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ATTENTION MMEA MEMBERS

We Need Your Feedback!

Thanks for all of your continued support as the board works to represent and advocate for you during these challenging times. As the learning voice for music education for the communities we serve, you are represented during discussions related to the reopening of schools. As additional information becomes available we will share all of this with you.

As we plan for next steps it is important that we hear from each of you prior to the conclusion of PK12 school end-of-year activities. We must collect and organize your best practices as to how we may all move forward in an uncertain and challenging time. We want and need your input.

Please use the following link:
massmea.org/about/contact-us

In the subject line, place one of the following:

—Sara Allen Santos;

ATTN: Middle School Rep.
—Andrea Cook;

—Meredith Lord;

—Reagan Paras, and/or,

—Christopher Martin

Please place in the comment section all items related to your success during these challenging times, as well as listing your suggestions as to how you envision arts education in all of the possible formats it could be offered in your community. Once complete, click submit and the materials will be forwarded to the correct representative. Each representative will share your comments with the board and those who are preparing for the reopening of schools in the fall.

We look forward to hearing from you and hope that you continue to support your MMEA.

MMEA All State Conference 2021

By Noreen Diamond Burdett, Conference Coordinator

It’s time to send in your proposal to be a clinician at the 2021 All-State Conference! Go to the website (massmea.org) and click on the 2021 Call for Session Proposals link. The deadline to submit your proposal is September 1, 2020, but don’t wait another minute: Do it today!

As I am writing this in May, most of the details for the conference and festival are still up in the air, but one thing is confirmed: Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser, Music for All, will be our keynote speaker! We definitely need to be inspired and reinvigorated during this most uncertain time, and no one can do it better than Dr. Tim. For more information on Dr. Tim and his work, visit https://www.musicforall.org/who-we-are/bios/dr-tim-lautzenheiser

Stay tuned for the Conference details as they emerge. Check the website at massmea.org for updates.

Stay healthy and be sure to take care of yourself.”
'Twas the weekend before we taught online . . . A Poem for This Time

By Cecil Adderley, President, MMEA

Once the orders were given, we prepared to work from home, and move our instruction online.

I wondered how families would adjust to “new normal” in such a short period of time.

That first weekend, I worked around the house. I looked out the window, and walked around the yard.

I was curious as to what’s the “new normal” for me, and others who are now online, thinking this may be hard.

It was nice to see families walking together. They kept their distances from others as instructed.

Some waved when they wanted, others passed by without glances,

I thought of others kindness, yet wondered why others kept their feelings inside without giving the neighbors chances.

It is a new time for us all, and I wonder, when I see some families playing ball, walking, riding their bikes and such.

Do you think we’ll hear some families singing together, strumming a guitar, ukulele, or a piano? Maybe a recorder, notes from a soprano, alto or tenor?

The grounding of a baritone or bass, trumpet in your face, a tuba playing a line, and others filling in the inner?

We are experiencing a new normal, but all have stepped up to the plate.

Learning Zoom, Google Classroom and Meet, WebEx, GoToMeeting, and anything neat.

We’ve created videos each week for our students to view,

Continued with curriculum, and created something new.

Some have offered enrichment and maintained the class norm.

Our homes are full of people we thought had left, and it’s looking like a college dorm.

We’re working from home, educating kids at the same time too,

Serving breakfast, lunch, dinner, and trying to offer ensemble classes, woo-hoo!

Non-teaching parents now see, as they try to fill our shoes.

Teachers are more patient with their kids, and now they are singing the blues.

You’ve planned, you’ve modeled and executed each lesson remotely. You’ve managed the classroom from afar, and without missing a beat.

General music, modern band, various ensembles, and private lessons are all neat.

Faculty meetings, teacher conferences, grading assignments, fund raisers and equipment to sign out.

You’ve done a great deal in a short time and the tension continues to mount.

No one is mistaking that your job has gotten harder.

New ideas, additional tech, more planning, what the heck!

We all want the best for our students. In our assigned classrooms introducing the next unit. Ensembles are different, so is teaching a private lesson.

Breakout groups work one day, full discussions for the next,

I still can’t believe that I’m seeing some of these students’ texts.

You’ve kept their attention each minute you’re on.

Parents have e-mailed or called to seek tips on how to do the things that you do.

We all hope that the new normal is something we will approach, meet the challenge, revise and succeed.

We are teachers, we are bright, we are strong, we are important, and we meet a need.
In a decade of producing this quarterly journal for the music educators of Massachusetts, this particular issue feels most important. Never did an anniversary feel so much like a new beginning. In this issue, we invited educators to reflect on what teaching through COVID-19 has meant—or may mean—for them. This issue shares their thoughts, feelings, and stories. I hope you will find time to read it all and get value from every article. The articles are written and shared with heart.

These are times that defy a single description, because we are many. Our experiences and viewpoints are, too. For those who have suffered illness or loss, it has been a time of grief. For those who suffer anxiety or depression, it has no doubt been a time of blinding isolation and loneliness. For those whose homes are broken, it may have been a time of horror. For those who watch culture and politics, it may have been a time of disappointment, disbelief, anger. For those without income, a time of great fear. For those who have been spared these things and who are prone to making lemonade, it has offered time for reflection and renewal. For those who can give, it has been a time of sharing and love. And maybe for a few of us, it has been all of these.

There have been many reasons to feel discouraged since we left our annual conference renewed with high hopes in March. We are living the unknown; we are lost in what feels like an interminable grey area. We’re teaching without leadership, or rather, we are teaching in a time when answers come from within, when leadership simply means acknowledging the unknown, offering support and encouragement to individuals stumbling through the darkness in separate shafts of light, each carrying their own flashlights. We have an all-but-silent Secretary of Education and a completely abominable, inexcusable, and horrific racial situation. While many struggle to navigate through these insufferable areas of deep grey, the difference between black and white has never seemed more stark.

We must take heart. It does no good to dwell too long in the darkness of these times; we are contributing to the future only when we use darkness to help define the light. As the 2020 school year comes to a close, we can use our summer reflection time to reinvent ourselves as educators. But remember: We are not reinventing what we do. We are only reinventing how we do it. Things change. We will prevail if we change with them.

“In these challenging times,” “in these unprecedented times,” “in these uncertain times”—enough! We’ve heard all the descriptions a million times. Writers don’t lack creativity; it’s just that it’s hard to find words to describe the unexplainable. No one knows this more than the artists, the musicians, the poets. As music educators and as musicians, it is our distinct responsibility, our duty, our honor, and indeed our privilege, to create—and teach others to create—the sound of feelings that cannot be expressed by words alone. We must acknowledge and fulfill our duty to emote and uplift. We must keep believing that the night is darkest before the dawn. The dawn will come and we will see the sun—but only if we, as artists and educators, lift the curtains both for ourselves and for others. As musicians, as teachers, as humans: We have access to the light. We must share it, and keep her lit.

It’s what we do. •

Susan Gedutis Lindsay is happy to celebrate her tenth year as MMEJ editor. She worked for more than 15 years with online learning at Berklee Online, so this was a smooth transition in many ways. When she’s not teaching elementary instrumental music online and in the classroom, she is blogging. Stay-at-home restrictions released the beast! For almost daily observations—sometimes arch, often satirical—on musicianship, positivity, and life, subscribe to Sue’s blog, www.jamandbread.us. Here are a few highlights of Sue’s pandemic reflections.

Music, Coronavirus, and Certain Death: Say Yes Written right after the conference.
It’s Work/Worry Wednesday: Teaching Music Online, or, What About the Kids We Aren’t Hearing From?
Remote Learning: It Begins. And Ends At Love
Here is a selection of learning videos Sue Lindsay made with the Plymouth Public Schools Elementary Instrumental Program during the school shutdown.
How Good To Center Down

Poem By Howard Washington Thurman

As we look to restoring our weary online souls this summer and recover from the crazy remote spring, find clarity in these words from Howard Washington Thurman.

With full intensity we seek, ere thicket passes, a fresh sense of order in our living;
A direction, a strong sure purpose that will structure our confusion and bring meaning in our chaos.
We look at ourselves in this waiting moment—the kinds of people we are.
The questions persist: what are we doing with our lives?—what are the motives that order our days?
What is the end of our doings?
Where are we trying to go?
Where do we put the emphasis and where are our values focused?
For what end do we make sacrifices?

Howard Washington Thurman was an African-American author, philosopher, theologian, educator, and civil rights leader. As a prominent religious figure, he played a leading role in many social justice movements and organizations of the twentieth century. Thurman was also a mentor to Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

How Good To Center Down!

How good it is to center down!
To sit quietly and see one's self pass by!
The streets of our minds seethe with endless traffic;
Our spirits resound with clashing, with noisy silences,
While something deep within hungers and thirsts for the still moment and the resting lull.

MMEA Stands Against Racism and Discrimination

These days have been challenging for so many in our community, with many things to consider as to how we will move forward. As we look into our classrooms and out into the communities we serve, we must stand and work together to eliminate the racism and oppression which enabled the events we have recently witnessed to occur. The Massachusetts Music Educators Association welcomes all students and builds community as we foster inclusive music opportunities, curricula, and professional development that celebrates exceptionalities, identities, orientations, and cultural backgrounds.

We serve as leaders and role models to all of the students who emulate our behaviors, and whom later, we witness as they often display the actions and reactions they were silently, or not so silently taught. We are the leading voice for Music Education for all in the Commonwealth, and we must continue to build and maintain the arts communities where all can feel welcomed, can learn, and trust those who provide music instruction for every learner.

