



THE VAULT

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



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Four Years In Review

Paul Beyer, Conductor, Social Justice Coordinator, Trying-on-Teaching Liason



Miscellaneous Gratitude. Keeping Music Alive. Music Lives! Nurturing Community. These have been the social justice curricular themes since I have arrived at CSU; the things that MSOE has stood for. I have been lucky in that I have had the opportunity to see all four iterations of MSOE, watching each individual that is involved in various capacities transform their teaching and their musicianship, and watching MSOE as a whole undergo change that was truly massive. All of these things have caused transformation in me, and allowed me to serve students in many different capacities. For that, I am grateful.

Four years ago, MSOE felt like a lot to take in. The band was very big, and I shared the classroom with a mentor of mine, as well as two Trying-on-Teachers. That season was all about gratitude, and through that and other various interactions with students, we were able to create a positive musical experience for everybody. When the COVID-19 pandemic required us to stop all operations with MSOE, everybody was disappointed, however it was encouraging in a way to see that the students felt so strongly about their experience as young musicians.

Going into MSOE the following year, many of us were discouraged. That year, we held our entire MSOE operation online. There were many barriers in that setting that did not exist in person, and as a result, "Keeping Music Alive" during the pandemic was a task that sometimes felt impossible. Despite that, we found a way to keep all of the students playing their instruments, and keeping music in their ears and their hearts. The perseverance of MSOE through that year changed a lot of our framing of what it looked like to create music, and ensure that each and every student is able to receive a positive and comprehensive music education.

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Paul Beyer leads an Orchestra low strings sectional

While the pandemic was still ongoing last year, we were able to make enough accommodations to MSOE that made it possible to have ensembles in an in-person setting again. This was the closest we had to “normal” in two years, not just in MSOE, but for us all as musicians and educators. There was a sort of fire under “Music Lives” that kept us all going. We were determined to make our first MSOE back from the peak of the pandemic an experience that students could cherish. Despite being my third MSOE, this was the first time that I was able to experience the entire season, including the concert. I also had the privilege to conduct one of the bands. While I stood on that podium on the night of the concert, I could truly feel that music had survived, and will continue to survive so long as kids like the ones I got to teach were involved in it.

This year, MSOE is back in its full swing. I am the coordinator of the social justice curriculum this year, and when presented with the idea of “Nurturing Community,” I thought almost immediately about the fact that the majority of middle school-aged kids were likely cooped up in their homes for much of the last couple years. With that in mind, I developed the curriculum around understanding different kinds of communities, and how they all function due to the contribution of every individual involved. An underlying theme within this framework as well is the exploration of communities far from our own. I asked one conductor from each ensemble to choose some sort of folk song to have the ensemble perform. Aggie band, performing the folk song *De Colores*, has studied Hispanic cultures through learning basic Flamenco, as well as a rhythm game that is in Spanish. Ram Band, premiering a work based on Japan in the wake of WWII, learned a traditional “fisherman’s dance,” as well as a Japanese song and game about making mochi. The orchestra is performing a piece based off of a folk song from Ghana, and so we have talked about a traditional hand drumming style called *Ewe*, and a rhythm game that is in a dialect from Ghana. I have seen many aspects of community grow and evolve over the last four years, and I am excited to see its culmination this weekend.

In my time in MSOE, I have been able to serve in nearly every single position available to undergrads, and have seen every single system I have been part of change as circumstances do. Every moving gear in MSOE works to keep me inspired, and although I got one more season than most undergrads, it feels bittersweet to say goodbye. In addition to social justice, I oversee the Trying-on-Teaching program. We have a record number of participants, all of whom have grown tremendously. If any of them get half as much out of MSOE as I have, then the future of music and music education has an incredibly bright future, regardless of how many of them decide to ultimately pursue it as a career. Although my time with MSOE is nearly over, I leave with absolute confidence in this program, and everything it can provide to pre-service teachers, and the hundreds of students that MSOE will continue to serve moving forward. Truly, there is something special here. Thank you to everybody that has had a hand in this program for the past 4 years, including my mentors and supervisors, my fellow teachers (including the high schoolers!), and every student and parent that made this possible. Thank you, MSOE, for teaching every single one of us about gratitude, perseverance, and community.



MSOE and Classroom Management

Ethan Dunkerton, Teaching Artist

It was snowy. Half the band was out sick. Two days left until Spring break, and the students were getting restless.

I thought to myself, “Self, how are the students going to engage with the music in sectionals today under these conditions?” The typical rehearsal format that had been working well for weeks wasn’t going so hot. The students were aimlessly playing over instructions, they were on their phones, and no amount of peer-assisted learning or reminders of behavioral expectations could cut through the restless pre-break apathy.

I thought it was a disaster. And then I heard the voice of Dr. Richard Mayne in my head reminding me of his 2023 CMEA session. As band teachers, we have to give our students meaningful jobs so they can own the music. Did my students actually feel like they had a way to meaningfully contribute to our class?

Immediately I started giving the students jobs. Who wants to conduct this next run? Who can pick a song for us all to sing while we go to our room? Who wants to lead the cheer at the end of class and greet people when they come through the door?

Classroom Management (Continued)

The students' eyes lit up and they threw up their hands to be picked and rushed into the jobs, excited to have the room to explore the music and help each other. The noise level stayed the same, which may have bothered some of my students slightly, but the noise morphed from distracted and aimless outbursts to intentional creative chatter. This noise was a symptom of learning, and not a symptom of restlessness.

Giving students meaningful classroom jobs is not a simple fix or a panacea for all classroom management problems, but nonetheless, it's part of what my students needed. Students need space to take charge of what they care about, they need to take responsibility for each other, and themselves. Students need meaningful jobs and teachers need to coach them on how to do these jobs.

