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Mission

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

Goals

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

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INTEGRITY IN A MOMENT OF PRETENSE: A Look at the Moral Dilemma of the Politicization of the Tenure Process in Religious Institutions of Higher Learning

Pursuing a career as a professor in an academic setting offers a life that may be defined by many rich experiences. My own career spanned 42 years as a professor of music at a prominent Christian institution in southern California. Over my career, I have had numerous conversations with educators and administrators at other Christian institutions regarding many issues and potential issues that they have encountered. I offer my thoughts regarding a particular situation that might be faced regarding the tenure process at institutions where tenure is a possibility. However, it is recognized that many of these ideas are pertinent to comparable processes where promotion and retention are considered without a formal tenure practice. Some of the principles may be applicable to non-academic areas, as well.

One of the processes deemed to be important to the academy in many institutions is that of tenure. Those of us who have served as members of rank, tenure, and promotion committees at our respective colleges and universities are often told that such service is the most important work that a faculty member can do. Regardless of the validity of this statement, it is certainly the work of this committee that has the most immediate impact on the lives of individuals. It is an area of the academy where the possibility of a moral dilemma is most likely to occur. Faculty members are chosen by their peers and are given the trust of their colleagues to uphold standards that are based on an acceptable and agreed upon set of standards for both the university and for the discipline. A moral dilemma may occur when the faculty committee finds itself in conflict with an administrator who represents the next step in the process. Ultimately, it is a body such as the board of regents that decides tenure issues. It is logical to assume, however, that they are acting only on the recommendations of those who have made judgments earlier in the process. It is also logical to assume that these recommendations reflect some degree of filtering by others such as a faculty committee within the department.

The university where I worked for my entire full-time career has a stated mission that it is a "Christian university committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and Christian values, where students are strengthened for lives of purpose, service, and leadership." There is a printed affirmation that clearly states "that truth, having nothing to fear from investigation, should be pursued relentlessly in every discipline…that spiritual commitment, tolerating no excuse for mediocrity, demands the highest standards of academic excellence." Statements such as these contain lofty thoughts and guide, or should guide, the actions of those who are in leadership positions. What happens when an administrator such as a dean attempts to go against accepted procedures and

professional standards in order to get the person of his or her choice tenured and also placed in a leadership position? The issue is one of stated values and procedures versus personal agendas. Another issue involves the leadership characteristics of an administrator who might be authoritarian and paternalistic. Such a philosophical leaning creates an interesting dynamic with committees such as the rank, tenure, and promotion committee. The theme expressed by Reinhold Neibuhr in his *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, that "while it is possible for intelligence to increase the range of benevolent impulse, and thus prompt a human being to consider the needs and rights of other than those to whom he is bound by organic and physical relationship, there are definite limits in the capacity of ordinary mortals which makes it impossible for them to grant to others what they claim for themselves"[1] is very pronounced in a committee such as the one under discussion. The fear factor surfaces too often when a group gets together. This can be a fear of reprisal. I believe that much of that dynamic is attributed to another leadership characteristic—that of using one's position in a local organization, such as a church, to intimidate others to get one's way, as one example. There is a blatant disregard for core human values such as respect for human dignity-the dignity of faculty who serve on the committee and the dignity of the faculty who received false affirmation through a process that is not based on a realistic and honest evaluation. When all of these things collide, the tenure process becomes politicized and weakened. When this happens, the core values of the academy are jeopardized and corroded. If one of the foundational pillars of ethics is the belief that each person is of equal importance, then it would seem reasonable that each person should be judged by equivalent standards. There are numerous moral questions that come to mind when the process becomes politicized: 1) what effect does such an action ultimately have on the quality of the program; 2) what effect does such an action have on the morale of the other faculty who have been held to a different set of standards; 3) what effect does such an action have on the integrity of the core values of the institution; 4) what effect does standing up against authority possibly have on the personal welfare of those who speak the truth; and 5) what effect does it have on students when faculty who speak out may have retribution directed toward them or resources denied that could benefit students?

A major part of the dilemma grows out of an increasing concern among schools such as those associated with my own religious affiliation of the fear that these schools may be in jeopardy of losing their religious identity. Low numbers of potential faculty members in certain fields contribute to this concern. Church affiliation, family connections, and indebtedness to church leaders who are also school administrators, are becoming more important considerations in the hiring

[1] Reinhold Niebuhr, *Major Works on Religion and Politics – Moral Man and Immoral Society* (New York: The Library of America, 2015), 152.

process at such institutions. Yet, the stated mission of commitment to academic excellence and Christian values remains.

First, I believe that there are many ethical perspectives present in this moral dilemma. I do believe that anytime a faculty committee is charged with such a task as the tenure process that it should approach the task with the question put forth by James McGregor Burns in *Leadership*. He asked the question of "how do leaders lead followers without being wholly led by followers?"[2] In other words, there must be a transforming dimension to the undertaking that involves all of the players. Candidates for tenure are held to a standard. They often rise to a new standard after going through this process. The level of excellence at the university should be lifted to a greater standard when the efforts of faculty members are acknowledged and recognized. Faculty members who function as members of the rank, tenure, and promotion committee should be uplifted by a process that can, if handled professionally, create a transformed intellectual climate for both students and faculty.

Second, I have always sensed a moral duty and responsibility to myself, to the individual candidates, to my colleagues, and to the students to uphold professional standards based on an honest assessment of the facts presented as they relate to the core values of the institution and the standards of the profession. A faculty member has a right to a fair consideration by the tenure committee. Rights impose a duty to respect the rights of others. I believe that, in the scenario that I am proposing, students have the right to expect that those entrusted with their education be the most highly qualified people to do so.

Third, I have always felt a moral responsibility to the university as a whole. To violate the trust given to me to uphold the standards of the tenure process would be to accept a lie. While one must accept the final decision in tenure cases after all parties have been heard, it is important to be true to one's own moral beliefs. Therefore, I believe that we, as professors in the academy, have a moral duty to make judgments that are grounded on our own moral principles that we know to be valid. As hard as it may seem at times, one must remember that moral judgments must be consistent. This is part of the sense of wholeness that is known as integrity. Accordingly, it is my personal belief that I must act on this principle. Failure to act out of concern for consequences in such areas as tenure and promotion really creates a long-term corrosive effect on the values of the academy. In making tenure judgements, I believe that one must be able to be impartial when it concerns the interests of everyone affected by his or her actions. The core values and professional standards must be maintained. I personally had the great fortune of being able to graduate with a certificate in the executive management program at Claremont Graduate University. This program was founded on the principles formulated by Peter Drucker, the

[2] James MacGregor Burns. *Leadership* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 2.

founder of modern management. Drucker's assertion that people are the ends—not the means—suggests to me that standards of honest assessment are to be used for everybody. It also suggests to me that political maneuvering by administrators fails to recognize that students, as people of dignity, are the ends of an organization such as a university. To use the tenure process as a political process fails to recognize this. Administrators who choose to politicize the tenure process and adopt a utilitarian philosophy that suggests that rules can be broken or broken for the sake of greater happiness—namely their own—fail to have a long-term picture of what it takes to have institutional health.