Sincerely,
Cecil Adderley, President, MMEA
All Hands On Deck: Advocating for Music and the Arts During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The Massachusetts PreK-12 Music Educator Facebook Group

By Anthony Beatrice, Executive Director for the Arts, Boston Public Schools

I think back to the 2008 Massachusetts All-State Conference where the big bulletin board for job postings only had one little piece of paper hanging off of it. This was the start of the Great Recession and my first year as a full-time middle and high school music educator. Many of us had to go through many years of proposition 2 ½ overrides, frozen budgets, and nuanced advocacy strategies to keep our music programs from being cut. Back then we did not have a forum to strategize with each other and instead relied on ad-hoc surveys that would take too long for results to be shared. Now that we have a double-whammy of potential budget shortfalls married with new protocols for social distancing, this is no time to be going through this in isolation. Our music education community is talented, resilient, and always here for each other. We just need a place online to give our community an access point for discussion and so began the Massachusetts PreK-12 Music Educators Facebook Group.

Now over 785 members strong, the group is a living and breathing source for sharing information in real time while collaborating best practices in remote learning and advocacy. The group began just four weeks ago and is moderated by Jenn Dennett, Jeffery Daniels, Margaret McKenna, Sara Santos, and myself. We had our first evening virtual Zoom forum with nearly 100 attendees featuring MMEA President Cecil Adderley, Arts for All Coalition representative Jonathan Rappaport, and author of Music Education and Social Emotional Learning, Scott Edgar. The group includes a spreadsheet of local newspaper articles pertaining to city/town budgets, national articles about school reopening plans from across the country, and a Google form for everyone to fill out for the Arts For All Coalition, which is connecting all of the arts organizations in the state and building advocacy tools. Additionally, we have been creating a bank of quick video interviews focused on navigating these trying times with retired school leaders Dr. Kim Smith, Dr. Paul Livingston, Dr. David Nieves, Northeastern District Chair Tom Bankert, and Country Music Association Foundation Executive Director Tiffany Kerns. As we move into the final weeks of school, we are learning about embracing social emotional learning, building an advocacy plan that balances the fine line of protecting what we have built while also displaying a sense of flexibility, as well as spending time researching information on our budgets and reopening plans. Some of us may need to remind our communities of why they can’t live without music and arts education. There have been major cuts to arts education in Massachusetts in 1982 during the implementation of Proposition 2 ½, in the early ‘90s, and during the Great Recession. Each time the arts have bounced back and this time we will come back stronger and transformed. Please consider joining this group and helping our community move forward.

Action Items for Right Now!

Create an Advocacy Plan

• Have students and parents respond to prompts about why music and arts education is important to them. Make a YouTube video and share it out on multiple social media channels. Try to get your advocates to tag school committee members, town selectmen/city council members, etc. This can be done through a Google Form, FlipGrid, etc. Check out this video from Kayla Werlin’s Tri-M students at Longmeadow High School.

• If you have any recordings of students performing or teachers teaching online, put together a TV show for your local public access channel. Check out this example from the Boston Public Schools Arts Special on the Boston Neighborhood Network TV.

• Have your parent boosters meet online to coordinate an action plan. Groups that cater to just middle and high school may want to extend their vision to elementary general music, as this is the cornerstone to a high-quality sequential music education. Check out this grassroots advocacy guide from the National Music Merchants Association to help: https://www.nammfoundation.org/educator-resources/grassroots-advocacy-guide

• Are there music teachers who do not teach in your district but live in the school community? Often it can seem self-serving if you represent your program at a school committee meeting. A music teacher who teaches outside of your district but lives in the community...
can be a great advocate for your program during the public comment portion of a school committee meeting.

- If you are part of a union, start asking questions to your building reps. Maybe coordinate your questions with all of your music and arts teachers beforehand.

- Start building a coalition with other music educators in the area. Oftentimes local superintendents form a bond (as seen when they call snow days). If one superintendent does something, it may trickle to the other surrounding cities/towns.

- Try not to repost scary news articles on your public social media. If someone tags you in something, send them a message and explain why it is a problem. We are trying to withhold the narrative that music education is too dangerous during this pandemic.

**Learn More About Your School Budget**

- Start forming school committee meeting watch parties with your colleagues to get a sense of your district’s budget status. As of this writing (June 1), Governor Baker has not released budgets yet and so a lot of cities and towns are considering a 1/12 budget. It is a month-to-month budget based on the FY20 amount but for FY21 without increases (example of a $20 million budget in FY20 and $20 million for FY21). Most districts will need to make adjustments to cover the shortfall. Additionally, some cities and towns are requesting school committees to supply options of a 1/12 budget plus a 2% or even 5% cut above that. Municipalities might have rainy day stabilization funds and/or be able to shift resources from this fiscal year into next to help alleviate shortfalls.

- If the discussion of cuts occurs, listen to whether they are looking at across-the-board cuts or targeted cuts. If it is across the board, you might want to be more humble in your approach, compared to if they are just targeting music/arts/physical education/health.

- Listen for whether they will be incorporating COVID-19 response items into the budget. This could include personal protective equipment and increased transportation costs if they will only allow so many students on a bus, etc.

**Don’t Just Say “SEL.” Actually DO “SEL”!**

- As our students and ourselves are undergoing so much trauma throughout this pandemic, districts are going to be looking at ways to embed social emotional learning practices in the school day. It is important that if you say you are doing SEL in your music class, make sure you actually are! Dr. Scott Edgar has multiple webinars available on the NAfME website. Think about what you have done during remote learning in your classrooms that supports SEL. Is there a lesson you can implement in the last few weeks of school that you can use to help you advocate for your program over the summer?

- Read the NAfME Music and Social Emotional Learning Pamphlet.

Be on the lookout this week for a new SEL Arts Framework from Arts Ed NJ. As stated on the website [https://www.artsednj.org/covid19](https://www.artsednj.org/covid19): Developed by the SEL Arts Education Taskforce, the SEL Arts Education Framework outlines the intersections between the artistic process as represented by the visual and performing arts standards and the SEL competencies to enable arts educators to embed SEL into their instructional practice.

Anthony Beatrice is the Executive Director for the Arts for the Boston Public Schools.
As music educators, I think it’s fair to say that we are very future-oriented beings. We are always looking ahead and planning for what’s next on the calendar. Our profession necessitates it. Especially from March through June I feel like I’m flying from event to event, deadline to deadline, and milestone to milestone. Sometimes it feels more like white-knuckling than gracefully gliding. The meditative philosophy of “living in the present” is hard enough to do to begin with; as a music teacher, it is nearly impossible. While I absolutely love what I do, the reality of the constant planning, over-thinking, stressing, caring for, and worrying about students—all while juggling personal life responsibilities—makes this a very anxiety-inducing path at times.

So when COVID-19 put a giant pause on our usual end-of-the-year marathon, I have to admit that a small part of me exhaled a sigh of relief. The relief of finally being able to focus more on the here-and-now. The relief of spending more time with my husband. The relief of finally getting back to playing my primary instrument for my own enjoyment more regularly. The relief of erasing scribbles on the calendar. The relief of setting my own pace, rather than frantically running from class to class with a full bladder.

But while exhaling tiny wisps of relief, I was inhaling deep gulps of new anxieties. My thoughts snapped towards the future again: What if I catch the virus? What if my husband does? What if one or both of us lose our jobs? And like all teachers, my thoughts quickly turned to my students. What about my students who left their instruments at school? What about my students who have special needs? What about my students who don’t have access to technology at home? What about my students who rely on school-provided free lunch? What about my students whose parents have already lost their jobs? What about my students who are stuck home with abusive family members?

The privilege of being able to have those momentary feelings of relief was about to smack me across the face.

As my head churned with uncertainty about the future, I began to experience what I thought were COVID-like symptoms myself: a high fever, tight chest pains, body aches, constant fatigue. Everything but the tell-tale dry cough. I went to urgent care, only to realize my fever broke and my chest pains were mostly gone. It was clear to both myself and the physician: it wasn’t COVID-19; it was a panic attack. I had never had my mind unconsciously take hostage of my body like that before, and it was horrifying.

I began to feel full-blown guilt.

You’re the one who thought this all would be a relief.

Guilt mixed with shame.

How could I ever have felt relief at a time like this?

Shame mixed with grief.

I cannot even begin to fathom the pain he must have felt when I had a panic attack due to mild stress.

It became a cocktail of overwhelming and debilitating emotions.

It has now been two whole months since my former student’s passing. Every day has followed the beat of its own drum. Some days, the tune is lively and beautiful. Other days, the tempo drags and I feel like I’m playing in the wrong key. But what I have gained from these past few months is perspective. I would love to have back the privilege of what now seems like the minimal stresses of a normal end-of-the-school-year routine. I would love to have back the privilege of making music with my students face-to-face. I would love to have back the privilege of seeing my former student’s smiling face again.

Every day is a privilege. Every day is a privilege. Both prior to quarantine and even now. While I’m still grieving and afraid of what the future has in store, I’m learning to move beyond the fear and “live in the present.”

If not for me, for my students.”
When you see neat little acronyms like C-Squared or catchy sayings, you certainly don’t think they’ll involve a pandemic. You’d think (hope and most certainly prefer) something super cool. However, in our case, we are using a catchy phrase to make the best out of a challenging situation. “COVID-19” and “choir” are an unmatched pair. We’ve had to reinvent how we teach our beloved subject in both reactive and proactive ways. And because our ingenuity, we make the best of this situation across the state and the nation.

In planning out the rest of the year, I’ve tried many things to keep my students engaged and keep chorus relevant and meaningful. Some things worked, more than I’d like to admit failed, and other things—well, the jury is still out. While doing this planning, I had to constantly remind myself that this whole process is new, and it’s not going to be perfect as it’s crisis learning and not true remote learning. However, I firmly believe there is a lesson in every single thing we encounter, and that belief has guided my approach.

Being the eternal optimist, I’ll start with the positive:

- **Technology programs:** I took advantage of the Sight Reading Factory subscriptions that were offered to us and figured it was the perfect time to give this program a try, as I have been fairly positive that I’d be getting a subscription for my classroom this fall. My students liked having the ability to control the speed in which they worked, have feedback, and those who are less comfortable with sight reading had the option to truly start from the bottom up while my more advanced students had the option to work a little faster and be challenged.

