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THE VAULT: Vol 2

The official newsletter of CSU Middle School Outreach Ensembles (MSOE) 2025

The Endless Potential of Large Ensembles

Arjen Wynja, Teaching Artist

Band, Orchestra, and Choir: these three ensemble categories have long dominated the music education programs of American secondary schools. We are proud in CSU MSOE to offer all three, and to have a program focused on building the comprehensive musicianship of our students. But in teaching ensembles, it's easy to fall into the endless process of rehearsal and performance which, critics of the ensemble model point out, builds a limited skill set that is specific to their ensemble setting.

As an educator, my goal is to help my student build a skill and knowledge base that will allow them to live active musical lives in creating, performing, and understanding the music they hear.

Of the four Colorado State Standards of Music (expression, creation, theory, and aesthetic evaluation), performing ensembles most often focus primarily, if not exclusively, on the Expression standard - performing music. While performing is an important part of being a musician, it is only one - students should also learn theory, history, composition, improvisation, arranging, and appreciation of music. As someone who is passionate about teaching ensembles, my mission as an educator is to develop methods of teaching and learning in ensembles that allow students to develop their musicianship through many different means, all towards the end of comprehensive musicianship that will bring depth to their lives and experiences.

The question is where to look for these methods, and how to integrate them so that students are learning comprehensive musicianship in the course of playing their instrument or singing, which is inherently the core activity of band, orchestra, and choir. One area of music educators who are particularly skilled at teaching comprehensive musicianship are Elementary general music teachers. Great general music teachers are able to harness students' creativity and joy in music while building strong performance, reading, and writing skills, among others. Adapting these methods for secondary ensembles could lead to exciting results.



One of the methodologies used by some great general music teachers is “Eurhythmics,” or a method of learning music by using the whole body. Eurhythmics most often involve movement that allows students to experience music concepts physically before applying them to instruments. A way to apply eurhythmics in band could be tapping a balloon back and forth between partners as a way to learn different note articulations: accent, tenuto, staccato, etc. Before seeing them in music and using the tongue and air to create these effects, experiencing them in a physical and social environment can build a preexisting understanding that carries forward into instrument technique. This activity could easily be adapted for different concepts and classes, such as practicing scales on solfege in choir, changing notes each time the balloon is touched, or similarly in orchestra.

Small-scale improvisation also often takes place in elementary classrooms, most often during singing games. The opportunities for applying this in ensembles to help build skills in creating music are exciting and numerous. For instance, in a string orchestra class, students might take turns improvising a one-measure rhythm for their peers to repeat. This could be applied to pitch, where students improvise a four-note melody within a scale, also repeated by their peers. This not only can help build confidence in improvising in small segments, but also aids in ear training for all students in the class through the repeating element. This is just one interesting and exciting method of developing fluency with rhythms and scales that can also work in band and choir - singers could improvise a short melody on solfege for their peers to repeat, and band students could do the exact activity as in orchestra. I’ve seen it done with great success!

Passing games are also commonly used with younger students, where they pass a physical object around in a circle while singing. With the flexibility of choir classes without instruments, this could be adapted as an activity where each student sings just one note within a melody, passing the melody to the next person with body language and in rhythm. This could be started with scales or simple melodies, and expanded to repertoire to reinforce part independence and solo singing in a group environment. Band or orchestra students could even do a similar activity from their seats, or do so seated in a circle in occasional classes.

Large changes in methodology of teaching can’t happen overnight - small changes in day-to-day ensemble teaching routines can lead a profound impact on the quality of learning taking place. I believe it starts with taking inspiration from general music and adapting those methodologies for secondary students. I hope to try some of these activities in MSOE: a program opportunity that not only allows CSU Music Education students to develop as teachers, but also places Northern Colorado music students at the cutting edge of music teaching in an exciting, supportive environment.