Several years ago, I had the pleasure of taking a class entitled "Morality and Leadership" at the Drucker School of Management-Claremont Graduate University under the tutelage of Professor Richard Ellsworth. One of the case studies investigated during the semester was "The Parable of the Sadhu." The parable centers around a story where a businessman encounters a dying pilgrim in the Himalayas and ponders the differences between individual and corporate ethics. In this case, several people found it easier to go forward on their journey rather than to stop and render aid.[3] This is often the case in faculty committees. It is easier to move on without any investigation, discussion, or debate. While this mode of operation may seem to be the most expedient, it leads down a path of decay and is a way of caving into the desires of a "toxic" administrator. This often comes about in faculty committees as a result of having been beaten down or having one's efforts go disrespected. Although the stakes are not of the same magnitude in higher education, the principles put forth by Rev. Martin Neimollor in a famous quote from 1945 has some bearing on the situation found in such a faculty committee. "First, they came for the Communists, and I didn't speak up, because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up, because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up, because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time there was no one left to speak up for me." I believe that it is a moral imperative to address the issues because the stakes are high for the future education of students and the morale of the faculty.

Certainly, one of the questions that comes up in a situation like the one that I have described is whose judgment should prevail. Universities have changed dramatically over the span of my life. A story has often been told that the faculty of Columbia University once informed Dwight D. Eisenhower when he was the university president that they themselves were the university. Times have changed, for better or worse. In small private church-related institutions, the organization often runs from the top down. Faculty members are often led to believe that they have more clout than they really have. The governing board ultimately has the say in hiring, but there is an illusion that everybody has been

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[3] Bowan H. McCoy, "The Parable of the Sadhu," *Harvard Business Review* (May-June 1997): 2-7.

involved in an equal way.

In the final analysis, the standards used for guiding such a decision should be the stated core values of the institution, the stated standards for the tenure process, and the standards found in the discipline. The decision should never be based on unstated assumptions about church membership and other such considerations.

The moral dilemma created by politicizing tenure opens up a veritable cascade of consequences. To recommend that an unqualified person gets tenure does indeed ignore a "low-probability event." Faculty networks are very quick to pick up on political decisions. Such decisions weaken the efforts of others. Awarding someone with a political appointment limits the search for the best-qualified candidate and weakens the quality of the educational product. Awarding someone with a political appointment also ignores the possibility that the public will find out. It does not take very much intelligence for to look at a hiring, look at the candidate's qualifications, and determine the candidate's religious affiliation to determine why the hire took place. Church-related institutions do have a right to hire those who share common religious beliefs. I believe that the ethical and moral dilemma occurs when there is one stated set of assumptions about the mission and another unstated one. When the committee operates under one set of guidelines and certain members of the administration operate under their own set, there is an obvious tension created.

As expressed by Richard Ellsworth in his *Leadership and the Quest for Integrity*, "high ethical standards are at the core of the ideas of integrity… without them, the deep personal aspirations and idealistic organizational aims that are central to business leadership are likely to be stillborn"[4] When faced with a leader who appears to be a proponent of "situational ethics," it is imperative for members of the rank, tenure, and promotion committee to uphold the values of the university in a consistent manner. If there is a constant shift in values, it will be impossible to maintain a sense of academic integrity. One of the most devastating events of university life is witnessing faculty members who want to do the right things but are stymied through fear of reprisal from a member of the administration. This is indicative of a larger adaptive challenge that surfaces later in academic life when faculty members get to the point of feeling that they do not matter. They have witnessed inconsistent standards applied throughout the university, repeatedly, and over an extended period of time.

In looking back at my own experience as a professor of music and academic chairperson, as well as reflecting on the Christian mission of an institution, I am reminded of Paul's "Letter to the Philippians" found in the *New Testament*.

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[4] Richard Ellsworth, *Leadership and the Quest for Integrity* (Cambridge: Harvard Business School Press, 1989), 189.

Much of this book is concerned with integrity as expressed in an insightful commentary by Earl Palmer, entitled, *Integrity in a World of Pretense*. Palmer reports on Paul's teaching that one should let his/her manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ. "Worthy" suggests an equilibrium brought on by a consistency and wholeness in one's life that may be properly labeled integrity.[5] Regardless of any consequences that may be directed toward individuals, I believe that the wholeness to be gained is more important than the fear of crossing one's superiors.

Abandoning a stated value system in favor of an unstated agenda does not work in the long run. I do subscribe to the concept of relativism at the appropriate time. However, it does not always work in an academic setting such as that found on a tenure committee. It may be true that one discipline should be judged in a different manner than another one. Yet, absolutism does play a major part in the process. There are absolute values that a tenure candidate must be judged upon. If one's commitment to the Christian mission of the school is judged by leadership positions and actions in a particular church, another candidate's commitment should be judged by those same standards—not by whether or not one simply says that he/she attends church. If publications are accepted as scholarship in one field based on the standards of that field, performance-based scholarship should be considered by the same standard in a field such as music. Thomas Donaldson points out in his article, entitled, "Values in Tension: Ethics Way from Home," that absolutists operate under the assumption that people must express moral truth using only one set of concepts.[6] I am not expressing a belief that there is only one way in which one can display expertise at scholarship or spiritual commitment. I am suggesting that the problem occurs when one set of standards is printed, and a leader chooses to adopt his or her own set of standards in order to pursue a personal agenda. Donaldson identifies another problem with absolutism—a global standard of ethical behavior. Extending this concept to the university, one might expect that all parties would choose to operate on the same standard of ethics. This is not always the case in this situation. I believe that many in the academy are motivated by fear. Perhaps, this is a result of having been hired primarily for membership in a particular denomination. Yet, everyone realizes that they are going to be judged by a different set of standards than those that led to their initial hiring—at least as far as the rank, tenure, and promotion committee is concerned. This has resulted in some degree of dysfunction, as evidenced by the deliberations of rank, tenure, and promotion committees.

In an institution with such a prescriptive set of values expressed in certain terms, the idea of moral free space is difficult to imagine. The concept of

[5] Earl F. Palmer, *Integrity in a World of Pretense* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992,15-24.
[6] Thomas Donaldson. "Values in Tension: Ethics Away from Home." *Harvard Business Review* (September-October 1996): 4-12.

mokita[7], as expressed in the Donaldson article mentioned above, is, perhaps, an appropriate word for a university committee such as the one that I have described. The South Seas used the word to mean "the truth that everybody knows but nobody speaks." Fear motivates faculty to avoid confronting the issues that they know superiors may be mishandling. One might hope that superiors would welcome the discussion over such issues. This is not always the case.

What action should be taken to resolve the dilemma created when what should be an honorable process is cheapened by the politicizing motives of one person or a group of people? I believe that the most important consideration is that of one's personal integrity. This is not a naïve approach that fails to recognize the need to be able to think politically when needed. Rather, it is a sense of personal integrity that recognizes that in order to be whole, one has to be consistent with one's own beliefs and values, as well as the values of the organization where one works. To be any other way would be to live a lie. One of the important themes that can be found in the academy is that of life as a quest. If one is to have a goal of living the life of a "good person," one must have a conception of the ultimate end—what is good for humankind. Such thoughts have long-term ramifications for the lives of students and faculty, as well as the reputation of a program. I believe that is it important to remember that individuals come and go, but their decisions may live on. Compounding this is the likelihood that the stated values of the organization will continue to be around in one form or the other. If bad decisions are made, these values will become stagnant, and the "morality of aspiration" will be severely hampered.

