



# THE VAULT

The official newsletter of CSU's Middle School Outreach Ensembles (MSOE) 2023



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## *Feedback: Teachers as Students*

Leah Dunphey, Assistant Feedback Coordinator and Teaching Artist



A crucial part of what makes MSOE such a unique and impactful program is the coexistence of the roles that Teaching Artists take as both students and teachers.

As the Assistant Feedback Coordinator for the 2023 MSOE season, I am able to gain a unique perspective on how important the Feedback System is to the growth of MSOE's participants and teachers. Knowledge, advice, and feedback flows through the different layers of the MSOE team, and in the paraphrased words of Dr. Johnson, seniority and experience acts as a foundation rather than sitting at the top of the hierarchical pyramid.

Each week, the Teaching Artists facilitate the learning and improvement of the wonderful student musicians that participate in MSOE. These Teaching Artists are also dedicated students of education, approaching MSOE as a laboratory to strengthen their teaching practices and community in an authentic setting. We write detailed lesson plans that drive us to think critically about our goals, assessments, activities, and how each moment of the lesson connects to our goals of nurturing community and building musicianship. Before being implemented in rehearsal or sectionals, each lesson plan receives constructive feedback from the Feedback Leaders, who dedicate time outside of the regular MSOE schedule to reading through the plans in support of other Teaching Artists. After MSOE each week, Teaching Artists reflect on their teaching by watching recordings and giving responses to guiding questions, which are then reviewed by their Feedback Leaders. An additional layer is added with our exceptional High School Trying-On-Teachers, or ToTs, who have the opportunity to observe, assist, and teach alongside the Teaching Artists. They receive feedback and guidance on their ideas and teaching, and are introduced to structures such as lesson plans,

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teaching cycles, and critical self-reflection on their practices. The Teaching Artists mentor the ToTs and help them incorporate what they are learning into how they teach and interact with students.

Another crucial component of the feedback process is the insight and wisdom of Master Teachers, who currently teach middle school band and orchestra in Denver and Northern Colorado, many of them with direct history with MSOE. They kindly give time out of their busy schedules to observe our teachers in action and lend their expertise to the entire MSOE team in the group debrief, known fondly as the MSOE Afterparty. This is an extremely beneficial opportunity for the CSU students to make professional connections with these wonderful teachers and learn from their knowledge and experience. Acting as the foundation for these interlocking roles is the Senior Admin Team, consisting of Music Education professors and graduate students who dedicate themselves to the planning, execution, and organization of the MSOE program. This team works diligently to structure MSOE for success while also ensuring high levels of agency and self-direction for each CSU student. They lead the self-evaluation and growth processes of the preservice teachers in MSOE, challenging them to expand the boundaries of their comfort to reach new heights of connection and pedagogy. This unique aspect of MSOE provides an invaluable experience for Music Education students and pushes them to strive for excellence and thoroughness in every aspect of their teaching.

The complexity and multidimensionality of the Feedback System is thoughtfully designed to provoke conversation, reflection, and expansion so that we can constantly improve how we interact with and teach our students. The system exists to benefit each member of MSOE and provide purposeful, meaningful reflection frameworks so that we can be responsive, attentive teachers. Most importantly, these processes interconnect the roles and responsibilities that we hold as both teachers and students, and equip us with tools to embrace lifelong learning both within and beyond MSOE.

## Student Choice

Mary Vogelsberg, Conductor, Carnival Coordinator and Teaching Artist

Setting an alarm in the morning so there's time to shower, get dressed, brush your teeth, and eat breakfast is a decision we've all been taught to make. Sometimes we make the choice to sleep more and compromise one of our daily morning steps, and we learn from the effects of that decision if it is one worth making again. As teachers, we can instill decision making skills in our students by giving them choices. Guiding students through making choices and knowing the outcomes and consequences is an important life skill that can be taught in the classroom. Simply giving the students the option to decide the order of the warm up is one example of how to implement this. Students will feel more empowered and motivated to engage if they have a choice in the matter. As a teacher in training I find myself getting stuck in these ruts where I think about myself rather than the students. It is easier to be focused on what I want, but ultimately, it's not about me. Student choice opens the door to having a more inclusive environment where students can feel comfortable making mistakes and learning from them.

Sometimes their choices do not go according to plan, but being able to talk about what happened and how it influenced the outcome teaches the students more than just adhering to a preset plan would. Learning is making choices, making mistakes, and changing to get a more successful outcome. As teachers we want to help the students learn how to do things for themselves. Allowing the space for them to take ownership of their learning process gives more opportunities for growth. Another example of student choice in the classroom would be having the students vote on repertoire for the concert cycle, allowing the students to pick the pieces they are most engaged with. The director would pick a selection of pieces that would work for the ensemble and then the students vote on those choices. Ultimately, learning to have an opinion and being able to explain the reasoning behind your decision is a crucial part of student growth.



Mary Vogelsberg directs the Aggie Band low brass section in learning new and complex rhythms

# MSOE: A Community of Art

Olivia Calzaretta, Teaching Artist

MSOE develops musicality through a united force of diverse arts. In the past six weeks of MSOE I have observed visual arts, language arts, and several types of performing arts in lessons as a way to conceptualize music. I saw one lesson that gave students the opportunity to create a skit or craft to present different dynamic changes. In this activity, students were given the choice between a skit, crafts, or musical technique. By allowing the students to choose a form of art to express dynamics, it provided them with a way to express and understand a musical contour by looking through a different lens. Another lesson focused on how the music made the students feel, and what adjectives the students could think of to describe their repertoire. While different types of art aid in deeping the students' understanding of music, it also strengthens the end goal of our social justice-nurturing community.

