

## Keeping Instruments Out of the Attic: The Concert Band Experiences of the Non-Music Major

Dan Isbell

*Ithaca College—U.S.A.*

Ann Marie Stanley

*University of Rochester—U.S.A.*

---

### Abstract

*Students' participation in music beyond high school continues to be a goal of many music teachers and a topic throughout decades of music education literature. The purpose of this inquiry was to understand students who continue making music in college by participating in a campus band as non-music majors. One hundred band members provided written responses about their campus band experience. Twenty members were interviewed. Research questions were: How did the band members perceive the campus band experience as contributing to their musical lives? How could the experiences and understandings of the band members contribute to our knowledge of lifelong participation in music? Many participants' prior memorable music experiences were competitive; however, they desired low-stress, non-competitive environment in campus band. Participants enjoyed the campus band community and atmosphere. Most participants wished to continue playing their instrument and stated they felt that the concert band was their only viable musical opportunity.*

### Introduction

Lifelong music participation is a worthy goal held by many music educators. The notion that years of public school education in music should result in students graduating high school with the desire and skills to continue making music has been an enduring theme for decades among practitioners and policy makers alike (Leonard & House 1972; Myers, 2005; Poland, 1987; Revelli, 1937). At a recent Lifelong Learning Symposium, Myers (2005) suggested the formal approach to music instruction in schools is irrelevant in terms of its ability to foster engagement in music beyond high school, and that current practices in music education emphasize short term goals ending upon graduation. Remarkably, almost 75 years ago William Revelli (1937), a highly regarded band director and music educator of the twentieth century noted, "Perhaps one of the greatest weaknesses of our school band program is that, for

the majority of the students, active participation ceases upon the day of graduation from our high schools" (p. 33).

For many students, high school graduation marks the moment when band instruments are packed away in the attic. This issue has been studied from various perspectives to tease out possible factors contributing to the decision to continue, or re-start, participating in music throughout life (Bowles, 1991; Flowers & Murphy, 2001). Researchers have studied students' choice to pursue a musical career by majoring in music and/or music education in college (Bergee, Coffman, Humphreys, & Thornton, 2001; Bright, 2006; Isbell, 2008). Of course, not all high school musicians who wish to continue playing choose to major in music. Unique opportunities however, do exist for those who choose to continue playing but not majoring in music. Casey (1994), after sending questionnaires to 508 National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) member institutions, found that two-thirds of schools offered an open enrollment concert band. Little is known about the motivation of young adults who, upon college matriculation, choose to enroll in performing ensembles as *non-music majors*.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to better understand one such group of students, by investigating the experiences of non-music major students enrolled in a campus concert band. Specific research questions were: (1) How and to what degree did the band members perceive the campus band experience as contributing to their musical lives? and (2) How could the experiences and understandings of the band members prior to and during participation in the ensemble contribute to our knowledge of lifelong participation in music?

### Method

This study was a qualitative inquiry using a grounded theory approach to data analysis. In our research design, we followed Moustakas (1994):

The focus initially is on unraveling the elements of experience. From a study of these elements and their interrelationships a theory is developed that enables the researcher to understand the nature and meaning of an experience for a particular group of people in a particular setting.” (p. 3)

In this study, we sought to understand the interrelated elements of the campus band experience in the musical lives of these band members and develop theories that illuminate the reasons why these non-music majors choose to continue to pursue music in a concert band setting. We were also interested in formulating a theory about how these findings may contribute to our professional knowledge of lifelong participation in music.

### **Sampling**

Participants in this study were undergraduate students at a private liberal arts college in the Northeast United States who were choosing to participate in an open enrollment campus band but not pursue a degree in music. Total undergraduate degree-seeking enrollment (full-time) across campus at the time of the study was 6,355. The total undergraduate enrollment at the School of Music was 538. The campus was predominately white/non-Hispanic (4,461) and was located in a college-town with a population of 29,763 ([www.city-data.com](http://www.city-data.com), 2008). A total of 100 students from a variety of departments across campus attended an introductory meeting of the ensemble and agreed to participate in this study by completing a questionnaire. From these responses, 20 participants were selected for follow up interviews after the initial round of data analysis was completed. One of the researchers was the conductor of the campus band, but at the time of the written responses had yet to begin his first year with the ensemble.

### **Data collection**

#### *Questionnaire*

At the start of the school year participants were asked to provide written responses to researcher questions (Appendix A) and submit contact information. In the open-ended written responses ensemble members were asked to provide information about their most memorable musical experiences, expectations for the campus band, and what they enjoyed most about playing in the ensemble. These “opinion and values questions” (Patton, 2002) were designed to enable us to capture participants’ points of view and learn more about the

intentions and expectations of the campus band members.