It has been said that one cannot fight city hall. While one may not be able to fight city hall, ultimately, I believe that it is a moral duty to voice a judgment that is based on the facts. I do not believe that it is possible to dictate the morality of a collective unit. I do believe that it is possible to speak in a way that will persuade. Yet, the end result after debate has occurred is the collective vote. Once all has been said, it is a utilitarian concern with consequences that prompts all parties to let the matter drop and move on. To do otherwise would result in too much disunity for the organization and be unprofessional. People must own the collective decision. The moral affirmation is found when one has presented the facts and presented them in a way that is consistent with published guidelines, standards for the profession, and stated assumptions of the organization. I do not believe that one can do more in a situation like this. Disagreement in a climate of stifled discussion is an act of courage, perhaps. It is also an act of necessity. Personally, it is a liberating action. It can also be a transformational act if handled appropriately. In reference to the Buddhist concept of "the self as being defined by relationships," I believe

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[7] Ibid., 12.

that it is reasonable to assume that service on the rank, tenure, and promotion committee under such circumstances can result in an "ever expanding stream of connectedness and a development of a foundation of mutual trust and confidence." Creating an environment where there is an harmonious values orientation and where there is a feeling of mutual obligation and respect between all parties will not happen in silence and intimidation. Going back to the Aristotelian concept of virtue ethics, it must be remembered that virtue does indeed involve action. Persuasive speech and willingness to express a viewpoint in writing are actions that I personally consider to be virtues. They may not always be successful, but they are actions that must be used in such situations. Changing a situation like this may not occur without a change in leadership. Referring back to the question of what action will do more harm than good, I believe that the most harmful and immoral action would be that of silence—both verbally and in writing. Such an action would be an act of consent. Complacency is not acceptable if there is to be a possibility of positive change—a change that results in a climate where there is a meritocracy of ideas, promotions and rewards.

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HARMONIZING NEW VOICES: EMBRACING DIVERSITY IN MUSIC EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

National Association of Schools of Music
100th Annual Meeting
November 22-26, 2024

Keynote Address

"*The breadth of music in schools and communities continues to grow as we involve expanding populations of students, teachers, and community members. As we welcome new voices, assumptions, values, and traditions, our increasingly diverse population offers rich opportunities, along with the need to consider new pedagogies, perspectives, and resources.*"

Good morning, and thank you all for being here today. It is truly an honor to stand before you as we reflect on a topic that holds immense significance not only for me but for the entire field of music education. Today, as we celebrate the 100th anniversary of NASM, we are not just commemorating a century of accomplishments but also setting our sights on the next 100 years—a future that we all have a role in shaping.

Acknowledging NASM's Legacy

For a century, NASM has been a compass guiding music schools across the country, cultivating excellence and preserving the integrity of music education for hundreds of thousands of students. NASM continues to uphold rigorous standards, providing a strong foundation that supports music educators and students nationwide. Each of you here, along with your colleagues back home, plays an indispensable role in this work, and for that, I extend my deepest gratitude.

Your dedication to advancing music education reflects the highest aspirations of our field. The generations of students who have walked through your classrooms and rehearsal halls carry forward the knowledge, artistry, and discipline that define what it means to be a musician. That legacy is remarkable. And as we celebrate this milestone, it is also a moment to ask: How can we ensure that this legacy remains relevant, inclusive, and transformative in the century to come?

My Musical Journey

I am extremely fortunate to have grown up in a home where music was the lifeblood of our family. My mother, a high school orchestra teacher, and my father, a middle school band teacher, dedicated their lives to nurturing young musicians. Most afternoons, their classrooms were filled with the sounds of afterschool rehearsals, and our home became an extension of this environment—alive with the comings and goings of their private students.

My father was born in the early 40s and grew up in Jackson, Mississippi. There were key people and events in his life that eventually led him to the band room he taught in for over 25 years His cousin brought home a saxophone from a house she regularly cleaned that ignited his love for jazz and the blues as a kid. Although he never received any formal music education, he learned what he could from local musicians in clubs and from what he heard on the radio. As a young man, he decided to serve our country by enlisting in the Marines and fought in the Vietnam War. His pledge to complete his formal musical training was added to his desire to survive his time in the conflict and when he returned physically intact, a VA staffer went above and beyond to get him a seat in the music department at Norfolk State University and set up to use his GI benefits. He worked hard and caught up with his young peers, and after completing his bachelors degree in Virginia, he earned a spot in Eugene Rousseau's studio at Indiana University where he earned his Masters in performance and education. He's shared so many stories with me of times of being excluded and denied musical opportunities because that's just how things were back then, but the instances where people stepped in to include him would always encourage him to keep moving forward. His time at IU would be just that.

On the other hand, my mother was born in the mid 50s and grew up here on the Southside of Chicago. My grandmother brought my mom and aunt to Ravinia in the summer of 1965 to hear Andre Watts perform with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra for the first time. Seeing a young Black soloist left an indelible impression on my mom; it inspired her to work hard as a flutist with hopes that she could accomplish such musical mastery someday. Three years later, she was one of seven students to integrate the Chicago Public Schools where she and her family had to endure tremendous amounts of ridicule and pressure to stay out of the Mount Greenwood community. Despite all of the challenges and lack of support she faced, she still aspired to pursue music as a profession and began the familiar trek of applying to colleges and set out for in-person auditions. She was told at her first college audition that she should consider doing something else besides music because she was so far behind the competition. If you imagine hearing this news, what would you do? For my mom, she decided to return back home to where she would be included and earned her

Bachelors of Music from the Sherwood Conservatory when they were granting college degrees at that time. She did see the writing on the wall throughout her undergraduate studies and decided she wanted to add professional skills to her toolbox that would someday compliment her musical studies. It was through the Consortium for Graduate Study in Management program—whose mission is to enhance diversity and inclusion by striving to reduce the underrepresentation of African Americans, Hispanic Americans and Native Americans in global business education and leadership—that took her to Indiana University's Kelley School of Business where she also played in one of the bands in the School of Music.

On the way to rehearsal one day she met my father. They married and set up shop in Atlanta where they had eight kids. The 7th child my parents made was perfect. This child was the strongest, best looking, and had the most potential. My mother had originally hoped that The Consortium would match her with the business school at Stanford University, so she thought it was appropriate to name this bundle of perfection that you see here today, *Stanford*. I like to believe that they gave up on having more kids after the eighth was born because the seventh was perfect, but maybe my mom was just too damn tired.

And then there were my seven siblings and me, all held to one inviolable rule: *You were only served dinner on the days you practiced.* That rule instilled in us a profound respect for the discipline and joy of making music. But it also taught us something deeper—that music is more than notes and rhythms; it is a way of life, a means of connecting with others, and a bridge to opportunities that might otherwise remain out of reach.

I took these lessons and the entrepreneurial spirit instilled in me by my mother and ran a web design company in middle school, established the Atlanta Trumpet Festival in partnership with Emory University in high school, founded a tuition-free summer camp in Reading, Pennsylvania while in college, teamed up with the Kenya Urithi Education Fund to develop a music program in Central Kenya immediately after my undergraduate studies, and then spent several months in Venezuela studying their music education and social development program *El Sistema* through the New England Conservatory's Sistema Fellows Program—all before I started my professional career as an advocate for those often overlooked and divested in our field.

Shaping Programs for a Changing World

These formative experiences have stayed with me throughout my career and continue to shape how I have looked at the challenges and obstacles that have been barriers for so many people I desperately want to be engaged through music. Over the past fifteen years, my work—from founding Play On Philly to leading El Sistema USA and now Equity Arc—has been rooted in a deep belief that music has transformative power, not only in individual lives but

in communities as a whole. This belief has guided me to advocate for music programs that meet the evolving needs of students and society by integrating social impact, community engagement, and innovative practices.