As a result of utilizing different art forms, MSOE is able to nurture a tight-knit community. While all these students already come to MSOE with at least one common interest and skill(music), they are given the opportunity to connect with others through a different form of expression through these other art forms. Multiple social justice activities have emphasized connections through various art forms. One week the entire ensemble learned how to Flamenco dance, which not only enforced diverse cultures in the ensemble, but it also encouraged the students to establish friendships with those in and out of their section. Another week there was an activity to grow small communities by supporting students to express themselves through visual arts. Each student added some of themselves, through paint, on a canvas. Activities like these strengthen the desire to cultivate connections because each student now has another activity they can bond over with one another.

MSOE provides students with the resources to study music in ways that aren't typically used in an everyday classroom. Implementing various forms of expression in the curriculum grants the students a new way to think of music, a topic they all have a passion for, while also presenting them with new levels of connection between their peers. MSOE is not just a community of music, but a community of all arts.



Members of the Aggie Band learn a Flamenco dance as part of a Social Justice activity



Teaching Artist Ethan Dunkerton explores expression and emotion in music during a saxophone sectional



# Meet Our Master Teachers!



**Liz Richardson** currently works at Greeley Central High School directing orchestras in the Arts Magnet Program. She also teaches piano, digital music, and music history classes. Prior to this, Ms. Richardson taught middle school band, orchestra, and guitar in Cherry Creek. To keep band and orchestra both in her life this year, she enjoyed a fun and successful year teaching woodwinds for the Loveland High School Marching Regiment. Playing music together in ensembles has been a huge part of her whole life and she loves being able to share her love and passion for music with students as they grow. She graduated from Colorado State University with a Bachelors in Music Education with an instrumental concentration, and loves teaching private viola, flute, and piano lessons along with her GCHS classes. In the Colorado State University Wind Ensemble and Symphony Orchestra, Ms. Richardson performed at state and national conferences. Outside of teaching band and orchestra she has presented at music education conferences, adjudicated solo and ensemble festivals, and currently performs with the Fort Collins Wind Symphony. In addition to her favorite musical activities, Ms. Richardson loves plants, hiking, and attempting to bake.



**Pattie Nelson** is recently retired from Jefferson County Schools. During her 30 plus year teaching career she taught all levels of orchestra and band students spending most of her tenure as an elementary string specialist. Her most influential time was in the Arvada West and Ralston Valley area of Jefferson County where her beginning groups were 150 kids, and the retention rate was 85 percent. She began her own music studies on violin and added trombone skills when she started high school. She attended the University of Colorado for her bachelor and master's degree in Music Education. Her expertise in orchestra and her experience with band formed the broad base for her successful teaching career. She continues to follow her music teaching passion by directing the Jeffco Community Band since 1984 and establishing a Jeffco Summer Orchestra in 2012. She is currently teaching the String Methods class for CU music education majors and enjoys working with future string educators.



**Aaron Herman** currently serves as the Director of Bands at Fossil Ridge High School in Fort Collins, Colorado. Under his direction, the Fossil Ridge Wind Symphony and Symphonic Bands received ratings of "Superior with Distinction" at the 2022 CBA State Concert Band Festival. The Fossil Ridge Marching Band was the 2021 CBA Class 5A Silver Medalist and 2022 CBA Class 5A State Champion.

Mr. Herman received a Bachelor of Music in music education from Furman University and a Master of Music in wind conducting from Colorado State University. While at CSU, he served as a graduate assistant with the CSU Marching Band, Basketball Pep Bands, and the Presidential Pep Band. In addition, Mr. Herman was a guest conductor of the CSU Wind Symphony, Symphonic Band, and Concert Band. His conducting teachers include Dr. Rebecca Phillips and Dr. Leslie Hicken.

Before relocating to Colorado, Mr. Herman taught middle and high school band in South Carolina for five years. Mr. Herman is an active member of the Colorado Bandmasters Association. Additionally, he holds professional affiliations with the National Association for Music Education, the Colorado Music Educators Association, the College Band Directors National Association, the National Band Association, and Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia. Mr. Herman currently resides in Timnath, Colorado with his wife Christina and two dogs, Annabell and Penny.



Conductor Madison Kubala directs the MSOE Orchestra through a warm-up exercise



Conductor Jack Robitaille converses with student composer Jake Elam about his piece "1000 Paper Cranes". The Ram Band will perform Elam's piece at the concert in April.

## THE SEED BANK

Things are really starting to take root in the Seed Bank! From educational quotes to videos to specific teaching techniques, we are building quite the collection of resources!

Check out what's growing by visiting [https://tinyurl.com/2p8jp37c!](https://tinyurl.com/2p8jp37c)

## Letter from the Editor

We're back from Spring Break, and I for one am rejuvenated and ready to take on the rest of the semester. I'm excited to see our students continue to grow and to refine their music, and I think we're in for a great final four weeks of MSOE.

I'm so impressed by our MSOE staff- the enthusiasm, compassion, and genuine interest in our students and our music is inspiring to see. We have a great bunch of future educators here at CSU!