- **Virtual Choir.** Thank you, Mr. Whitacre, for outlining two weeks of my curriculum. Of course I did not just sit back and tell them to just go make a video and send the video and certificate of completion back to me. That was only the final piece of the puzzle. We’ve focused parts of our time on analyzing music a little more and digging deeper into theory—something many of us tend to do on the fly during a class as there are multiple things that we have to get done in such a short time together.

- **Social Emotional Learning.** The assignments that came out of this were probably the most heartwarming and had the most return from students. Inspired by a TikTok video a student sent me towards the beginning of our time at home (now seriously—I never in a million years thought I would use the term TikTok in a discussion of job-related inspiration—but hey, I’m open to anything!), I created an assignment where the students had to create chorus and conductor memes. I am pretty sure I haven’t laughed that loud, hard, and had tears from laughter at all during this pandemic. I feel that this gave my students a chance to reflect on their fun moments that we’ve had in class, poke fun at the teacher, and still allowed creativity. I had only asked my students for three memes apiece, but practically all students gave me far more than that! After the assignment was due, I posted a meme each day to the classroom for them all to enjoy.

Another SEL related activity, and I can’t take credit for this idea (thank you Ginny Bailey!), was that I had the students create recruitment videos for chorus, as our chance for the students to go to the middle school for recruitment day was no longer happening. Again, it got students thinking about the reasons they love chorus, and the responses I got were heart-warming. Some students did the basic video while others utilized various apps on their iPads or equipment that they had at home and used their skills a little more and collaborated with peers from their class to do Zoom videos.

- **Weekly check-ins.** This may not be a popular approach, but based on the population I serve, I used our Zoom meetings each week as a check-in rather than time for me to “teach.” I posted videos of me teaching instead and gave my students a chance to talk and “see” each other who might necessarily not socialize outside our class, and I had...
an overwhelming response from my students that they liked this approach. I did also use it as an opportunity to ask questions about an assignment as well—which they usually do.

• Killer Choral Playlist. You know how our students are constantly requesting pieces or telling us what we should or shouldn’t be programming? Well, here’s their chance. We do four concerts a year in the upper level choirs so I’ve had them working their way through programming a concert based on our theme for each concert: We do a formal concert with traditional choral music, a holiday concert that blends all styles, a March concert that has a nice mix of jazz added into newer choral music, and we end our year with a pops concert. This gives me the opportunity to share how music is chosen, what the “formula” is for various concerts, and I have even gone as far as teaching and discussing program notes and how to write them.

Things that have been difficult:

• Student participation. As I mentioned before, my SEL activities had amazing return as compared to more technical activities. Like any good teacher, I evaluate what’s going on and adapt my focus and approach. I think every single teacher would agree that the emotional state of our students right now is far more important so I’ve been formulating my lessons that way instead.

• Student frustration. Students have told me that they want to do their assignments and certainly try their best, but learning how to navigate siblings (and parents) constantly around and finding a time and place that they’re comfortable making a recording without feeling self-conscious of their family judgments has been one of the biggest challenges. My challenge to my students is to look to the future in the fall where it’s possible that some sort of remote learning is going to need to be in place—I’ve asked them to look at their environment and figure out how they can set up a system or space that will work. Critical thinking always manages to work its way back into any situation.

• Like all teachers across America, the biggest thing for me was missing the daily interaction and creativity with my students. There is absolutely nothing that will ever replace that, and I don’t think we should try. Moving forward, I think we need to keep chorus relevant for our students so that when we do get the chance to get back to singing and creating together, students have had this rare opportunity to explore the many little things that add up to this big beautiful thing we call chorus. If we’re remote learning in any form in the fall, I know I’ll be better prepared and have been penning new and adjusted curriculum for my choirs. Keeping choir is essential even in a remote setting as we need to continually advocate for our art form. Insisting that we keep it and then making it work will be the best thing we can do for our art and our students.

To conclude, I think my biggest takeaway from this whole situation is “opportunity.” Let’s seize it, mold it, learn from it, create it, and utilize it. Nothing in life is permanent. We’re just writing another chapter in our teaching career and musical career book. And, I have no doubt we’re all going to come out stronger, more connected, and more creative than ever. And that right there is going to make our expertise so much more valuable than it already is.

Imagine

Mrs. Riley when she's

About to end the piece

The whole chorus smiling through the concert

When the whole chorus smiles through the concert
From Plunking onto Zoom to Total Reconceptualization: A Range of Responses to COVID-19

By Rhoda Bernard, Ed.D., Managing Director, Berklee Institute for Arts Education and Special Needs, Berklee College of Music

The urgency of COVID-19 and its effect on my work first hit me on Saturday, March 14 at about 12:30 p.m. I was sitting in a Berklee classroom on my lunch break between facilitating two sessions of the Berklee Music Education and Special Needs Study Group, which we were offering in person and online. Just as I finished my tuna sandwich, the security guard entered and informed us that we were required to leave the building. Berklee Public Safety had just issued an order to cease all in-person activities on our campus, effective immediately.

That was the last time I was in a Berklee building.

What I have noticed in the many weeks since is that my job features a range of remote teaching—from plunking what I normally do onto Zoom at one extreme, to a total reconceptualization of my teaching in order for it to translate to a remote environment.

There seems to be an association between the ages of the people with whom I’m working and where our engagement falls in that range. With adult learners, like the arts educators participating in our Music Education and Special Needs Study Group, as well as with my graduate students in our Master of Music in Music Education with a Concentration in Music and Autism, I can plunk what we normally do onto Zoom pretty effectively. We can have very effective seminars together, where the students share screens and present, where I lead discussions with the whole class, and where small groups of students interact in breakout rooms.

Remote teaching looks quite different with younger students, and especially with our students with disabilities who study in our Arts Education Programs at the Berklee Institute for Arts Education and Special Needs. Here my teaching staff and I have been required to reconceptualize our work. We are not teaching the same things the same way online. Rather, we have deconstructed our teaching into its various elements, and reconstructed those elements into interactions that can be successful in a remote environment.

While there are some aspects of our in-person teaching that simply cannot take place remotely, we have been surprised to find that the remote environment has provided some new opportunities for our teachers and students.

Take our Rock Band Ensemble program as an example. Before COVID-19, our two Rock Band Ensembles met every Saturday afternoon for 60-minute sessions where they learned and rehearsed popular and rock music together. While sheltering in place means that our students can no longer play together in ensembles and hear the full group, they can play together on Zoom with all but one student muted. Though our instructors can no longer coach the full ensemble, they can provide more individualized feedback and support.

Our students have new opportunities and new ways to learn. They now practice at home with play-along recordings, record themselves, and send their recordings to their teachers for feedback. They also play for each other in their Zoom meetings—a new practice that has generated a lot of excitement in our students, who want to show their peers what they can do.

Our instructors have transformed their teaching practices. To share just a couple of examples, this summer’s remote session features Rock Band Fundamentals Lab, a synchronous class with additional practice-at-home activities that will introduce students to chord patterns, rhythm patterns, and arpeggiation patterns for a wide range of rock and popular musical styles. Instrument Sectionals will provide students with in-person coachings and activities that are customized to their instrument and its role in the ensemble. And the Zoom gatherings will continue, as well, to foster community and to provide opportunities to jam and play with others (albeit without being able to hear the ensemble sound).

At this point, we have no idea how long we will be required to teach remotely. What I wonder is, when we do return to in-person teaching, will that mode of instruction be changed by what we’ve learned and developed during this unprecedented time? Will some of these newly developed ways of engaging and supporting our students continue, even as we return to our classrooms? These are the questions that my staff and I are pondering as we think about and plan for the future.

Rhoda Bernard is the MMEJ Higher Education Editor and Managing Director, Berklee Institute for Arts Education and Special Needs, Berklee College of Music.
Hot Cross Buns, Hairspray, and Girl Scout Cookies: On Grief and the Persistence of Music

By Adam Gröschow, Scituate Public Schools

The first hints of this unfortunate lockdown, for me, begin in late February. I’m frantically securing my hotel for the MMEA conference, very much past the deadline. My high school colleagues and I send the first of many Google Forms to our music families to “take their temperature” on our upcoming Walt Disney World trip in April. My elementary colleagues and I are losing sleep over how we are going to help our 4th grade band students get ready for their first performance at our All-Town Band Concert in two weeks. Fast forward to Wednesday, March 11th.

The MMEA All-State Festival is behind us, the Florida trip is still on, and the 4th graders are finally ready and excited to debut the most epic “Hot Cross Buns” and “Anchors Aweigh” anybody has ever heard. We meet as a department that morning and decide that the concert just cannot happen. It would be irresponsible to pack 400 band students and their families into the gym. At this point our Junior District Festival is already postponed and the Senior SEMSBA Festival is soon to follow.

Immediately after deciding to cancel, our 4th graders start arriving and drop their instruments on the stage to begin lessons and a full rehearsal. After, I commute over to the high school for music tech class and introduce a unit using brand new hardware we just received from a generous community grant. My last class that day is Symphonic Band, and we run through our program for the concert that we know won’t happen. Our closer was going to be a fun medley from Hairspray, so when we get to “You Can’t Stop the Beat” I naturally pick up my phone and unknowingly, yet somehow knowingly, capture the last sounds we would make together. The irony is not lost on me.

Thursday, May 12th, is a middle school band day. We rehearse as normal, but mourn the concert that never happened.

I’m particularly sad that my two new 6th grade bassoonists didn’t get their first chance to perform since learning the instrument. The students in my afternoon music tech classes, mostly seniors, are distracted and chatting about a rumored shutdown. As they work independently, I circulate around the room helping them with their newest project and engaging in casual conversation just a little bit more than usual.

Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled for the evening, most of which have already transitioned to socially distant phone calls, but of course we have to be in the building anyway [groan]. I decide not to go home and stay at school to tidy up the classroom. Our flute section leader, a senior, is doing homework in the band room. She is hauling a cart of Girl Scout cookies and before she leaves she asks me if I would like to buy any. I’m not carrying any cash so I decline, but she insists that I don’t need to worry about payment. I still insist that I will bring her cash tomorrow. She tells me that she is thankful for all that band and her music teachers have done for her, so I should just take the cookies. We exchange a pleasant goodbye, and we both almost jokingly acknowledge the possibility that it might be a while until we see each other again.

Not too long after she leaves, I get the call. School will be closed on Friday for decontamination due to a potential positive case of COVID-19. All after-school activities are cancelled for the evening. I am relieved that I can now go home, but before I do, I go upstairs to the music tech lab and quickly pack up all of our newly-purchased equipment. I didn’t want any kind of disinfectant mist to potentially render them useless. I walk over the middle school drama club students painting/building their set pieces for the musical in the hallway, grab my essential work items, instruments, and Girl Scout cookies, then make my final drive home. Fast forward to today.

It’s been difficult having to mourn the milestones and rituals of the end of the year. I really wanted to grow closer with our Symphonic Band students at Disney, but that will have to wait until next year (hopefully). We won’t reach that final barline at the spring concert with our amazing senior class. The 4th graders, who only had a taste of what a full band would be like, will not have their first performance for an increasingly uncertain period of time, and I’m out of Thin Mints. I also know that I am not alone. I am thankful for my incredible colleagues and especially thankful to be a part of a larger music educator community who since day 1, has been stepping up for each other and weathering the challenges together.

In the end, I’m learning to cherish my 4th and 5th grade Zoom lessons. I’m learning about a whole different side of my symphonic band students’ musicality as they share their original compositions and Acapella app videos. I love seeing that we have students who are seeking out music making in these times because music is what is driving them forward. They are determined to hold our music community together. They won’t stop the beat.

Adam Gröschow is a co-director of 4-12 bands and teaches 9-12 music technology in the Scituate Public Schools.
Technology in the Time of COVID-19:
Discovery, Humans, and the Limits of Gadgetry

By Stephanie Riley, MMEJ Technology Editor, Choral Music Educator, Dennis-Yarmouth Public Schools

Though I am the Technology Editor for MMEJ, I consider myself not a tech wizard but tech savvy. I have always prided myself at keeping up to date with all things tech related. I’ve always been the one in my department constantly searching out new ways to aid our teaching with technology, searching out ways to make our jobs a little more efficient, maybe even add a little extra fun. Heck, I’ve even presented sessions on how to flip the music classroom. The topic of technology is something I have always craved learning about.

So, COVID-19 hits and I’m immediately hit with the thought of: Hey! This is the technological moment I’ve been preparing for my whole life! Joke was on me. While I have stayed competent with technology and implementing it in my now virtual classrooms (I was using Zoom all year long with my AP Students whenever I had to stay home with a sick child), nothing could prepare me for learning how to juggle my own four children and their remote learning needs, my administrator husband’s very busy and overwhelmingly stressful remote work schedule, and then find time (and energy) to be the teacher I wanted to be and that my students most certainly deserved.

Flipping the classroom and designing meaningful online remote learning are two very different birds. The biggest difference between the two is that with remote learning, you remove the human interaction and physical in person check-in element of the design. Online models of learning are extremely well thought out and planned and as many questions of “what if” or “how do we handle this” are explored with plenty of prep time in advance of the course being launched.

I am a big fan of technology: a puzzle to conquer, a new language to learn, a new game to have fun with. It helps me do my job just a little bit better on a daily basis. I love technological gadgets. Here’s the BUT: but, it will never replace the human interaction. It can never replace the feeling you get when you sing or play together. It can’t give you goosebumps, show you the “I finally got it!” emotions of our students (and teachers for that matter!). Technology can’t show the worried look from a student when they don’t quite understand something or that their day isn’t going so well. Technology can never truly be human. I would gladly give up technology today if that meant I could see my students in person tomorrow for the rest of eternity and not have to worry about this type of situation ever again.

After all, we’re musicians and we are some of the most, if not best, creative beings ever... created.

In Memoriam

MMEA is sad to acknowledge the passing of Jack Casey, cofounder K & C Music.

Jack sadly died of COVID-19 related illness. He had been living in a nursing home in Wilmington that was heavily affected by the pandemic. Jack coordinated the MMEA Vendors area at our annual All-State Conference for many years, and he and K & C served almost a hundred school districts in eastern Massachusetts with instruments and supplies, and was well known across the state. He organized a major fundraiser for the Quincy Public Schools a few years ago, and was a true friend and supporter of schools in Massachusetts. We thank Jack for his contributions to the growth of music education in Massachusetts. Donations can be made in his honor to the: Save the Music foundation at savethemusic.org.

Find more about Jack in his Obituary: https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/wickedlocal-medford/obituary.aspx?n=john-casey&p=196215640
Growing Music in Mass Still Needs You

While everyone is staying safe and healthy, the Growing Music in Mass Foundation is making plans for the 2020/2021 year.

Grant applications for our giving initiatives are on our new website, which can be found at growingmusicinmass.org. On the website, you will find information about our giving initiatives, the Future Symphony Hall Scholars and Classroom Innovations block grants programs. We encourage teachers to apply, even if you’re not entirely sure about the status of your district’s programs for the fall. Here again are the block grant descriptions in a nutshell:

**Future Symphony Hall Scholars**

funding grants to schools are specifically designed for instrumental and vocal/choral performance skill enhancement, and typically fall into these categories:

- Private, semiprivate, or small group lessons and targeted instruction
- Master classes by visiting professional musicians, conductors, or musical mentors
- Sponsoring or attending performances and performance-related events
- Financial support for students participating in advanced college, conservatory or music school programs
- Instructional and support materials

**Classroom Innovations**

grants are designed to allow member teachers to explore a range of strategies and methods of musical instruction and evaluation. Falling into, but not limited to, these categories, grants will be available at all levels of music education.

- Specific nontraditional instruments and ensembles (for example: folk or culturally inspired instruction)
- Composition-based or improvisation-based instruction
- New or expanded technology-based programs of instruction
- Student learning centers and individualized instructional programs
- Programs designed for special learners (as distinct from modifications or adaptations of regular lesson planning)
- Developing methods, tools, and strategies that measure student growth and achievement
- Curriculum integration in which music is a lead or primary component

Teachers developing and expanding distance-learning programs would qualify for Innovations grants. Because teachers are out of the classroom and may not get this information before the application deadlines, there will be a degree of latitude in completing and sending them to us. On our website, there is a contact e-mail that teachers should feel free to use should you have any questions or if you are in the process of developing a grant-worthy program that isn’t quite ready. Just let us know.

The address is gmmchair@gmail.com

The GMM Committee will looking at the grant applications in August, and will meet to determine the grant recipients. Any proposals submitted up to that meeting will be considered.

Also, while it may not be applicable right now, the Growing Music in MASS Foundation is committed to assisting students so that they can attend and participate in the All-State Festival. We will be designating funds through the Symphony Hall Scholarship Program for this very purpose. By next fall, when students have been selected, there will be an application for funding student registration on the website.

Finally, if members have contacts with or referrals for possible donors—corporate, charitable, or individual—please pass our program information on to them, or send their contact information to us so that we can reach out to them. Donor information, and the grant application is available on the website.
Growing Music in MASS 2020 Donation Form

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Check out Taylor!

By Taylor Nardone, Elementary General Music, Plymouth Public Schools

Sigh.

I’d be lying if I said I was getting used to this. Nothing about this is “normal,” and truthfully, I do not want it to be.

Perhaps I am untrained in this field of online learning. Scratch that; I know I am untrained. When our schools closed on March 13th, I (as well as many) didn’t grasp the full severity of the situation. Every day thereafter was a pouring out of information that only deepened the fears we all began to face.

I didn’t succumb to those fears until mid-April. I knew of the severity of the situation (as I isolated myself in my 600-square-foot apartment), but I didn’t fully process the effect it had on education until then.

Was I dissatisfied that so few students were participating? Yes. Was I upset about the curriculum I wouldn’t get to teach? Yes. How about the opportunities these students missed? Yes.

All of that, of course, saddened me. But, here’s what it really came down to:

Online teaching has stripped away everything that brought me joy about teaching in the first place. I fell in love with being a music teacher because of the opportunity I had to watch students fall in love with music. The excitement came from what was left in my students faces as we explored the many facets of music making, listening, and feeling. Without being in person...it felt empty, void of any form of connection and community (the foundation of music education), and, well, just lifeless.

I pondered these thoughts for a while and took some time to reflect. I’m ready to move forward. But, I’m left incredibly uncertain for the future of our jobs due to the almost guaranteed economic trickledown effect this virus will have in the coming years.

Yet, somehow...I have hope. Perhaps this is an opportunity to explore the different realms of experiencing the multisensory world of music. Perhaps the traditional route of our teaching is not the end-all, be-all. Time will tell. Until then, we look back on a year of change. As long as my students found some joy in class this year, even if just a passing moment, I am content.

Born in central Massachusetts, Taylor Nardone is a K-5 General Music/Choral educator in Plymouth, Massachusetts.

Click on the thumbnails below to check out some of Taylor’s amazing videos.

On Facebook:
Check out some of Taylor’s amazing videos on Facebook

Taylor’s Initial Thoughts on School Closure

A typical work day in quarantine.

Taylor, Featured on Edutopia

Walk Like A Mummy
When We Get Through This
By Gareth Dylan Smith, Assistant Professor of Music, Music Education at Boston University

Martyn Joseph isn’t quite a household name (well, he is in our home), but he’s been a full-time singer-songwriter and social activist for the last 38 years and I’ve been to at least two dozen of his captivating one-man live shows since the early ‘90s. Barring the couple of times in my 20s when he politely and hastily signed CDs for me after a show, I have never met him, but as I sat down to write this I realized what a profound influence Martyn Joseph’s music has had on my life. Through his music (live concerts primarily—his recordings lack the immediacy and charisma of the in-person experience), Joseph has helped me figure out a lot about who I am and who I want to be; to understand my place in the world as one person with a lot of compassion but limited skills and loads of questions I maybe won’t ever find answers to; and, perhaps more than anything of late, he has taught me through example about how to be a British man in a complicated, long-term love affair with the United States of America.