Today's music classrooms reflect a growing diversity of backgrounds, experiences, and traditions. This shift is not just an opportunity but a responsibility. When I started Play On Philly, I saw firsthand how a symphonic orchestra could become a platform for students to engage with their cultural heritage, develop executive functioning skills, and broaden their perspectives alongside peers who were from 59 different countries. By celebrating our students' collective diversity through music, we created a curriculum that resonated deeply with them—a curriculum that didn't just teach music but also fostered connection, curiosity, and confidence.

The results speak for themselves. Many of Play On Philly's students have gone on to study music performance, education, therapy, and business at institutions such as Juilliard, Berklee, Royal Conservatory, Peabody, and regional universities in and around Philadelphia. These outcomes reflect the potential of inclusive, community-driven programs to not only prepare students for advanced studies but also to empower them as engaged citizens. How are you embracing our students and the lived experiences they are bringing to your institutions as they already know there is much more to learn and strive for than what they need to graduate from your institutions?

The Power of Mentorship

While NASM's standards have done an excellent job of shaping technically proficient musicians, today's students need and want more. They need to be prepared for a world where adaptability, collaboration, and community engagement are just as critical as technical excellence. And they desire to be acknowledged, respected, and actively listened to by their professors, administrators, and peers, indicating that their opinions and experiences matter and are valued within the academic environment.

Too often, students are left without the time or resources to meaningfully explore these areas. While schools may offer community engagement or entrepreneurship courses, these opportunities are often under-resourced rather than central to a musician's education. We have to ask ourselves: Are we setting aside the proper time to equip students with the tools they need to thrive—not just on the concert stage but also in and with the communities they will serve? I'd like to share a couple of examples of the people who truly saw me for who I am and leave you with questions to think about:

My first trumpet teacher, Dr. Gordon Vernick, still is the Director of Jazz Studies at Georgia State University and our lessons were sandwiched between

a standing weekly department meeting he had and a big band rehearsal. As an 8-year-old, I was much more observant and curious about his work than he thought. Even for a while I thought he was the Dean of the music school because it seemed like he was doing a lot more than just talking about the trumpet or jazz. I watched how he handled himself around the other faculty, staff, and students, being helpful yet firm, but always being inclusive to others ideas. Once when I asked him about it all, he simply said "jazz musicians must have 'big ears,' which means listening to others more than you're listening to yourself." On one hand, I was witnessing the empathy, respect, and trust he had for his colleagues and students and how that made him such an effective collaborator. And on the other hand, he embraced uncertainty and challenges, showing me that space can be made to take risks. In the eighth grade, after studying with him for five years, I finally worked up the nerve to ask him what it was like doing his job. We put our trumpets down and he took me to the music administrative building where he introduced me to all of the staff, explained how the school of music ran, and revealed that he had another office that was bigger than my childhood bedroom. Watching him navigate those spaces and often sharing stories of the good, bad, and ugly of his various responsibilities on campus opened my eyes to the multiple dimensions that make up our collective work. How do you model the balance of empathy, inclusion, and risk-taking in your leadership that inspires and includes the next generation of musicians and administrators?

Another example of mentorship and advocacy came during my time in the Atlanta Youth Wind Symphony under the direction of Dr. Scott Stewart, who continues to lead the ensemble today. While the suburbs and fancy private schools are known to have strong music programs, did you know that Atlanta is number one for having the top black high school marching bands in the country? I navigated the traditional world of wind ensemble on Monday nights at Emory while spending my first two years of high school filming and recording for the 21st Century Fox movie Drumline which used our school uniforms, instruments, scores, students and alumni. I had no problem feeling like I belonged in my school's music program—I was constantly validated and supported in many ways. However, it took someone special like Dr. Stewart to see and support me in ways that every other youth music program and summer camp failed to include me. He programmed music from all over the world, especially by living minority composers, where others didn't. He was thoughtful about engaging soloists and guest conductors that my peers and I needed to learn from. Those experiences were the only time I ever saw black men and women of all backgrounds on the podium in front of us in all of my youth and college training. Dr. Stewart came out to my high school to meaningfully engage with my band directors, work with our band, and ensure we had tickets to anything we wanted to hear that came through Emory University. It wasn't

just local engagement though, Dr. Stewart was always supporting me and my siblings—whether it was to ensure my family could afford a trip to perform in Carnegie Hall or give my sister the keys to the percussion studio with 24/7 access to the building, he just found a way to make those things happen. When I approached him about hosting the Atlanta Trumpet Festival, he did more than offer time and space. He rolled up his sleeves, serving as a mentor and sponsor—taking me and my trumpet buddies through all the operations and logistics we would need to execute a flawless experience, and he opened doors to funding sources by connecting us to the Coca-Cola Foundation and he sat with us to explain *in detail* how we were going to navigate and circumvent the bureaucracy of Emory University. How can you intentionally create opportunities for students to see themselves reflected in the leadership and community engagement of your music programs? As the Atlanta Trumpet Festival just celebrated its 20th anniversary, your students just might create lasting communities that stick around well after they leave campus.

When I moved to Philadelphia to attend the Curtis Institute of Music, I was quickly described as the kid that would someday run the conservatory. I often spent time in those back hallways that Dr. Vernick and Dr. Stewart showed me as a kid. I had an understanding of how the school worked outside of my practice room and recital hall. I found welcoming and warm staff that were happy to show me the ropes through my various work study assignments in just about every department on campus. To me, it was exciting to see how the advancement staff developed relationships with donors that supported my musical learning through gifts of all sizes. I also learned a lot from supporting the student services and marketing teams, lending a hand with the artistic and operations teams, and seeing first hand how the business functions of the school kept the entire institution running on time. What stood out to me the most was the willingness of every staff leader to spend time with me explaining how everything worked in their department and being a resource for me as I started Play On Philly. My most impactful mentor was Mary Loiselle, the former Director of Community Engagement and Career Development Services at Curtis. She was the only person who took the time to get to know me on a personal level to match my values, interests, and skills to her advocacy with the faculty and Dean. They found opportunities and gave me the space and time to continue to develop my first nonprofit and launch the Reading Summer Music Institute, a tuition-free summer camp in Reading, Pennsylvania. One of Curtis' donors and retired bank presidents in the Berks County region, Mr. John Connelly, took an interest in my story and knew I would connect well with the young people in Reading. Together with the local music educators and universities, we organized a two week summer experience that dramatically

increased participation from Black and Hispanic students who continued to learn music in high school and college, who then returned to their home communities to take over music teaching jobs in the school district, private teaching studios, and community music schools. How can you create a culture within your institution where staff, faculty, and stakeholders collaborate to nurture students' unique values and aspirations, empowering them to drive meaningful change in their communities?

However, I purposely decided against enrolling in a traditional Master's program because I couldn't find a comprehensive program to support me in the type of impact I wanted to make in the world until I met Mark Churchill at the New England Conservatory. In 2009, he launched the Sistema Fellows Program, a tuition-free postgraduate certificate initiative. Its primary goal was to train musicians and music educators to develop and lead El Sistema-inspired programs in the United States. The program selected ten fellows each year who engaged in an intensive nine-month curriculum. This curriculum encompassed leadership development, presentation skills, nonprofit strategy, finance, resource development, evaluation and assessment, and educational pedagogy. The training combined classroom seminars at NEC with experiential work in the field—for me it was here in Chicago at the People's Music School. A notable component was a two month-long residency in Venezuela, allowing me and my colleagues to immerse ourselves in the original El Sistema environment. Unfortunately, the program only lasted five years, but the impact our programs are still having on over 25,000 lives each year is a remarkable legacy to leave on communities often overlooked for high-quality music education programs. To this day, I wish that so many of my peers could have participated in a program like this alongside our musical studies. How can you reimagine music education programs to include comprehensive leadership and community engagement training, equipping musicians to create meaningful impact in communities they serve?