The Importance of Language

Kathryn Carlos, Teaching Artist



In every culture and in every aspect of time, music has been a means to create, explore, and build community. This is such a beautiful part of our profession, as music teachers. We get to be a part of a community that truly believes that music can reach everyone regardless of barriers such as language. However, I think that there is an important aspect of being able to explore other languages through music. Not only are other languages such as Italian, French, and German used in everyday music vocabulary, but in the choral world, exploring languages is often required and necessary. If music teachers already see themselves exploring the language of music, why not explore the languages that have been intertwined with the notation of music today? From a student perspective, I would see words on a piece of music that clearly wasn't English, but I didn't always understand its meaning. This could be frustrating because directors or teachers often thought that we all understood what the music vocabulary on the page was. This isn't always the case and pedagogically, it is important for teachers to understand that students need a comprehensive understanding of every part of the

music they play, including the musical vocabulary often expressed in other languages. For example, the words "col legno" mean "with the wood". This is an Italian musical instruction for string musicians to use the stick of their bow to hit the string. To simply understand and have the tools to succeed in music, students don't just need to understand basic notation, rhythm, and their instrument. They also can have a hurdle of reading and understanding the implications of words and phrases in another language.

While music teachers can simply use Google Translate or another translating device for these little phrases, it can also be important to understand the etymology and culture behind these words. Like anything in any language, there are connotations, inflections, and simple cultural ideas that aren't always reflected in a translation. For example, the word "leitmotif" is a German word that most musicians associate with Wagner's idea of a recurring musical phrase associated with a character or theme. The literal translation means "leading or guiding motif" but that doesn't mean anything to a student if they don't have the context. While teachers could simply explain this to their students, there is the importance of the context of Wagner's idea and how leitmotifs are expressed in music today. Of course, this adds another thing to music teacher's plates. However, I truly believe that giving students all the tools they need, will help them become better musicians and human beings. If students realize that you need context to understand the meaning behind things, they can learn how to research, learn, and understand other cultures and ways of life.

What Does Music Mean to You?

Michael Millan, Teaching Artist



MSOE 2025 has finally arrived! There is an energy in the air - nervousness, anticipation, excitement of the idea that we are all here to make music together. But what does music mean to you? Meanings range from surface-level to deep, practical to spiritual, and individual to communal. For some people music is an escape from the day. For some it is another extra-curricular that you can put in your resume. For some music is their lifeblood and passion, and for others, it is just a fun thing to do with their friends. Let me tell you what music has meant to me.

I am a master's student who has led many lives. In high school, I played classical piano and played the tenor drums for the marching band. I got a jazz piano degree for my undergrad, and now I'm pursuing my Music Education degree to be a choir teacher. I have sung in jazz choirs and classical choirs. I have played in mariachi bands, punk/grunge cover bands, jazz combos, and singer/songwriter duos/trios. In all these styles and configurations, there are

three things I have found that have unified these experiences - **connection, personal expression, and work ethic.**

Through these ensembles and experiences, I have met some of the best people. I have met mentors who I respect and can call upon for guidance today. I have met friends who I've made beautiful music with. I've been part of a larger community of like-minded people. I've learned how to express myself through music. I can channel my joy, excitement, frustration, and rage into my music. I can communicate feelings bigger than myself through my music. I have learned that I get what I put into things. My performance - and the consequent personal feelings that follow - directly tie to the effort I put in. Even if a musical product doesn't turn out perfect (and perfection itself is unattainable), I still feel pride in how hard I worked and how much of myself I've put into my music.

Turning it back to you, the reader, what thoughts do you have about what music means to you? What universal truths have you gleaned from your musical experiences? What can you take from the lessons your mentors, inspirations, and role-models have already learned? What did you still have to experience in order to truly understand universal concepts?

As we go further into the MSOE 2025 season, think about this. We come from all walks of life - from different experiences, backgrounds, and skill sets - to do this thing together. Whether we are in band, orchestra, or choir, we are part of something bigger than ourselves. MSOE is a testimony to the fact that we have more in common than we think, and our differences make us stronger. So, I encourage you to think about why you are here and what music means to you. Reflect on the similarities in meaning and find the commonalities in the differences. Then at the end of the day, just play.