The Martyn Joseph I know and love is a character—of both his own creation and mine. I’ve no real idea what he’s like outside of a concert venue, despite the apparent bleeding honesty, palpable fragility, seething worry, and uplifting joy that pour abundantly forth from his trove of achingly compassionate and always powerfully rendered contemporary folk songs (and, lately, his Twitter account). Nonetheless, I have forged a deep bond with the music and persona of Martyn Joseph. What a comfort and a joy it was, then, on another cold, rainy Sunday afternoon in late April, after more than six weeks of lockdown, to catch the live stream of a concert from Joseph’s home studio in South Wales. There were over 1,700 people in the audience, but of course I could see only three of us from the sofa in the TV room in my house.

The concert was amazing. I was—as always—in awe of Joseph’s masterful guitar playing, captivated and caressed by his impassioned vocals, and moved by the incisiveness and porcelain beauty of his lyrics. What I frequently fail to articulate in 8,000 words of scholarly prose, Joseph achieves impeccably in four minutes of song. He also usually reduces (or maybe increases?) me to tears.

Highlights of the April 26th concert included the feisty, optimistic “Here Come the Young,” about political winds of change blowing hard to create a new politics that prioritizes ordinary people and our collective long-term survival. He sang the delicate “Cardiff Bay” about creating precious memories with his young son—this really hit me since, testing as this lockdown is, I know I must cherish every special moment with our daughter. He roared in the monumental “Proud Valley Boy” about Paul Robeson’s activism and charity bringing dignity and hope to downtrodden coal mining communities in the valleys of South Wales in the 1930s. Joseph delivered both a warm homage to, and searing critique of, the United States in “Lonely Like America,” which depicts isolation of and within the country. After “Nye,” a soaring tribute to the prime mover in founding socialized healthcare in the United Kingdom, he played “When We Get Through This,” a brand new song of hope and love penned for the present moment. It was an exhausting and uplifting show. The sun even came out just as it finished.

Joseph said in an interview in 2000 that “the prime motive in the instant that I pick up the guitar is a selfish one. It’s because I need to deal with the world. I’m in the world and it’s horrible, and what can I do? I’m just getting this stuff out of my system as it were.” The fact that for him this feels selfish helped put some things in perspective for me. There’s not a whole lot, as a musician and a professor, that I can do while the world seems on some days to be falling apart around us. I feel guilty for not being the right kind of doctor, and I feel selfish for making lots of music with colleagues, students, and my family. Music-making is so integral to who I am, though, that on the days I don’t practice drums I can be outrageously irritable and short-tempered. When I recently said, half-jokingly, that I seem mostly to be wasting my time, my wife sagely responded, “No art is a waste of time.”

Many of us need to make music—to hear it, feel it, and connect with others through it. We owe it to everyone to make music. We each have our own Martyn Josephs—musical mentors and de facto life coaches who help keep us grounded and present in
these craziest of times. As music teachers, we can often be seen as that guru (especially in hindsight), and our students need us right now at our most compassionate and kind and musical. Martyn Joseph reassures us all in his newest song: “You Got This. I Know You Do.”

Gareth Dylan Smith is Assistant Professor of Music, Music Education at Boston University, a board member of the International Society for Music Education, a founding editor of the Journal of Popular Music Education, and a drummer. Gareth’s research interests include popular music, music learning, drum kit performance, distributed telematic performance, punk pedagogies, and eudaimonia. He is excited to get to work every day with future music teachers in Massachusetts and beyond.

What I thought I might do is give you some resources and ideas to keep virtual learning going within your jazz program. Some of you may already know of these resources but some may not. As always Jazz at Lincoln Center is a great place to start. www.jazz.org

They have done an outstanding job of posting material that both your students and you can learn from. There is a weekly schedule of events such as Jazz 101, JLCO Master Classes, and Wednesdays with Wynton. There is also the Jazz Live app from Jazz at Lincoln Center. Open up the app and you can see and hear past performances from Dizzy’s Club, Rose Theater, Essentially Ellington, Blue Engine Records, or Play Along with JLCO.

Another great resource is JEN (Jazz Education Network). If you don’t know about JEN you really should check them out. They have been hosting two or three Facebook Live events every week. I joined Facebook just to be able to be a part of them. You don’t need to be a member of JEN to be a part of these events.

Through JEN I found Seattle Jazz Ed www.seattlejazzed.org. There, I found the Seattle Jazz Ed Teacher Toolkit—COVID-19 Resources. In this toolkit you can find two online masterclasses with JazzED educators and five sessions of Guided Listening to Great Jazz Albums with videos and worksheets for each album. They do ask for a donation, anything between $25 and $250, depending on your school’s resources. I have taken some of their ideas and created my own resources as well.

The schedule of events of MAJE will be out in the fall issue as well as online at www.majazzed.org as soon as it is available.

If you have any questions or would like to get more involved in MAJE please feel free to contact me at joseph.mulligan@reading.k12.ma.us

—Joseph P. Mulligan, MAJE President
Student Teacher Displacement During COVID-19

By Ruth Debrot, Kel Cadence Kim, and Sabrina Scotti, Boston University

The COVID-19 virus hit during the All-State Professional Development Conference in Boston. While at the conference, I heard that concerts were being canceled. However, at that moment, I didn’t feel like it would amount to anything serious. One week later I learned that no one would return, in a physical sense, to their schools.

At the beginning of the spring term, ten student teachers from Boston University had placements in the public schools. At mid-term, most students had their second placements canceled entirely. Kel Kim and Sab Scotti shared their experiences.

—Dr. Ruth Debrot

Kel Cadence Kim: Reflection

The first moment I realized I would be affected due to COVID-19 was when my middle school placement was canceled. This was before most school cancelations occurred and I was in shock believing that I was one of few to be affected. Then, as the school districts around me began taking their school year online, I realized that everyone would be making drastic changes to their spring semester. Although the natural reaction was to panic about what all of this meant, it was really reassuring to know that I had a great community of educators to rely on.

While it is regrettable that I will not be receiving this time back, I have been teaching myself to ask, “what now” instead of “what if.” I wasn’t able to gain middle school choral experience, but I had a wonderful time in my high school placement and I am continuously learning about remote teaching, which is an increasingly important skill to have. Even though I did not have the breadth of professional experience I expected, I continue to grow, both as a student and educator.

Kel Cadence Kim: Virtual Lesson

Kel Cadence Kim is a recent graduate from Boston University holding a bachelor’s in music education. She has always held a passion for all aspects of education and will be working full time in higher education while pursuing a master’s degree with Teachers College, Columbia University.

Sabrina Scotti: COVID-19 Pandemic Reflection

I thought student teaching would be an opportunity to experience things I had not done in my pre-practicum courses. I chose student teaching placements that targeted the skills I needed to improve upon the most. These placements allowed me to have guidance from professionals and to learn to be comfortable teaching the subjects and ages I was not familiar with. As a result, I feel excited to teach middle school.

While the pandemic cut my student teaching short, I used the experience as an opportunity to reflect and create lessons for remote music classes. I have taken the time during the pandemic to think about how to adapt my lessons and make them more effective outside of the physical classroom. My pedagogical goal was to design lessons that work in live classrooms and remote settings. I also thought about how my previous experience as a private online instructor with adults could inform my work with elementary, middle, and high school students. I have thought a lot about taking lessons from my middle school placement and adapting them for online adult students and vice versa.

Although I have missed being in a physical classroom and my daily interaction with the students and staff, I have enjoyed having some time to connect the many ways I use music in my life. I have tried to tie music education into my other job, performing video game music online. In addition, I have been attempting to motivate people that I know to engage with music during these times, so they can experience how music can be a vital role in their lives, whether it be listening, performing, teaching, composing, or listening. I believe that in the immediate future, there will be an increased emphasis on remote teaching and learning in schools. This will, in turn, impact how we adapt music teacher education in the era of COVID-19, so all that we learn now will be important to our teaching future.

Sabrina Scotti: Virtual Lesson Link

Sabrina Scotti finished her undergraduate degree in music education at Boston University. In her studies, she has tapped into her own childhood, working with video game music in the classroom as well as academic research regarding its potential benefits for young children’s musical listening. Outside the classroom, she makes video game music on YouTube and teaches students online privately all over the world in piano, arranging, composition, and audio engineering.
Filling Our Wells

By Kính T. Vũ Assistant Professor of Music, Boston University

Simon and Garfunkel’s (1965) song *The Sound of Silence* “criticizes silence that perpetuates oppression” (Schmidt, 2016, p. 121), but these lyrics, “echoed in the wells, of silence,” seem apropos to the coronavirus pandemic that emptied America’s college campuses during spring semester 2020. Once music-filled halls brimming with the exuberant rattle of youth now sit vacant like deep, bone-dry wells. As an assistant professor of music who lives on-campus and serves a faculty-in-residence role at Boston University, I am privy to the academic and residential lives of our learners. Now it feels so deafeningly silent where once the wells overflowed with the life-giving waters of youth.

It all began in mid-March when students evacuated campus or were unable to return following spring break. Most of my neighbors in Kilachand Hall took up residence in their primary residences where they began co-living and co-working with family members, extended family, and in some cases roommates and friends. In hosting weekly Zoom meet-ups with students from my residential community, I learned how students coped with the ordeal of losing their campus and ultimately their freedom. Students were ready to return to school within a week of shelter-in-place orders. A sort of mezzo-piano lull settled into everyone’s remote existence; there were no crescendos leading to graduation ceremonies or decrescendos of early-May move-out.