Imagining a Holistic Model for Music Education

Imagine a new model for music education that emphasizes holistic development. Picture curricula that elevate skills like collaboration, empathy, and cultural understanding alongside musicianship. Imagine programs that place non-Western music traditions, community-driven performance, and social impact on equal footing with traditional studies. These changes could bridge the gap between music schools and the communities they serve, ensuring that students graduate as both skilled musicians and engaged citizens.

As our society and field evolves, so too must our pedagogical frameworks. Today's musicians must be entrepreneurial thinkers, able to create opportunities, fund their own projects, and navigate the rapidly changing technological landscape. Teaching students how to leverage tools like artificial intelligence,

much as earlier generations taught themselves to harness the power of social media, could open doors we've yet to imagine.

Music as a Catalyst for Social Responsibility

But beyond technology and entrepreneurship lies an even greater calling: music as a catalyst for social responsibility. More and more students are asking how they can use their art to address issues like human rights, climate change, and cultural preservation. They see music not just as a career but as a platform for change. Is it our job to support them in this vision?

Programs like Play On Philly and Equity Arc have shown me what is possible when music education prioritizes equity and inclusion. These programs have used music to build resilience, foster belonging, and create opportunities for students who might otherwise be overlooked. If NASM were to integrate these values into its standards, it could inspire a new generation of musicians to lead with purpose.

A Call to Action

As leaders in music education, you have the power to shape the future of our field. By embracing standards that celebrate diversity, accessibility, and social impact, NASM can prepare students to navigate an ever-changing world with confidence and compassion. I urge you to consider setting bold new standards that prioritize community engagement, cultural awareness, and holistic education.

Reflect on your own journey, those who've believed in you, and the values that have guided your work. Then imagine how we can collectively support the next generation of students as they chart their paths—paths that may look very different from ours but are no less vital to the future of music.

Envisioning the Next Century

Imagine a music world shaped by NASM's vision—a world where every student has access to the transformative power of music education, where schools celebrate the rich traditions of every culture, and where students graduate as empowered citizens ready to make a difference. In this world, music education becomes a bridge—linking cultures, breaking barriers, and fostering understanding.

NASM has the power to lead us toward this future. By setting bold standards, actively advocating for and championing inclusion, equity, and excellence, it can ensure that music education remains a cornerstone of a more compassionate and connected society.

As we celebrate NASM's 100-year legacy, let us also embrace the opportunity to shape the next century with vision, courage, and purpose. Together, we can ensure that the music we nurture today resonates far beyond our classrooms, inspiring generations to come.

Thank you.

…

Stanford Thompson is an internationally recognized arts leader advancing musical excellence and equity in classical music. His expertise includes organizational management, strategic implementation, and stakeholder relationship development. He founded and led music education organization Play On Philly, served as the founding board chair of El Sistema USA, and founded and currently serves as executive director of Equity Arc. As a Principal with Goldsmith Strategies, he has guided the strategic development of dozens of organizations across the United States. Stanford serves on the faculty of the Global Leaders Institute and regularly speaks at major arts and business conferences and institutions. He has been a TED Fellow, presenting on music as a powerful tool for positive personal and societal change. Stanford holds degrees from The Curtis Institute of Music and New England Conservatory.

IS BIGGER ALWAYS BETTER? RECONCEPTUALIZING ENROLLMENT, QUALITY, AND SUSTAINABILITY IN UNIVERSITY MUSIC PROGRAMS

Higher music education has historically faced financial limitations and evolving governmental requirements (Hertzog, 2024; Davis et al., 2024; Helton & Delfing, 2023; Jääskeläinen, 2022). In 2011, Odundo et al. cautioned that the drive for "massification" to augment enrolments would enhance income but potentially jeopardise resources and diminish academic quality. Shortly thereafter, West (2012) recorded how legislation like the No Child Left Behind Act favoured core courses at the expense of the arts, resulting in a diminished number of well qualified students for postsecondary music programs. Burrack et al. (2014) emphasized that funding cuts in Kansas, Nebraska, and Missouri reduced music teaching posts, illustrating the precariousness of music departments already scrutinised for failing to accommodate increasing enrolment demands.

In this perspective, Adams-Johnson (2015) underscored the significance of smart student recruiting for the financial viability of a music program. He contended that synchronizing enrolment objectives with the skill levels of prospective students can fulfill both institutional requirements and the rigorous standards of artistic education. A fundamental concern persists: can recruitment alone maintain quality amidst administrative pressures to validate investments in specialised facilities and faculty by increased enrolment?

Numerous scholars have subsequently investigated whether larger cohorts invariably diminish standards. Ramchander and Naude (2018) challenged the presumption that big class numbers inherently detriment learning, demonstrating that smart planning can maintain consistent pass rates. Similarly, Xu (2018) emphasized the 'transformative potential' of music education, proposing that students without sophisticated pre-entry abilities can thrive in a supportive environment. Hanna (2023) contended that inadequate faculty assistance and financial considerations frequently outweigh class size, highlighting the conflict between institutional revenue objectives and the necessity for personalized, intensive instruction.

By 2024, additional research amplified this discussion. Tolmie (2024) characterized music training as exceptionally specialised, necessitating stringent auditions and sophisticated skills. Ski-Berg and Røyseng (2024) cautioned against "superficial compliance," wherein programs modify curricula just to achieve enrolment objectives, jeopardizing fundamental creative and educational principles. All these viewpoints converge on a common dilemma: institutions anticipate substantial enrolments to finance costly music programs, whereas teachers assert that maintaining depth and rigour is challenging with huge student cohorts. This study does not advocate for any singular perspective.

It examines the reasons departments desire development despite adhering to stringent standards, while administrators aim for increased enrolment in conjunction with a quest for reputation.

Historical examples of departmental downsizing or mergers (West, 2012; Burrack et al., 2014) demonstrate the tangible expenses associated with decreased enrolment, such as diminished scholarships, deteriorated equipment, and limited performance possibilities. Administrators may enquire why music programs cannot "adapt" like other disciplines; nevertheless, some contend that music is inherently performance-oriented, necessitating expensive equipment, small practice environments, and tight mentorship. Concerns emerge over whether institutions have established targets without providing adequate assistance, or if conventional music admissions and pedagogical approaches contribute to the problem. Ultimately, cooperation between both parties may be the sole solution to this stalemate.

This study examines the institutional, economic, and pedagogical elements that perpetuate the tension between quantity and quality. Although music departments are occasionally deemed snobbish, it is equally erroneous to presume that administrators are solely motivated by profit. The study suggests techniques to reconcile artistic rigour with financial feasibility, analyzing enrolment habits, the long-term effects of departmental downsizing, and innovative curricular alternatives to maintain music education's academic integrity and fiscal viability.