The Musical Mind as a Compost Bin

Caelan Herk, Teaching Artist

In a matter unrelated to MSOE, a professor of mine was discussing the value of learning “licks” in jazz music. When you practice a lick in all twelve keys, it becomes a piece of your vocabulary that you do not even think about when you use it in a solo. He used the analogy of putting a red pepper skin into the compost bin, then closing the lid. You can then open the lid and take it back out, but it has not become soil yet. It is only by consistently adding things to the compost bin over time, that you get soil. The same can be said for developing musicianship in general; when students are consistently analyzing their playing, learning new music, listening to the ensemble and recordings, they develop an innate awareness of musicality that can persist throughout their lives. This is musicianship.



In MSOE, this type of learning occurs with everyone at every level: conductors study their rehearsal recordings, teaching artists give themselves and others feedback as well as receiving feedback from others, Trying-On-Teachers work closely with mentors to reflect on their work, and middle school students work with teaching artists to build their musicianship. At some point in the experience of being a musician, you begin to forget exactly what or where you learned something, it has all become compost.



MSOE Teaching Artists (Undergraduate and Graduate Students)	MSOE Administrative Staff (CSU Faculty and Graduate Teaching Assistants*)	Meet our Trying-on-Teaching High School Participants!
Ethan Barker Cameron Becker Olivia Calzaretta Kathryn Carlos Zuzu Davis Aundrea Dugas Anna Dunn Audrey Farrar Madelynn Flanagan Matthew Fox Zeke Graf Nick Hailey Caelan Herk Alexis Highland	Kailey Jeffs Cameron Kregas Michael Millan* Mateo Novoa Juno Okins Gemma Petrucci Elise Renner Andrew Ressetar Alexander Strobel Triston Told Freya Underwood Arjen Wynja Olivia Zenzinger	Dr. Erik Johnson Dr. Seth Pendergast Dr. Christina Herman Paul Haarla* Jessica Warner Raymundo Barrera Jacob Brown Collin Carlson Melinda Fullenkamp Kacy Larson Maya Leisz Brendan McKellar Savannah Morris Hayden Mosley Alexis Nyambe Ian Rose Rayya Saleeby Sienna Vogel



A Note About the Editor

Jessica Warner began her study of the oboe with Andrea Mather-Stow at the age of 10 in South Bend, Indiana. She made her solo debut at the age of 17 with the South Bend Symphony Orchestra. Ms. Warner holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan and received her master's from the University of Texas at Austin. In addition, she has also studied the Aspen Summer Music Festival for three summers with John Mack, Joe Robinson, Jeannette Bittar, and Pedro Diaz. She has held the position as English hornist in the Roanoke Symphony Orchestra and Peoria Symphony, and oboist of Western Piedmont Symphony, Auckland Philharmonia, and Pontiac Symphony Orchestra. Ms. Warner has performed oboe and English horn with many orchestras throughout the United States and abroad, including Boulder Philharmonic, Greeley Philharmonic, Fort Collins Symphony, Cheyenne Symphony, Charlotte Symphony, Winston-Salem Symphony, North Carolina Symphony, South Bend Symphony, Illinois Symphony and Monterrey (Mexico) Symphony Orchestra. Ms. Warner has been working as administrative assistant to the Music Education Department at CSU for the past 6 years, where she has had the opportunity to work with the MSOE program and multiple other endeavors. She also works at Laurel Elementary School as the strings director, where she teaches orchestra and modern band to some amazingly talented young musicians. She spends her free time making modern band arrangements, gardening, cooking, and spending time with her lovely family. If you would like to contact Ms. Warner, please feel free to reach out at Jessica.Warner@colostate.edu

MSOE 2025 Rehearsal and Concert Schedule!

2025 MSOE Rehearsals:

Rehearsals take place on Wednesday evenings from 6-8 p.m.

- Wednesday, March 5: MSOE NIGHT 1
- Wednesday, March 12: MSOE NIGHT 2
- Wednesday, March 26: MSOE NIGHT 3
- Wednesday, April 2: MSOE NIGHT 4
- ***Saturday, April 5 (9 a.m. – 4 p.m.): MSOE Super Saturday Rehearsal***
- Wednesday, April 9: MSOE NIGHT 5
- Wednesday, April 16: MSOE NIGHT 6

MSOE Dress Rehearsal and Concert:

- Saturday, April 19, 2-8 p.m.