying myself."³⁹

³³ Klein, e-mail to author.

³⁴ Gables, e-mail to author.

³⁵ Hellman, e-mail to author.

³⁶ AMS Audience Outlook Monitor, *COVID-19's Pandemic's Impact on The Arts: Research Update February 8, 2022*, Randy Cohen. (Americans for the Arts, 2022), accessed February 25, 2022, <https://www.americansforthearts.org/node/103614>.

³⁷ Adriane Kerr, e-mail message to author, February 26, 2022.

³⁸ Bartholomew, e-mail to author.

³⁹ Laws, e-mail to author.

Mental and Emotional Health

“COVID burnout is a very real issue that students face. Now more than ever, we need to be proactive about our students’ mental health.”⁴⁰ Have you found yourself mentally and emotionally challenged or taxed because of COVID? Akat and Karatas write, “Some people can control the negative emotions of pandemics and continue their lives normally. But some people cannot cope with these feelings and need professional support.”⁴¹ The research on the decline of mental health of adults and children since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic is well documented.⁴² Music educators are fighting on two fronts: one, fighting for their own mental health and two, fighting for their students’ mental health.

Brian relays his own struggles with anxiety. “The level of anxiety is moderate and has peaks when a student reports that they tested positive for the virus. At that time, I wonder what the heck I’m doing, but more often than not I have accepted this is the new norm (hopefully for now) and I just move forward.”⁴³ Nancy shares her struggles as well. “This is happening because people are afraid. So, when I see an outburst or inability to engage in what I am trying to do, instead of getting frustrated, I talk to myself that this student has problems and how do I help them be the best they can be without embarrassing them?”⁴⁴ In a recent article, Thomas Marcetti advocates for music educators to take note of their students’ mental health because “music educators can’t afford not to take extra time and care to students’ emotional and mental states.”⁴⁵ He also notes that it is just as important for educators to take the time to “turn the lens of emotional care back on themselves as well.”⁴⁶

What are the steps we take to enter into and maintain good mental health? Akat and Karatas write of the need to maintain social relationships to cope with feelings of loneliness, despair, and pessimism.⁴⁷ They also suggest relaxation exercises or sport activities be a part of a daily or weekly routine. These forms of self-care are also supported by over 300 music teacher participants in a research study conducted by Kelley et al..⁴⁸ In particular, social relationships and maintaining a healthy lifestyle were found to be extremely important and

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Akat, “Psychological Effects of COVID-19,” 4.

⁴² Mahbub Md Hossain, et al., “Epidemiology of Mental Health Problems in COVID-19: A Review.” *F1000 Research*, 9 (2020), accessed February 26, 2022, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7549174/>.

⁴³ Nedvin, e-mail to author.

⁴⁴ Klein, e-mail to author.

⁴⁵ Thomas Marcetti, “Lessons from the Pandemic,” *Teaching Music*, 29, no. 5 (January 2022): 36.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Akat, “Psychological Effects of COVID-19,” 9.

⁴⁸ Jamey Kelley et al., “The Reported Self-Care Practices of Music Educators,” *Journal of Music Teacher Education* 31, no. 2 (2022): 68-79, accessed February 26, 2022. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/10570837211056615>.

effective. The musicians I talked to held similar views.

I take time for myself, I exercise, and I try to eat well (though treating yourself every now and again is important!). If I'm not taking care of myself, nothing else gets taken care of in the proper way.⁴⁹

The pandemic has caused me to re-evaluate the balance between work and home life and I believe I have a much healthier balance at this time.⁵⁰

I've learned that I need to set my boundaries day in and day out, and even identify the leisure activities I plan on doing so that I make sure I do them.⁵¹

I have found encouragement when I'm able to get together with a colleague here and there to commiserate and exchange ideas with. We're all navigating new waters; it's really tough to do when your alone on an island.⁵²

For believers, with all that's going on, it's important to pause and seek the Lord for clarity and direction. Seek the Lord for creativity, strategy, implementation. Wisdom on how to develop and bring out the best of those who we are entrusted with.⁵³

It is interesting that when a balance is not struck between self-care and professional life, anxiety and stress seem to take on a more prominent role.

