

The Vault

MSOE Weekly Newsletter

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Are We Up to the Challenge?

One of the challenges for music students and educators alike in the past year has been the sudden shift to virtual life. Even for non musicians, the past year has been difficult, but actively encouraging the distancing of people has impacted the musical community drastically. Because of regulations like social distancing and instrumental limitations due to particulate propulsion, musicians have been stripped of the most important part of their passion: other people. With the current conventions of large ensembles in music education, it can seem like the value of music cannot be recreated virtually. How can we keep music alive when everything we know about teaching music is twisted by technology? I saw something during this season of MSOE that proves that even without the presence of large ensembles and the social environment that comes with them, music still has the same powerful impact it always has.



When discussing the social justice theme of “Keeping Music Alive”, one of my students asked to share one of their chosen songs in their playlist project. This student shared a link in the chat and we listened to their chosen song. After a few seconds of listening, the student began to share their relationship with this music, and the magic of MSOE began to reveal itself. Even through sub optimal video resolution, you could see the student’s face light up as they shared about the song they had chosen. Even with network latency, you could hear the passion in their voice. Listening to this student talk about their love for music gave me chills, because it is moments like these that define what we do. MSOE has always been about giving students the best musical experience possible, and this experience proved to me that shifting music to an online environment did not rob it of its value.

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Are We Up to the Challenge? (continued)

Instead, it has encouraged educators to find new ways to draw out the passion in their students. This begs the question: **Are we up to the challenge?** I believe that what I saw in my student is undeniable proof that the participants in MSOE are more than ready to conquer the challenges of the online musical experience and continue to inspire students to keep music alive.

- **Alex Koster, Cello/Bass Teaching Artist**

Be Our Guests: Meet Our Week 8 Master Teachers!

Michelle Ewer has been a professional educator for 39 years. Her career began in Westminster District 50 teaching elementary and middle school strings. She taught band in Jefferson County Public Schools for five years and was a strings specialist for 27 years. A member of ASTA and CMEA, she has had groups perform for CMEA conferences as well as student performances at numerous state and local festivals, always receiving high ratings. She is often asked to present at CMEA and CASTA conferences and has served as president for both organizations. In 2014, she was inducted into the Colorado Music Educators Hall of Fame. She is the State Chair for TRI M Music Honor Society as well as coordinator for CMEA TRI M sessions, which include over 450 students from across the state of Colorado. In 2017, Mrs. Ewer became a part time faculty member at CU Boulder School of Music where she coordinates placements for student teachers, and is support staff to mentors and mentees. She is a member of the Colorado Department of Education Content Collaborative, helping to rewrite State Standards and Assessments. In addition, she also hosted the Colorado High School Activities Association Solo and Small Ensemble Festival for 18 years. She was the 2019 recipient of the Jeffco Music Distinguished Service to Music Award. Michelle retired in 2016 and currently is teaching part time at Ralston Valley HS as well as coaching at Columbine HS. She earned her Bachelor of Music Education from The University of Northern Colorado, and her Masters in Educational Administration from The University of Phoenix.



Bill Cleary has been teaching at Wellington Middle School for the last 8 years. In that time, he has taught 6th-8th Band, Orchestra, Choir, Guitar, and Piano. Prior to teaching at Wellington Middle School, Mr. Cleary received his Bachelor's in Music Education from the University of Colorado. When he is not teaching, Mr. Cleary enjoys playing his saxophone with the Fort Collins Wind Symphony, backpacking, fly fishing, and spending time with his wife and the best darn golden doodle pup you could possibly imagine.

Teaching Composition

Creative scaffolding can be a very fine line to walk. Generally when I help students to create musical ideas, I like to start with some parameters in which they will compose: Pitch set, form, articulation, rhythms. While often creativity pours out of some young students, others will benefit from having some slight push in a direction to get them started. Then it becomes a tightrope walk to stay in the zone of proximal development—teachers often wonder if they are getting in the way of student creativity in this process. My personal strategy is "less is more." Since teachers are very musically creative from all of their experiences in their own education, it's important to let the students do the work. Creative scaffolding is about a small push to guide THEIR creativity; never create for the student.

There are many people much smarter than me who have written about this process. I recommend the writings of Dr. Maud Hickey, such as *Music Outside the Lines: Ideas for Composing in K-12 Music Classrooms* and *Why and How to Teach Music Composition*. There's also *Composing Our Future: Preparing Music Educators to Teach Composition*, ed. by Michele Kaschub and Janice Smith.

The most important thing to remember is that you're not just teaching them to write the music in front of them, you're teaching them a skill that will bring them joy and satisfaction for their entire lives. Musical creation is a beautiful thing that CAN be taught and should be taught. Give your students the gift of creative methodologies and they will return the world with the gift of their creative expression!

- **Jake DiFebo, Carnival Coordinator and Feedback Leader**



Sydney's Social Justice Goals

I've been asking myself, "what do you want your students to leave MSOE with?" I know one of my goals is to have my students learn about and appreciate different types of music. I have had them listen to each other's Social Justice playlists and talk about them. As we near the end of MSOE, this could be a great opportunity for our students to learn more about each other and appreciate other kinds of music!

-**Sydney Bouwens, Trumpet Teaching Artist and Carnival Coordinator**

Questions? Contact Erik Johnson, Program Director (e.johnson@colostate.edu) or Maddy Cort, Assistant Program Director (macort@rams.colostate.edu)

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"I'm smarter than everyone because music. Yes."

- MSOE Percussion Student

PROPS BOX!

"Ms. Young and I have been working together for our Carnival presentation and it has been wonderful! Seeing our lesson adapt has been interesting, but also the way our teaching has grown as well. Ms. Young did an awesome job taking over one time when I was having technical difficulties. We've gotten into a groove, and I'm so glad to be working with Ms. Young!" - Sydney

"Christian Huang continues to inspire me with his commitment to trying new things to inspire and motivate himself, his students, and his fellow teachers. If you ever feel like you need some advice about your teaching or life in general, Christian is a great friend and mentor!"

- Jake

Jake's Teaching Tip:

Breakout Room Duets are a great way to record if you have not yet tried it: Essentially you embed reciprocal peer-assisted learning by having two students in one breakout room. Both students put on headphones! One stays muted, the other unmuted. Both play their parts but the muted student records on their end into a recording application or device. They switch between muted and unmuted and repeat the process. This way, instead of purely relying off of catering to a MIDI recording or background track to keep time (or just having one student alone in a recording session) , students are responding in real-time with the post-latency audio they hear of the other student. This is also a great way to get students playing with one another, even if only one of them can hear the two parts interacting at a time. But this is also helpful, since it requires the unmuted student to engage in a showcasing of their play. This may help your recordings to have better intonation!

- **Jake DiFebo, Carnival Coordinator and Feedback Leader**

FROM THE EDITOR: GRATEFUL FOR OUR COMMUNITY

I'm so grateful for our amazing music education community at CSU! Everyday I'm reminded of how much excellence I'm surrounded with, but I especially feel it on Wednesday evenings. My favorite moments happen when I pop into a zoom room and see teachers beautifully demonstrating musical concepts and students sharing their incredible ideas. Another favorite is at our wrap-up meetings when my hands get tired from doing our "MSOE Round of Applause" so many times! Every teaching artist, Trying-on-Teaching student, and senior admin member has been a key part of MSOE taking on new challenges and supporting music in our community - thank you for your part in this great adventure!

- **Maddy Cort, MSOE Assistant Program Director, "The Vault" Editor**