Pertinent to the academic rigor and vigor germane to campus life, students experienced mixed emotions about the shift from in-person to distance education. While some of our learners (and their professors) were reticent about the change, many people appeared to take the new normal in stride. It might be fair to say that students, both in music education and in residence life, demonstrated quiet courage as they negotiated the constantly changing landscape physically, mentally, and emotionally. I witnessed that quiet courage in students’ creativity nearly every day. Courage revealed itself as music majors developed peer teaching episodes for remote engagement where ordinarily they would have stood alongside fellow music majors to teach songs and dances. In some classes, students seized opportunities to sharpen their technological skills by creating original songs or remixes using digital audio workstations (e.g., Soundtrap). One music education major said something to the effect, “We could design our online peer teaching episodes as if this is actually going to be a part of our future.”

Aside from the residential and curricular changes experienced in higher education, the pandemic served as a necessary reminder to care for one another. Care is multidirectional. In education, it might be assumed that care flows one way: from administrators to teachers and subsequently from teachers to students. Yet in my experience, pathways of care are rarely a direct line from top to bottom or bottom to top; they tilt and wend along oftentimes unpredictable routes. While students may have relied on their professors to guide them carefully along a detour, so too did our students serve as caregivers to the faculty during this erratic journey. I might argue that this unplanned, coronavirus-induced journey was well-provisioned in that care has never been in short supply despite orders to social distance or evacuate our university homes.

This moment in time will not be forgotten, and I suspect that it will be etched into our collective memories for many years to come. It may be too soon to know how coronavirus will affect education in general and music education specifically. In moments of quiet courage, in our wells of silence, I invite readers to reflect on what has come to pass, to savor the gift that is today, and to fill their wells with life-giving ideas that inspire generous helpings of care, wonderment, and joy that will serve each other in times like this and better moments yet to come.

Kính T. Vũ is an assistant professor of music at Boston University, where he teaches music education courses in general and instrumental music. His current research centers on exploring connections between music education and forced human displacement in Cambodia and Kính’s homeland Việt Nam.

REFERENCES


Notes on the Future
From the President Elect

By Dr. Heather Cote, Westwood Public Schools

I’m sure that most of you feel the same way that I do: We want someone to tell us definitively what is going to happen when schools reopen in September. Living in the uncertainty right now is a struggle. Yet, despite this uncertainty, we can and should begin looking ahead to the fall.

The hard work and dedication of our music teachers across the state has been amazing these past few months. We always strive to do the best we can for ourselves and our students, even during this pandemic. Yet, remember that there is no “best practice” right now in how to do this. We are living in a changing environment, learning to do something we’ve never done before. As we near the end of the school year, it is ok to give yourself some downtime and reflection time. Take a deep breath, look back at what worked and what didn’t, and begin to make some choices on what you personally want to learn moving forward, as well as what you think is essential for both you and your students.

There is no “one size fits all” model for going back to school, and there shouldn’t be. There have been a lot of amazing resources shared out; take what you can from all these resources, but you know your students and your district. Do what YOU believe is right and works for your own students. Don’t compare yourself and your program to others. You’re going to find resources and hear strategies that you like and that you know you might be able to use in your situation. You’re also going to come across things that just might not be possible for you. Take it all in, but in the end, consider what you feel is ESSENTIAL to your classroom, what IS possible, and what you CAN do.

The word “opportunity” keeps popping up in my vocabulary, as right now we have the opportunity to reimagine music education. We may be reimagining the way our music program leaders

performance classes look for the fall. What opportunity is there if you’re teaching online? Or hybrid? Or in person? Take this as an opportunity to consider what are the essential things that are important to you, your classroom, and your teaching. Our National Core Arts Standards reflect skills related to Creating, Responding, Performing, and Connecting. If we can’t focus on one, such as performing, then what opportunity is there to focus on other music skills? The “What” hasn’t changed. We’re still teaching music. What we have to think about is the “How”; how will we do this?

We will likely look at Social Emotional Learning (SEL) as being be a big part of our return to the classroom. Instead of our primary focus being on a final product, the focus shifts to think about reflection and self-awareness. We have the opportunity to tap into “student voice,” giving them a say in their own learning and their own self-assessment. Whether we use choice boards or ask student to set their own goals, we have opportunity for our students to explore self-awareness, social awareness, and creating connections.

I believe one of the most important things to consider is the community we create in our classrooms. Should we start the fall online, or in some kind of hybrid model, we are going to need to think about how to develop that community part, or how to start it. If we’re in the classroom, that community looks different than in a virtual or hybrid model. If I can be in the classroom in any form, from a skill perspective, I’ll

ultimately decide what I think is important for my students to know and we’ll work in small groups with whatever social distancing measures we have to take. But we also WILL meet online as a full group to build community.

We’ll need to find strategies for the classes that are new to us, and those students that we’ll need to get to know. Anticipating that, I’m starting now by looking to the eighth graders that will be my freshmen next year. My middle school director and I started a lesson together on a piece of music that we can play when we’re back together. I made a welcome video to welcome them into the high school band, and gave them a choice board to do around the repertoire. As a result, I’m getting eighth graders who don’t know, sending me videos of them transposing, and introducing themselves to me, and telling me they can’t wait to be in the high school band. I’m already starting to create that community that will take me into the fall. Sure, it’s not the same as doing my recruitment in person. But it’s finding new and different ways to reach out to new students and invite them into our high school band community. If students feel like they are a part of something, they are more likely to be and stay engaged.

Remember, what we’re doing doesn’t change. We’re still going to encourage kids to love music. We will need to meet the social and emotional needs of our students. We will need to continue to be flexible and think about the opportunities ahead of us, or we risk losing our seat at the table. The arts aren’t going away. Music is a cultural necessity; it is fundamental to being human. I am not just a band director. I am a music educator. We all are music educators. And we will continue to teach MUSIC.

Dr. Heather Cote is the Director of Fine Arts at Westwood Public Schools.
Encouraging Student Composers:
“I Once Had This Student . . . Composer”

By Joe Pondaco, Duxbury Public Schools

They don’t come often, but we have all had them before: that one student. Sometimes, that one student is the 1st chair clarinet that practices night and day to nail Ticheli’s “Blue Shades,” or the string bass player with perfect pitch that plays in the band, and jazz band, and sings bass in the choir. Other times, that one student is that great mezzo-soprano that we pull out Copland’s “In the Beginning” for, or the lead trumpet in the jazz band that rips out double Cs on request. Maybe, that one student is the percussionist that plays marimba on Creston’s “Concertino,” piano on “Gumsuckers March,” and vibes on “Bag’s Groove.”

That one student makes our program better by being an inspiration for others. They are in all of our groups, always practice, rehearse like a professional, and top every audition in school and out. That one student’s enthusiasm raises the energy of our groups and the level of our program. That one student we remember for our entire career. Even years after that one student has graduated, we still tell stories about them to our friends and colleagues that usually begin with, “I once had this student . . . .”

When that one student is in our groups, we can identify them, and we know how to support them, but what if that one student is not a performer? What if they are a composer? What would we do with a student composer? They could write original music for our ensembles, create custom warm-ups, or arrange easier parts for our younger groups, struggling sections, or extra percussionists. They could copy out lost parts from the score or transpose that Eb clarinet part for Bb clarinet. What about creating saxophone parts for playing orchestral pieces? Some of you may be saying, “but I don’t know how to teach composition.” Well, if you have the student write these things and your groups perform them, guess what, your teaching composition.

Student composers are hard to find, but maybe they are already in our program. Maybe they play in the percussion or viola section or sing in the alto section, and though we don’t know it, at home, they are writing band pieces, jazz charts, or EDM. Maybe we don’t notice because they are just an okay player or singer and don’t stand out much in our groups, but only because they spend their time composing and not practicing. Maybe they have not had the guidance they need to write their symphony, but, in their bedrooms, they have been writing string quartets in Finale or some fire beats in Logic with a proficiency greater than any Berklee class could teach. Try asking your ensemble, “Do any of you write music at home on your computer?” You may be surprised at what you get.

Whether or not we have found them yet, student composers exist in our programs, and in my time working on the MMEA composition council and SEMMEA composition contest, I have had the opportunity to work with many of them. All of these students have been that one student from programs across the state; great composers supported by teachers who recognized their talents and passions. These teachers supported their students by performing their pieces and encouraging them to submit their pieces to SEMMEA, MMEA, NAfME, and other composition calls. I would like to tell you about one of those students. Her name is Amanda White from Bridgewater-Raynham High School, and she has agreed to let me tell you her story.

She was a band, and jazz band, and sings bass in the choir. Other times, that one student is the percussionist that plays marimba on Creston’s “Concertino,” piano on “Gumsuckers March,” and vibes on “Bag’s Groove.”

When I once had this student . . . .”

Amanda decides to do next, she goes off into the world with the rare experience of having her music heard, and her story told. That is an experience very few get, but that more could. There are many more composers like Amanda out there, and all we need to do is find them and give them the opportunity. Then the next time we talk to our colleagues, we can tell the story: “I once had this student composer . . . .”

Joe Pondaco teaches instrumental music, music technology, and composition at Duxbury High School. He is currently the SEMMEA Composition Contest Chair and the MMEA Composition Council Chair.
The Creative-Driven Classroom

Kirstie Wheeler, M.Ed, Assistant Professor, Berklee College of Music

Have you ever really thought about what got you into MUSIC education? It’s most likely related to your need to create. Humans are innately creative beings, yet somewhere along the way, education pushes them into a compliance-based form of learning. While all educators should strive to bring more creativity into the classroom, music educators must embrace creativity because the arts are creative at their core. For most, the need to be creative played a significant role in choosing music. A colleague wisely stated that Berklee College of Music is a different place because the students arrive and already know who they are . . . they are musicians. At other colleges, students arrive trying to figure out who they are and what to pursue. Choosing to teach music means that at your core, you are a musician. Musicians demand creativity. Students need a creative process, and educators need to create space and opportunity for students to learn and produce in a creative manner. So what does a creative-driven classroom look like?