In higher education, music programs hold a unique position due to their resource-intensive and experiential characteristics. Research conducted by Jiang (2024), Hadjikou (2021), and Grant (2013) confirms that individual instruction, ensemble rehearsals, and small-group feedback are not readily adaptable to large-class settings. Certain researchers debate the potential for more flexible delivery of elements like theory or ear training; nonetheless, all recognise that individualized mentorship has practical difficulties, including constrained rehearsal space and heightened faculty responsibilities. Furthermore, extensive financial crises influence the methodologies universities employ to evaluate and finance music programs (Toomela, 2024; Hillman & Kindschy, 2018; Hutton, 2022), as diminished public funding and declining tuition income necessitate austerity measures that frequently impact specialised disciplines first (Chirica & Puscas, 2018; Marshall & Marshall, 2018).

Institutional authorities frequently perceive enrolment expansion as a protective measure, so imposing more pressure on minor disciplines such as music (Sanders-Dewey & Dudek, 2018; Aksnes et al., 2024; Tubulingane, 2024). From an administrative perspective, a reduced student population results in diminished tuition revenue, fostering perceptions of "underperformance" and rationalizing budget reductions. Ironically, larger cohort sizes can compromise the individualized teaching style crucial for performance-oriented education.

When programs fail to attract sufficient high-caliber musicians, a detrimental loop of reduced resources, decreasing student quality, and declining departmental prestige occurs.

Academics generally agree that music degrees necessitate specialised facilities and focused supervision; yet, they dispute the efficacy of creative approaches—such as partial curriculum scaling or alternative funding streams—in maintaining high standards. As accountability increases and budgets diminish, the inquiry is how music departments may maintain the high-contact paradigm that promotes artistic growth without succumbing to only financial or administrative pressures.

Backdrop: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives

The origins of specialized music degrees in higher education can be traced to the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when conservatories and nascent university music departments initiated the establishment of formal curricula. Hönerlage (2024) examines the pioneering role of Regensburg University of Catholic Church Music and Music Education, established in 1874, in developing systematic church music degrees that prioritize artistic development alongside pedagogical training.

Marty et al. (2024), Rubinoff (2017), and Rasmussen (2021) illustrate how European institutions, including the Conservatoire de Paris, which was founded in the late 18th century, broadened their programs in the early 1900s. This expansion established a standard for strict, audition-based admissions focused on technical proficiency, sight-reading, and theoretical knowledge. da Silva (2019), reflecting the perspectives of Bellini (2014), emphasizes that early 20th-century conservatories typically operated independently from larger university frameworks, focusing on elite performance training rather than mass enrollment. This reflects trends in the United States, where the Institute of Musical Art in New York, founded in 1905, subsequently evolved into The Juilliard School, as noted by Olmstead (1999) and Botstein (2000).

With the rise in prestige of the conservatory model, a concurrent evolution occurred in university-based music programs. Aquila (2022) argues that music has historically been integral to the liberal arts curriculum, connecting the quadrivium and trivium and underscoring its educational significance. This perspective highlights the coexistence of conservatories' audition-driven format with university degree structures that necessitate a broader coursework load, including general education (as noted by Almqvist & Werner, 2024 and Rosa-Napal & Romero-Tabeayo, 2015). Despite the expanded degree requirements, universities upheld selective admissions, necessitating applicants to possess demonstrable instrumental or vocal skills in addition to fundamental theoretical

knowledge, reflecting the preparatory rigor characteristic of European institutions.

By the mid-20th century, the dual model of elite conservatory-style mentorship combined with university-led general studies had become established (see Sternberg et al., 2022). In this context, strict selectivity was maintained: acceptance rates remained deliberately low to allow faculty to cultivate a small group of exceptionally talented students. This exclusivity, as indicated by several authors, fostered a significant reputation for excellence but subsequently created tension with the broader objectives of contemporary universities.

As we enter the 21st century, higher education has experienced substantial transformation. Research by Kaur (2023) indicates that Indian institutions are progressively dependent on government funding, performance metrics, and rankings, reflecting global patterns characterized by limited public funding and intense competition for resources. This aligns with Huber and Hillebrandt (2019), who contend that although German universities continue to utilize traditional bureaucratic methods for fund allocation, they have also adopted elements of performance-based strategies. Goker and Dursun (2023) argue that globalization has intensified the demand for measurable outcomes, such as teaching evaluations, research impact, and citation metrics, frequently eclipsing the tuition-revenue model in specific areas.

In numerous countries, public funding has not aligned with increasing operational costs, compelling institutions to expand enrollment for financial stability. Dyrstad et al. (2024) examine the impact of performance-based funding (PBF) on institutional enrollment strategies, noting that while PBF incentivizes full enrollment to ensure revenue, it seldom results in enduring changes in institutional capacity. Universities, they observe, respond by optimizing enrollment whenever possible.

The current climate presents challenges for music programs. Administrations frequently perceive increased enrollment as a means to validate expenditures on specialized facilities, including acoustically engineered halls, rehearsal studios, and costly equipment. In contrast, music faculty highlight the intensive, individualized nature of performance and ensemble instruction. Some authors connect institutional pressures to national or regional funding frameworks, as indicated by Kaur and Huber & Hillebrandt. In contrast, Goker & Dursun contend that global competition heightens the demand for measurable outcomes over revenue-based solutions.

Prospective music students vary considerably in their musical pursuits—some focus on classical performance, others on contemporary or technology-driven disciplines (Naidu, 2018; Ni & Chen, 2024), often turning to online or hybrid learning options. In response, certain departments are exploring more flexible degree tracks, certificate programs, and digital components to

enhance their appeal while maintaining a commitment to high-quality musical instruction.

These scholars illustrate the evolution of specialized music education from niche, elite conservatories to complex, university-centered programs increasingly influenced by enrollment targets and performance metrics. Authors such as Hönerlage and da Silva advocate for a tradition of rigorous selectivity, asserting that depth and artistry are essential and non-negotiable elements. Conversely, scholars like Aquila and Naidu argue that recent curricular and technological changes can maintain excellence while enhancing accessibility.

However, as noted by Dyrstad et al. and Goker & Dursun, practical funding and ranking pressures compel institutions to increase student enrollment in ways that may not consistently support resource-intensive, small-group music pedagogy. The conflict of interests is fundamental to the tension inherent in contemporary music program administration.

In summary, the traditional foundations of rigorous auditions and limited groups have created a longstanding benchmark of excellence, whereas contemporary universities require flexibility and larger capacities. Scholars debate the responsibility for change, with some arguing that institutional systems are excessively influenced by financial considerations, while others view music departments as insular or resistant to the evolving educational landscape. The situation may involve a nuanced equilibrium, requiring both parties to modify frameworks, funding models, and pedagogical practices.

This historical-contemporary context establishes the foundation for the primary discussion: Is it possible for music programs to maintain the integrity of their specialized training while also meeting the contemporary university's emphasis on strong enrollment and quantifiable results? The interaction of elite traditions, expanding educational missions, and performance-based funding highlights the complexities involved, indicating that a sustainable solution will probably necessitate collaboration between administrators and faculty, rather than unilateral changes from either party alone.

Bridging the Gap in Practice: Sustainable Approaches, Case Examples, and Ongoing Debate

Global music departments confront the dilemma of maintaining rigorous mentor-apprentice pedagogy while addressing institutional demands for increased enrolment. Performance-based education frequently incurs substantial expenses related to specialised facilities and faculty workloads; nonetheless, several sustainable strategies have arisen to align financial feasibility with stringent requirements. Equally vital are practical illustrations that showcase both the successes of these initiatives and the ongoing challenges influencing the

future of music teaching in higher education institutions.