As a teacher, it's our job to make sure there's a certain level of control in the classroom so our students can be safe and learn. However, it's the student's job to actually create that level of control. This requires teachers to show students how to be responsible, it requires teachers to give students opportunities for failure and use failure (or conflict for that matter) as a teaching opportunity. Learning requires everyone to have a job that allows them to meaningfully take charge of their education.

For more information on classroom management strategies, check out *Conscious Discipline* by Becky Bailey (2015) as well as Hollis Faye Avis' dissertation on classroom tasks at <https://digitalcommons.lindenwood.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1184&context=dissertations>



Undergraduate Program Director Jack Robitaille connects with his clarinet section during a sectional

Culturally Responsive Teaching for the Music Classroom

Sean Sullivan, Teaching Artist

Since the early 2010s, with Zaretta Hammond and fellow researchers and educators inquiries and explorations, the topic of culturally responsive pedagogy has been examined, scrutinized, and praised for its building of equity and representation throughout academia and education psychology and philosophy. However, with the growing interest in implementing such a style of pedagogy, there is an equal or greater level of confusion as to how one can best implement such practices. There is also a considerable misconception as to what is and what is not culturally responsive teaching. As music educators, we may find our role to be especially challenging when considering how to best meet the social needs of our students, and how they can feel best represented in our classrooms.

One of the most significant and, perhaps, straightforward approaches is the use of inquiry-based instruction. Inquiry-based instruction is student-driven and student-centered, and is structured such that expectations or hypotheses are made about a given topic, upon which further exploration from the students leads to a deeper working understanding of the topic at hand. In a music classroom, this could begin at the start of a unit. The unit is identified and made known to the students, followed by open-ended questions for the students which gets them thinking and considering what it is they think the unit might be about; why it is important to explore; what types of music to which this might be more or less relevant; so on and so forth.

A culturally responsive angle to such questions include more personal and cultural questioning such as "Where do we see this musical concept in our lives?" or "What does this make you feel when you hear this type of music?" One consideration when bringing in a more diverse body of repertoire—which we must be consistently aware—is the risk of tokenism. Introducing a piece of music or a musical element or cultural tradition purely for the sake of checking a box to fulfill a requirement does not a culturally responsive pedagogue make. The inclusion of the students in this process, a safe space in which they feel seen and respected, and one in which they feel empowered enough to take an active role in shaping the curriculum is the best way to avoid this tokenization. This can be challenging, and requires a considerable deal of out-of-class preparation, but it does not have to be exclusively undertaken by the teacher in order to do so. In fact, the role of the teacher should be minimal in this regard, serving only to maintain order and direction; ensuring the end-goals are kept in mind and being worked toward, pushing students one way or another in order to maintain course.



Culturally Responsive Teaching (continued)

Providing repertoire can be a most challenging aspect of this process, as it is done to supplement the findings and observations made by the students, and comes as a response to their exploration, not as a predetermined destination. This means repertoire must be curated during the student exploration process, and checked for whether the repertoire is appropriate—can my students play this? Is it too easy or difficult? Is there subject matter which may need to be avoided?—and only then can the music be presented. Culture does not exclusively refer to one's ethnicity or ethnic background, but also includes other aspects of identity, including gender and sexual orientation, socio-economic status, religious/areligious affiliations, and anything else to which a student or students feel connected and represented. Proper representation in these aspects means this exploration occurs only when a student or students wish for such attention be placed on a given subject, meaning a class' curriculum will invariably differ from one to the next—not only between schools and districts, but also year to year in the same school.

Teachers must be willing to yield their expertise to those of a more capable one, should be willing to admit where their understanding ends, what their inherent biases might be, and acknowledge who or where more accurate information can be obtained. A culturally responsive classroom takes time and care, requires trust from the students, and meticulous care and attention from the educator, but when these steps are taken, a world of infinite possibility awaits our students and their learning, and we all benefit in the process.



Teaching Artist Leah Dunphy conducts a Ram Band high brass sectional

For more information on Culturally Responsive Teaching, check out *Culturally Responsive Teaching and The Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students* by Zaretta Hammond (2014,) *Culturally Responsive Teaching in Music Education: From Understanding to Application* by Constance L. McCoy and Vicki R. Lind (2022), and *Global Perspectives: Making the Shift from Multiculturalism to Culturally Responsive Teaching* by J.S. Walter, *General Music Today*, Jan 2018.

To all our Master Teachers...



We so appreciate you taking the time to work with us and help us grow as educators. Your insight, experience, and expertise have been invaluable to our development.

**From the bottom of our hearts,
thank you, thank you, thank you!!!**



Teaching Artist Anthony Sacheli discusses musical decisions with the Ram Band Percussion Section



Trying-On-Teaching Artist Sebastian Becker runs the Ram Band Saxophone section through their ensemble music

THE SEED BANK

The Seed Bank is in its final form! The Teaching Artists at MSOE have compiled an amazing resource for music educators, full of pedagogical techniques, classroom management strategies, educational quotes, technical resources, and so much more.

Check out what we've put together at [https://tinyurl.com/2p8jp37c!](https://tinyurl.com/2p8jp37c)

Letter from the Editor

It's finally here! The MSOE Concert is this Saturday, April 15th, at 6:00pm in Griffin Concert Hall at the University Center for the Arts. Every group is sounding amazing, and I am so excited to see the culmination of everyone's work this weekend!

Exploring melodies and rhythms from West Africa, Spain, and Japan, this concert will give a taste of cultures from all over the world. I'm also excited to hear our student composers' music be premiered! This week is our last push-let's make this concert one to remember!