In order to understand the creative-driven classroom, we must look at compliance vs. creative-driven.

The puzzle represents compliance-based learning. The teacher provides a set of resources and strategies. The final product is predictable, and the progress is measurable. The quilt represents creative-driven learning. The resources are all available, action is strategy, and the final product is not prescribed.1

How do we create a creative-driven mindset classroom? Let’s look at three vital components to every classroom: environment, assignments, and assessments.

Environment
• What does the room look like?
• What is the role of the teacher?
• What are the students doing?

When observing a creative-driven classroom, the observer would see students working seamlessly between group and individual work. The room is full of tools that students can access freely to explore, experiment, and draw conclusions. The teacher is moving between students and groups, answering questions, stopping for short directions and clarifications, facilitating discussion and advising as needed. The students are actively engaged in the work. They are taking risks, making mistakes, and creating products that they can then teach to or share with their peers.

Assignments:
Compliant assignments involve answering prescribed questions with desired “correct” answers. Creative assignments include a structure that allows students to discover meaning and create individual responses.

Examples:

1. How long after the completion of the marathon did victims, family and friends return to complete the marathon?
2. Who were the brothers that were featured in this article? How did they describe finishing?
3. What made them decide to finish the marathon after the bombing?


1 Boston Globe (bostonglobe.com)
Assessments:

Compliant assessments include a prescribed product to answer a set of questions. The scoring is rigid and earns points for the “correct” answer. Creative assessments give a structure and questions, but not a prescribed product. Rubrics are used and developed in a way that allows students to express their answers and knowledge in any way they choose as long as they answer the questions.

Examples:

### COMPLIANT

Choose a Boston Artful and write a paper that includes answers to the following questions:

1. Who is the person?
2. What is this person’s art form?
3. How did they arrive in Boston?
4. How does the art impact Boston as a city and people?

Our world is vastly different than it was three months ago and changing by the minute. This leads to stress and instability. As you consider the creative-driven mindset, remember that at our core, nothing has changed, we are still innately creative human beings. Our “classroom” might look different. Right now, it’s virtual, and it may be virtual or blended between brick and mortar and virtual in the fall. But, remember, our need to interact and create remains constant. Virtual classrooms allow for students to interact in small groups and then come back together. We can still create spaces that allow our students to work in small groups and report back. This can actually be an amazing use of remote learning. It flips the classroom and has students creatively drive the classroom and present information to their peers. Students will surprise you with their ability to manipulate and create when technology is present from the littlest ones to the eldest ones.

Combining all these ideas into one creative-driven classroom provides students with the opportunity to explore and create meaning. As musicians and educators, music educators, it is our privilege to engage their learning. Things will look different, and we will have to adapt, but this is where music educators should soar! Please do not let “the way we’ve always done it” stand in your way as you enter next year. Instead, dig down and unleash your creative spirit. Looking forward, be brave, start small, and take risks...our students do!

Kirstie Wheeler, M.Ed, is Assistant Professor at Berklee College of Music in Boston, MA. She worked to develop elementary and secondary curricula for choral and general music in several districts. Receiving several grant proposals, Kirstie brings technology, specialized music programming and special education music programming to schools that are unable to provide these services. As a performer, she sings with the Tanglewood Festival Chorus, chorus to the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and Boston Pops. Kirstie is a certified McClosky Voice Technician, using her knowledge of vocal physiology and pedagogy to prepare students for a lifetime of healthy singing.
Resilient Learners: Reshaping the COVID-19 Experience in Urban Schools

By Odell Zeigler IV, Providence Public Schools

As I reflect upon the COVID-19 pandemic that immediately suspended in-person music-making, I have gained more knowledge, skills, and pedagogical tools to teach music effectively in the urban setting. I have seen in real-time the many silent factors that affect African American learners’ academic progress. During this time, music-making has been extremely helpful and conducive to students’ daily routines, which has catered to the social-emotional component of learning. Having prior insight on various challenges within urban education was valuable, but the different routes taken to overcome these challenges was of most concern and intriguing to see daily.

Contrary to the learning deficiencies presented in research, or the lack of student engagement during this time of virtual learning based on our attendance and grade books, there is another view that gets distorted. This view deals with resilience in African American learners. I want to share how resilience and music-making go hand and hand. I want to share what I have learned and seen during this unprecedented time of teaching music. It is easy to share and talk about the students who have not been engaged in virtual learning, but the lights should be shined upon the students who demonstrated resilience and reshaped their learning experience.

Notably, research points out a prominent factor that some students of color have, which causes successful performance(s). This factor is resilience. According to the (Oxford-English dictionary), resilience is the action or an act of rebounding or springing back, rebound, recoil. According to Williams and Bryan (2013), resilience should be understood strategically in the lives of resilient African American learners. Resilience is typically overlooked after students demonstrate this characteristic consistently. In reality, students are putting everything they have on the table to show their teacher(s) that education matters to them and that they will succeed. According to Waxman, Gray, and Padron (2003), there are students of color who succeed in school despite the presence of adverse conditions, but they go unnoticed. Collectively, research shows evidence of successful and unsuccessful African American learners who are all derivatives from dilapidated homes, schools, and neighborhoods. In addition to these harmful aversive components, students shifted their mindsets for virtual learning at the drop of a hat. I am proud of the students I teach because this adjustment has not been easy for anyone, but their willingness and resilience has me in constant awe. Before writing this article, I wrestled with the question of, “Is resilience a characteristic trait or a choice?” Regardless of how you answer the question, I believe we can agree that choices made are reflective of our characteristic traits, and our character aids us in making choices. This is not to say that all my students were resilient, but they were willing to learn and grow.

I was fortunate to have a virtual learning platform at the beginning of the school year. I started this platform to support chronic absenteeism in my school. I dedicated several hours outside of school to learn how to present music online effectively. I had no idea that a pandemic would come, but I was reshaping my students’ learning experience. I spent a few weeks giving a tiered tutorial; I shared with students how to navigate the various online programs we used, and students were receptive to the idea of making music virtually. I must share that SoundTrap happened to be the students’ favorite online music program, and they did everything to make sure they had access to this web-based music-making software. From the onset of SoundTrap, a lot of my students downloaded the app to their phones and began exploring the mobile view. The teacher can see each student’s recent activity, and I noticed students actively engaged during all parts of the day and on weekends. I have had students submit projects from work, friends’ houses, native countries, etc. Their resilience did not stop here, before the pandemic, students who weren’t registered for my class downloaded the application and would come by my room with questions. This opened my eyes to how music-making was helping students all across the building. This continued, even more, when in-person learning was suspended. I want to give a shoutout to a fantastic colleague, Gillian Desmarais, who teaches music at Pioneer Charter School of Science in Everett, Massachusetts. She was accommodating during my time of learning this software. She openly shared the many activities that she created from this music software. I firmly believe that these assignments kept the students engaged. They explored with podcast compositions, commercial compositions, ringtone compositions, create-your-own-music projects (students were able to create anything), etc. The point is that music-making did not stop because of the pandemic, but students found ways to make music because they were invested in it. I must say that I received more submis-
sessions from the SoundTrap assignments as opposed to any other music assignments during virtual learning.

Here is the list of all the music online programs I synced with my Google Classroom during virtual learning: Quaver Music, MusicPlayOnline, and SoundTrap. These are a few programs I found to aid me with the curriculum map I have, and I was able to pick and pull from each application based on the concept I was teaching.

The questions may be now, “How does music-making, and resilience go together?” This is a good question! My goal as a teacher in the urban setting is to create a strong rapport with all my students. I aim to convert all my students to become patrons of the arts. I model for them that music-making should be a joyous task. I am passionate about my students finding themselves in music and wanting to be a part of music class each day, which in return causes them to be more excited about the subject. Once my students are organically converted, they become resilient about music class, and their resilience helps them reshape the learning and music-making experience. Whether in person or virtual learning, resilient students will always find a way to succeed.

Academic achievement in the lives of African Americans is predicated upon the environmental factors around them, and we know that COVID-19 has added another threatening component to these environmental factors. Still, these students have conquered challenges by confronting issues with great vigor and resilience. I know our attendance and grade books may show students who haven’t been engaged or active during virtual learning. Still, they will also show some resilient students who have exemplified how they can become great learners while experiencing negative factors.

To hear some of Odell’s students’ work, check out these audio files on Google Drive.

Odell Zeigler IV is a music educator in Providence Public Schools. Odell is currently the director of the gospel chorus at Providence College. Odell is a musician on staff for RPM voices of Providence, RI and has worked with Mixed Magic Theater Company along with other musicians and performing arts venues throughout the state of Rhode Island.

Odell holds a B. A. (Music Education & Psychology) from North Central College in Naperville, IL and holds an M.M.Ed from the University of Rhode Island.

REFERENCES


District Updates

NORTHEASTERN DISTRICT

As I write this reflection on May 14th, I am sitting in the front hall of Wakefield Memorial High School as the acting doorman for staff to come into school and pick up items from their classroom. Everyone must enter through the main entrance, wearing masks and gloves, and sign in. I am stationed ten feet away from the sign-in table, where I can say hello and ask how their families are doing, using my tone of voice to communicate to them the huge smile under my mask.

I miss them, and I am so happy to see them.

Just two months ago, I spent a Tuesday afternoon with my jazz ensemble at Reading Memorial High School along with many other band directors, adjudicators, and hundreds of students celebrating the hard work of the students and listening to some great jazz throughout the festival. This was the final day I met with the 2019-20 Wakefield Memorial High School Jazz Ensemble in person.

I miss them, and I can’t wait to see them.