A primary strategy encompasses short courses and certificate programs, which provide accessibility for potential students who are uncertain about or inadequately equipped for comprehensive degree programs. Instead of participating in multi-year programs, students may partake in focused modules* that cultivate particular skills—such as digital music production, jazz improvisation, or vocal techniques—providing a less risky entry point (Fernández et al., 2024; Van der Sluis et al., 2013; Young & Gibbings, 2007). Although these abbreviated programs might enhance and broaden the student demographic, departments must guarantee that participants attain substantial competencies, so circumventing the impression of "superficial" certifications.

At the degree level, tiered paths can cater to diverse levels of prior preparation and professional aspirations. A rigorous track generally prioritizes advanced auditions, specialised ensembles, and individualized instruction similar to a conservatory model, while a "general music studies" pathway may diminish audition requirements to focus on broader literacy, cultural understanding, and historical knowledge. This organization enables departments to support aspiring music educators, arts administrators, and interdisciplinary academics while preserving fundamental creative integrity in the more specialised pathway.

Music programs are increasingly enhanced by interdisciplinary collaboration, such as cross-listed courses with business or management schools that emphasise entrepreneurship for creative artists, or joint faculty arrangements that incorporate computer science specialists to instruct on digital technology for global outreach. By introducing music students to entrepreneurship, coding, or marketing, departments can cultivate graduates with a broader skill set appropriate for contemporary, rapidly expanding music careers. This methodology may also enhance enrolment by attracting students with interdisciplinary interests, assisting music programs in expanding their appeal without compromising standards.

Early outreach is fundamental for bridging skill gaps prior to formal admission. Partnerships with secondary schools and community programs—via seminars, summer intensives, or joint recitals—expose students to university-level standards at an early stage. Participants acquire essential performance or theoretical skills, enhancing retention and facilitating their transition into demanding undergraduate programs. Secondary instructors, consequently, gain additional resources to improve their instructional practices.

A further effective strategy for increasing enrolment is flexible scheduling, which include evening classes or part-time enrolment options. Consequently, working professionals, career transitioners, and adult learners discover a more attainable route to music education. Online components can enhance these options: short-term or block courses, as well as continuing education or degree-credit classes, enable students to learn asynchronously at their convenience.

Projects, papers, and subsequent sessions with teachers can maintain instructional quality. Utilising e-learning platforms enables programs to access a global audience; nevertheless, departments must guarantee that interactive, performance-oriented modules stay effective. Exclusively virtual solutions may undermine critical mentor-apprentice connections; therefore, universities generally achieve a balance by providing theoretical or music business courses online, while reserving ensemble rehearsals and performance coaching for in-person engagement.

Multiple case studies demonstrate the potential of these methodologies. Prest (2019) illustrates how bridging programs assist first-year music majors in addressing initial shortcomings and enhancing retention through the formation of supportive cohorts. Lisciandro and Gibbs (2016) establish that Australia's OnTrack program achieves strong retention rates due to constructive tutor-student connections, providing transferable insights for music contexts. Huang (2022) emphasises that 5G technology may enhance educational resources, potentially increasing college music enrolment. Through these and other programs, departments frequently experience an increase in student diversity and resource allocation, while simultaneously enhancing their curriculum to incorporate new skill sets.

Critics caution that rising enrollment—even through flexible or accelerated programs—may strain finite resources, including rehearsal spaces, specialised instruments, and faculty availability. These success narratives underscore the necessity for improved student support, which may involve graduate teaching assistants or specialised advising frameworks. Without strong institutional support, instructor overload is probable, threatening the quality of education. Certain departments have prestige pressures, especially in classical performance or composition, where the professional achievements of alumni bolster the program's reputation. Facilitating entrance or expanding into diverse offers jeopardises alienating stakeholders who perceive these modifications as a dilution of excellence.

Frequently, music departments depict administrators as only motivated by profit, while administrators perceive academics as obstructive to change. In actuality, administrators and teachers must collaborate in formulating viable solutions. Numerous administrators possess faculty affiliations, frequently accompanied by substantial teaching experience and tenure. Mandates generally originate from trustees, government officials, and parents who need results that validate public or tuition-derived funding. Successful collaboration between academic knowledge and administrative control may guarantee that increases in enrollment, interdisciplinary initiatives, and online programs are both artistically robust and financially sound. A collaborative strategy is essential to modify

the curriculum, manage economic constraints, and safeguard the personalised mentorship that sets music education apart from predominantly lecture-based disciplines.

Even when professors and administrators interact well, inclusive innovations must traverse sensitive terrain. In classical performance or composition, status continues to depend on the cultivation of elite artists. Accepting a significant number of inadequately qualified applicants or shifting to more diverse course options may incite concerns regarding the dilution of the program's quality. However, as contemporary career trajectories broaden—encompassing sound design, film scoring, worldwide outreach, and entrepreneurial endeavors—music departments that refuse to evolve jeopardise their relevance. Student demographics are becoming increasingly diverse, with numerous learners balancing employment, familial obligations, or residing at a considerable distance from campus. Some individuals like a hybrid or online format, while others want multidisciplinary programs that integrate music with technology, business, or cultural studies. Institutions that disregard these changes may experience a decline in enrolment, whereas adaptable, progressive programs are likely to prosper.

At the heart of this ongoing struggle is a fundamental question: What constitutes success for a university music program? Certain administrative offices prioritize enrollment figures and fiscal equilibrium, whilst numerous academics advocate for artistic excellence or the professional accomplishments of alumni. These contrasting measurements reflect the twin objectives of higher education, reconciling financial advantages with intellectual or cultural aspirations. Nevertheless, instances from Prest (2019) and Huang (2022), among others, demonstrate that with innovative curricular design and substantial institutional investment, departments can expand in size while maintaining the mentor-intensive paradigm that fosters performance excellence.

A crucial element in any situation is the presence of institutional support—scholarship funding, modernised facilities, and supplementary personnel. In the absence of such support, programs risk enrolling more students than they can adequately mentor, so repeating a cycle of insufficient resources and suboptimal outcomes. Administrators play a pivotal role by interpreting directives from trustees and governmental entities, while parents frequently anticipate demonstrable, employable abilities in graduates. As labour markets evolve, students are increasingly inclined towards career-oriented pathways that integrate technology, creativity, and entrepreneurship, necessitating music departments to innovate or face obsolescence.

Ultimately, the conflict between quantity and quality persists as institutions evaluate the costs of specialised music instruction in relation to widespread accessibility. Short courses, tiered degree programs, multidisciplinary classes, early outreach, and flexible learning—when integrated with proactive

collaboration between administrators and faculty—present potential opportunities. Each approach necessitates contextual refinement to maintain the profound, mentor-led artistry central to music education. In light of the changing dynamics of higher education, this discussion will persist, challenging the extent to which programs can grow without undermining the creative integrity that characterises them.

Conclusion

University music departments are currently facing increasing pressures to enroll more students while maintaining the hallmark of individualised mentorship that is at the core of performance-based education in an era of heightened accountability and changing student demographics. Short courses, tiered degree programs, interdisciplinary classes, early outreach initiatives, and flexible scheduling have been shown to be promising approaches to increase access without compromising standards. In addition, departments are able to broaden their global reach through technology-driven solutions, which include blended formats and online certificates. However, these strategies necessitate constructive collaboration between administrators and faculty, additional support systems, and deliberate resource allocation.