In the context of music making, I feel like I still haven't found a balance between comfort and COVID safety. As I mentioned before, I don't have much time for anything besides school anyway, so a lot of my 'living life' comes back to the university. And I think that's part of the reason that I care so much about the safety and comfort of student musicians. My music program, and my fellow students, are such a huge part of my life. I want us all to be safe, happy, and sane.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Kerr, e-mail to author.

⁵⁰ Nedvin, e-mail to author.

⁵¹ Loyola, e-mail to author.

⁵² Bartholomew, e-mail to author.

⁵³ Gables, e-mail to author.

⁵⁴ Laws, e-mail to author.

Final Thoughts

While being a music instructor and/or performer caused a lot of stress and anxiety during the onset of the pandemic, music also saved us. Alvarez-Cueve writes,

Music helped people navigate the situation by empowering them in their individual and collective spheres, while they were learning how to prevent contagion, appealing to emotions that create a positive view of the crisis. This lesson might help us grow and build a better future. In sum, the music of both amateur and professional artists produced in the pandemic evoked solidarity and kindness, thus helping people remain calm and providing them with the faith they needed to face the crisis.⁵⁵

The truth of the matter is that we have been and will continue to survive, to adapt, and grow. We will continue to find ways to make music, to teach music, and promote music. As Adriane, a university vocal studio instructor, told me, “I think we need to keep on keeping on, while still being mindful of the special circumstances of the ongoing pandemic. But we need music and art and purpose even more than normal now and we can’t let our current circumstances rob us of the passion to create and do.”⁵⁶ Be mindful that the opposite of anxiety is hope. My advice to you, therefore, is to remain hopeful. This is not always easy to do, but it will help mitigate the darkness of these times.

We should remind ourselves that we have the right to fight for and to create normalcy where we can. Though COVID has been devastating, our lives are not irretrievably shattered. We have the right to reach for what feels normal where we can.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Priscila Alvarez-Cueva, “Music to Face the Lockdown: An Analysis of Covid-19 Music Narratives on Individual and Social Well-Being,” *Social Inclusion* 10, no. 2 (2022): 1-13, accessed February 26, 2022. <https://www.cogitatiopress.com/socialinclusion/article/viewFile/4894/4894>.

⁵⁶ Kerr, e-mail to author.

⁵⁷ Hellman, e-mail to author.

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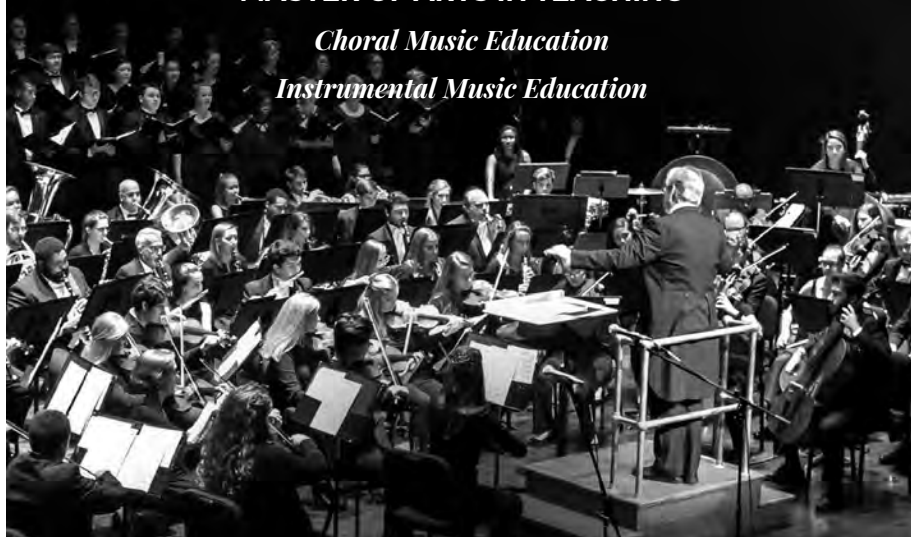
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