Throughout the last two months I have had countless video calls with district colleagues, administration, and other music teachers. What I have learned in these calls is that the adults so badly want to fix the pandemic for their students. They want to make everything feel normal and the students to feel like they are still “going to school” every day. One of the things I have learned from my video calls with the students and from my own two children at home is that we can’t “fix this” and that they all know, no matter what age, gender, race, socioeconomic status, or learning disability, that this is not normal.
But the most important thing I have learned from my students is that it is ok that I can’t “fix this.” They need me to be there for them like I was every day until March 12th. They need me to say hello and ask how they are doing. Whether the video call is with the whole class or with individuals, they need me to answer questions, or tell a band director joke and laugh with them. They need me to smile and let them know that I miss them, and I can’t wait to see them.

I am so proud of the teachers in the Northeast District and around the state who are continuing to be there for their students academically, socially, and emotionally through this pandemic. Please remember to take care of yourselves as well and don’t hesitate to reach out to your family, friends, and colleagues. We all need someone to lean on!

I hope you all have a great summer and are looking forward to the fall. To all my music teacher colleagues—I miss you, and I can’t wait to see you!

—Tom Bankert, Northeast District Chairperson

Happy Summer!

What a whirlwind this spring has been! In my previous article for the Massachusetts Music Educators Journal, I wrote about how much I was looking forward to the MMEA All-State Conference and Concert. That seems like a lifetime ago. From school building closures, implementation of remote learning, cancelation of concerts, musicals, performance tours, and events, countless online meetings and webinars, and the unseasonably cool weather this spring, this has been unique and challenging time for music educators in Massachusetts.

However, I find that I am uplifted by all the inspirational teaching that I am witnessing from my colleagues across the state. Music educators at all levels are demonstrating some of their best and most creative teaching ideas during this time of remote learning. Teachers are finding new and innovative ways of staying connected to their students. The spirit of sharing and collaboration that I am seeing among teachers is making our profession stronger and more resilient. I am connecting and working with other educators outside my school district more frequently and have truly enjoyed the experience of collaboration. No matter what happens in the future I hope that we can continue to support, encourage, and share best practices with each other long after the current crisis fades.

This will be my last article for the Massachusetts Music Educators Journal as Central District Chairperson. I would like to thank all the students, parents, and educators at the state and district level that I have worked with over the past two years. It has been my honor and pleasure to serve and I look forward to working with you in other capacities in the future.

Central District Important Dates

- Spring Dinner Meeting Wed. June 10th 5:00 pm will be held online through Zoom. CD-MMEA members will receive an e-mail invite and be asked to respond in order to get the password. Please e-mail me if you did not receive an invitation and would like to attend.
- Beginning during the 2020-2021 School year, ninth grade students will be allowed to audition and participate in the Junior High School Festival. See our website for more details regarding eligibility.
- Look for the updated CD-MMEA handbook to be published on our website during the summer.
- If you have questions, concerns, comments, or feedback, please contact one of the CD-MMEA Executive Board members. We are always happy to help.
- Finally, always check our website (cdmmea.org), for our updated handbook, audition lists and information.

—Arthur Pierce, Central District Chairperson
As write this, we are in the seventh week of COVID-19 shutdown. Today is being celebrated as a Worldwide Day of Gratitude. My students and I created this video to send love and gratitude to the helpers and caregivers in our community.

**LHS Music Says Thanks!**

It’s beyond my imagination to picture what our lives will be like as you read this in the weeks ahead, or six months or a year from now. But for now I’ll let the words of students and colleagues from Western District speak to the power of music to get us through. Thanks to Todd Fruth (Amherst Regional); Daniel Rose (Agawam); Chris Unczur (Pittsfield); Amy Westhaver, Colleen Grady, Scott Halligan, and my own students (Longmeadow) for the contributions below.

“Music is helping me through this time to stay motivated and active. Music is also helping me by keeping me positive and helping me to think positive during this really hard time in life. I think that it could be helping others if they are struggling with COVID-19 right now, because music helps people with their feelings.”

— Eva

“For me, discovering new music has been very entertaining, nothing feels stale.”

— Scott

“Silence fills the room. Music chases out silence, My brain can function.”

— Emily

“Music has provided me with uplifting and moving experiences during this pandemic. During a time where we tend to feel isolated and alone, music reminds us that we can be a part of something more than ourselves and contribute to our larger community.”

— Colleen

“Music is helping me through this tough time by letting me practice the songs I’m having trouble on, it calms me down when I’m having panic attacks, and it helps me focus on my class work!”

— Kadance

“It’s been a positive distraction from what’s going on in the world. It allows me, if only for a few minutes, to escape the coronavirus reality and be transported to a better place.”

— Bella

“Music has allowed me to have something to do in a situation where there is not a whole lot to do. It allows me to relax and find it really fun to play. I am currently learning to play guitar. I did not have the opportunity to take lessons before this ‘extra time’ we have been given. I took advantage of the free guitar lessons that Mr. U suggested through Zoom.”

— Jack

“Music is the only thing that makes sense to me right now. I’m having a really hard time dealing with the quarantine and understanding what’s happening but music keeps me grounded. It’s the only thing that makes me feel.”

— Leah

“Music is very helpful during this challenging time. For me, not only playing, but just listening to music is one of the most calming things. There’s so many things you can do with music to make the most of the situation. For instance, hearing a song, and figuring out the notes so you can play it. Or even just playing the songs you know well.”

— Gracie

“Music brings joy to me and others, and if people are feeling sad, I can play a song for them and they feel better.”

— Ellen

“Music is the glue that binds us all together. Music was here before this pandemic and it will be here far after. Music keeps me connected to other people. It keeps me connected to my country roots.”

— Daegan

“The cello (which I play) has a soothing tune to it, and whenever I play it, it helps me calm down.”

— Megan

“Music helps me distract myself from every annoying thing that is happening.”

— Gaby

“Music has been helping me cope with boredom. I was rummaging through some old stuff in my basement, and I found an acoustic guitar, so why not try to learn! Here is a photo of me playing what I have learned, so far, of Hallelujah, in case you didn’t know.”

— David

“When I hear my band pieces that our class has played, it reminds of all of the fun times in that class that we’ve had. This is a challenging time for lots of people, but we just have to stay positive and hope that it all gets better.”

— Grace
Hello from the Southeastern District! While I am always happy to reach out to my fellow music teachers, this particular article seems to have a special weight to it.

What a difficult couple of months it’s been for our country and our profession. There is the constant, oppressive threat of COVID-19 and what it means for our families, our jobs, our health, and our life. There is the cancellation of concerts, festivals, and shows, and the loss of our final days with our graduating seniors. There is the upheaval of our daily lives, and maybe most difficult for music teachers, the uncertainty about the future.

For me, music has always been about community—the community of our ensembles, our classrooms, our schools, and our districts. Anyone who’s ever been part of an ensemble knows that each one is a microcosm of connections, hierarchies, history, and traditions. I love teaching repertoire and theory and vocal technique, but it is the vibrant community of my music room that keeps me inspired and keeps me moving forward. COVID-19 feels as though it has separated me from that community in a sudden and devastating way.

**WESTERN DISTRICT CONT’D**

"Listening to music and singing along—sometimes in harmony!—is one rare activity that my two teenagers and I can experience and enjoy together."

—Amy

Here’s to making music together once again. Stay safe, everyone!

—Kayla Werlin
Western District Chairperson

I know I’m not alone in this grief. We are lucky enough to live in an age where we can meet virtually, even when we’re apart physically. I can share the thoughts and struggles and triumphs of my fellow teachers through e-mails, social media, and virtual meetings. And while I think we all agree that these methods can’t replace face to face contact, there is solace in sharing the struggle.

Music teachers are perhaps the ultimate community builders. In the absence of our music rooms, we’ve continued building a virtual community for ourselves and each other. We are advocating, we are organizing, and are doing it all while trying to continue to provide a comprehensive music education for each and every one of our students. The state and district boards have not been idle during this time. We are meeting, planning for the future, and sharing information and ideas. I feel lucky to be surrounded by so many dedicated and creative teachers.

On a personal level, I’ve enjoyed the renewed connection with my fellow colleagues. I’ve taken heart from reading Matt Harden’s coronavirus diary on Facebook. He has a gift for distilling the constant emotional tangle of this pandemic down to something clear and hopeful. I feel lucky to have taken part in the virtual chorus of music educators organized by Kirsten Oberoi. I’ve loved hearing Matt Cunningham and countless other educators share their performances on social media for no other reason than to fill the hole of community music making for themselves and their peers. There are many others who have kept me going—too many to name them all. The outpouring of creative endeavors coming from professionals, students, and educators has been truly overwhelming and beautiful. It is the bright spot in this difficult time. We are making music, not to tick off educational standards, raise money, or win competitions, but because it is important, and we miss it, and this quarantine would be intolerable without it.

This pandemic has certainly tested our abilities, but I can’t help but think music educators are up to the challenge. The communities of our physical classrooms will have to wait. In the meantime, we will keep advocating, keep reinventing, and keep building those all-important bonds between our students and each other.

Have a great summer everyone, and I hope very much to see you in the fall!

—Jillian Griffin, Southeastern District Chairperson

**2020-2021 Dates**

2020 Junior Festival (reschedule date): Friday, September 11-Saturday, September 12

Fall General Meeting: Tuesday, October 6, Fireside Grille, 5PM-7PM

Senior Auditions: Saturday, November 21

Junior Auditions: Saturday, December 5

Senior Festival: Friday, January 8-Saturday, January 9 (Snow date January 10)

Junior Festival: Friday March 12-Saturday, March 13 (Snow date March 14)

* All dates and locations are tentative at this point until we have more information about school openings and events in the fall.

This summer is sure to bring a lot of changing information, so please check the website and social media often:

www.semmea.org

https://www.facebook.com/semmea

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Virtual Learning
Resources for Music Educators

NAfME Societies and Councils have compiled distance learning and professional development resources from their own original teaching experiences, music educators in their school districts, universities, communities, peers, or other trusted sources. Available to NAfME members at no cost to help you keep teaching, learning, and making music through coronavirus disruptions.

Learn more at bit.ly/VirtualTeachingLearningMusicEd or visit nafme.org.

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