In fact, a significant number of administrators are themselves faculty members, which allows them to combine institutional mandates with a firsthand comprehension of the rigorous artistic training required. It is imperative that they are capable of reconciling the mentor-apprentice ethos that is a hallmark of music disciplines with the priorities of trustees and the government. In the interim, faculty must adjust their traditional methods to accommodate contemporary career paths, digital innovations, and entrepreneurial opportunities, while maintaining the quality of their performances and the profundity of their musical repertoire. The ongoing negotiation between viability and high standards in the debate over balancing quantity and quality necessitates inventive leadership, proactive planning, and an unwavering commitment to the cultural and intellectual value of music education.

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BRIDGING DIVIDES: THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF THE ARTS IN FOSTERING EMPATHY AND UNDERSTANDING

As we process one of the most polarizing elections in recent history, I have been thinking about how, no matter the outcome, the divisions that surround us today will linger long after the start of this new administration. The places where all people can come together to connect, have shared experiences, and explore our commonalities are too few and far between. For many, the tendency is to retreat, seeking refuge behind screens or among those who share our beliefs. We often find ourselves in echo chambers, connecting less with the diversity of perspectives around us.

But while today's politics divide us, now is the perfect time to remind ourselves that the work we do at arts education institutions—the work that artists do everywhere—is critical to bridging those divides and unraveling these binds we have created in society.

Empathy Through Art

Imagine being in a room full of strangers, each carrying a world of unique experiences and beliefs. Picture this crowd captivated, each individual's story melting into a shared narrative woven by music, a painting, a film, or a powerful dance. You likely don't have to imagine this and have had such an experience yourself at some point in your life. This is the transformative, unifying power of the arts—an experience that reaches beyond words, directly to the core of who we are as human beings.

Art can create an environment to expose people to different perspectives. From that space, art can spur dialogue among those with differing beliefs. In the process, art can push boundaries and provoke new thoughts or new ways of thinking, or help people view their perspective from a different lens.

Most importantly, art can foster empathy. It is an empathy machine. What other medium on the planet is more adept at helping one person feel and understand what another is feeling? It can remind us that, as humans, what unites us greatly outweighs what divides us.

In the words of actor and UNCSA alumnus Stephen McKinley Henderson, artists are "alchemists of empathy, sorcerers of empathy, magicians of empathy." "There is a great civility to citizens gathering in museums, concert halls, opera houses, and theaters. Gathering not knowing what political or religious affiliation the person standing or seated next to them might have — each experiencing creative expression through their own personal lens. It's not their team's side of the stadium or an opposing team's section of the bleachers. They are one audience united in amazement at the leaps and landings of the

extraordinary human bodies dancing before them. At a live performance, joyous laughter and unexpected tears unite an audience across all divisions."[1]

Moments of Unity

Throughout history, we have seen ways in which the arts can help heal entire communities—people from all walks of life and political backgrounds—by bringing them into the same room, sharing a meaningful experience. Just look at the ways in which people grieved together after 9/11 at concerts such as the New York Philharmonic performing the *Brahms Requiem* in a nationally televised memorial to the victims.[2] After the hate crime and murder of Matthew Shepard in 1998 in Laramie, Wyoming, Moisés Kaufman and the Tectonic Theater Project created *The Laramie Project,* a play based on interviews with the town's residents. That play and the subsequent HBO film helped many individuals and communities process grief, creating dialogue about acceptance and tolerance. [3] "We Are the World," created by Michael Jackson, Lionel Richie, and Quincy Jones, brought together a supergroup of artists from different backgrounds to raise global awareness for famine in Africa and raise funds for famine victims. It united people across borders in a shared cause, demonstrating the power of music to inspire global solidarity on a historic scale.[4] After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, conductor Leonard Bernstein led Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9* with its "Ode to Joy" in Berlin, a performance that symbolized the reunification of East and West Germany, with a message of universal brotherhood in the music echoing hopes for peace, reconciliation, and freedom after decades of division.[5]

And there are countless other examples across all artistic disciplines. From the visual arts world, works like Picasso's *Guernica* and Dorothea Lange's "The Migrant Mother" continue to inspire dialogue on human suffering and resilience. *Hamilton* is a modern example of how theater can address complex social and historical issues and spark conversations across political divides. To date, that show continues to fill the seats of the Richard Rodgers Theater and touring venues across the country with people from across the political spectrum, perhaps more than any other musical in history that wasn't named *West Side Story.*

These are just a few examples of how the arts have helped transform the way we see the world, challenging us to empathize and see others more fully. But the impact of art isn't just emotional – these shared experiences can carry powerful physiological effects as well.

It's Science

In a 2017 study, neuroscientists at University College London found that watching a live theater performance can synchronize the heartbeats of audience members. During a West End production of *Dreamgirls,* researchers observed that audience members' hearts sped up and slowed down in unison, mirroring

the rhythms of the performance. A lead researcher said that "experiencing the live theater performance was extraordinary enough to overcome group differences and produce a common physiological experience in the audience members."[6] (On a side note, a later study by the same group showed that watching live theater stimulates your cardiovascular system to the same extent as doing 28 minutes of healthy cardio exercise!)

Embracing Art's Power

Now, more than ever, we need to appreciate this unifying power of the arts. By prioritizing the arts—as artists, in our personal lives, our communities, and our society—we prioritize empathy and understanding, building a foundation for a more connected, unified future.

And for art to fully realize its power to bring people together, we must ensure that spaces where art and artists develop are open and welcoming to all people, perspectives, and stories that make up our society. Spaces grounded in academic and artistic freedom allow us to explore those stories, wrestle with them, and present them back to the world. These spaces must also encourage intense curiosity, the basis of great artistic expression. Through art, we engage with diverse ideas, embrace perspectives different from our own, and expand our capacity for connection and empathy. Better than any other medium, art orients us towards the goal of listening to understand, rather than listening to formulate a response—and understanding is something we could use a lot more of in our society. Art by its nature challenges people. Sometimes it makes us uncomfortable, but that discomfort can spark important conversations and even revelations within ourselves. Though we might not agree on a work of art, or its viewpoint, the act of participating can change us.

So, let's challenge ourselves to connect through the arts. Attend a local performance, explore visual art from another culture, uplift artists from all walks of life and perspectives, or try creating something of your own. Because when we do, we don't just appreciate beauty and creativity—we open ourselves to a world of understanding and empathy. This is the incredible power of the arts: to take us beyond ourselves and bring us, in all our beautiful differences, closer together.

Endnotes

[1] Stephen McKinley Henderson, UNCSA Commencement Address, 2021.
[2] New York Philharmonic, *Brahms Requiem,* September 2001.
[3] Moisés Kaufman and the Tectonic Theater Project, *The Laramie Project,* 2000.
[4] Michael Jackson, Lionel Richie, and Quincy Jones, *We Are the World,* 1985.
[5] Leonard Bernstein, Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9,* Berlin, 1989.
[6] University College London, "Synchrony in Audience Heartbeats," 2017.

Brian Cole is the ninth chancellor of the University of North Carolina School of the Arts (UNCSA), America's first state-supported arts school. A top-ranked arts conservatory, UNCSA is the nation's only public university of five arts disciplines on one campus, preparing emerging artists for careers in dance, design and production, drama, filmmaking, and music. An innovative, experienced and bilingual arts leader, Cole is also an accomplished conductor, having led orchestras and operas throughout the world, most recently the UNCSA Symphony Orchestra for the university's 59th annual performances of The Nutcracker.

Submission Guidelines

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

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

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

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