Patton (2002) called these types of questionnaires “the most elementary form of qualitative data” (p. 21). While he cautioned readers about the limitations to open-ended data collected on questionnaires, he also used an example of a questionnaire study to depict the power of direct quotations from questionnaire answers: “Yet, even at this elementary level of inquiry, the depth and detail of feelings revealed in the open-ended comments [on the questionnaire] illustrate the fruit of qualitative methods” (p. 21). We recognized that these questionnaire data needed to be enhanced by and triangulated with more in-depth interviews with some of the participants.

#### *Interviews*

After the school year was completed and 2 concerts performed, 20 students whose written responses reflected the most frequently coded themes were selected and asked to participate in follow-up interviews. Participants were contacted by phone and each conversation was recorded. Because one of the researchers was also the conductor of the campus band, a research assistant conducted all phone interviews. The “interview guide” (Patton, 2002, p. 343) (Appendix B) was created following the initial analysis of the written responses and was designed to provide further insight into the research questions. The interview guide was also intended to help the research assistant shape the interviews into the same basic lines of inquiry without losing her ability to expand upon or probe interesting subjects. During the interviews, participants identified their plans for making music after graduation from college, shared their perceptions of their campus band experience, and elaborated on their previous written responses. The interview guide began with the open-ended question, “What was campus band like for you last year?” This initial question was designed to permit participants to take whatever direction and use whichever words they wanted to express what they had to say. All interviewees were allowed the opportunity to talk as long as they wished.

#### **Data Analysis**

The analysis of both the written and the interview responses followed an approach recommended by Patton (2002). Each researcher analyzed the written response data separately first, developing our own coding schemes independently. According to Patton:

... where more than one person is working on the analysis, it is helpful to have each person develop the coding scheme independently, then compare and discuss similarities and differences. Important insights can emerge from the different ways in which two people look at the same set of data, a form of analytical triangulation. (p. 464)

Using the coding strategies suggested by Patton (2002), we began by looking for “recurring regularities” (p. 465), or patterns, within bits of the respondents’ answers that we then sorted into categories. As recurring regularities occurred, we put these bits of data into categories, constantly asking, “What does this answer mean in terms of this person’s experience in Campus Band?” Next, still separately, we sorted through the bits of data that we had divided into categories and checked to see if they seemed consistent, inclusive, and credible (Guba, 1978). We then traded our lists of categories, and the data bits within, to see if they were “reproducible by another competent judge ... verify that (a) the categories make sense ... and (b) the data have been appropriately arranged in the category system ... the category system ‘fits’ the data and that the data have been properly ‘fitted into’ it” (Patton, 2002, p. 466).

After creating the category system using the questionnaire data, we used the interview transcripts as data and categorized participants’ responses in the same way. Co-mingling questionnaire and interview data helped us create a fuller picture of the campus band experience for these participants. We have collapsed our categories into larger subsets, which we synthesize in the Findings section.

## Findings

### Participants

We considered ways in which we might explore important elements of the participants’ musical lives. We thought learning more about their most memorable musical experiences would be a way to begin to understand the satisfaction and motivation underlying these students’ participation in musical activities. One of the ways we attempted to glean information about our participants was by prompting them to describe in writing their “most memorable music experience,” in- or out-of-school: the first question on our questionnaire. We found it important to keep in mind that “most memorable” does not necessarily equate to a memory that is “favorite” or “most enjoyable.” We thought asking for their most memorable experience would help us identify unforgettably important moments in these participants’ lives, rather than the more run-of-the-

mill typical positives and negatives that occur in daily experiences. To present a fuller picture of the campus band participants, we chose to analyze their written responses to this first question in detail. In the next section we explain and quantify their answers to the prompt: “Describe your most memorable music experience (can be in- or out-of school).” This is followed by the findings related to each research question, organized thematically.

*Most memorable musical experiences: out-of-school.* Thirty-six participants cited an out-of-school context for their most memorable musical experiences. We defined out-of-school groups as any ensemble that was not part of the typical school day or dependent upon enrollment in school groups (i.e., honor bands). These out-of-school experiences were mostly oriented toward large-ensemble participation, and often had an aspect of competition and/or selectivity: “I was selected part of the American Music Abroad tour ... earning the solo.” The majority described performing groups that went on tour to special places, competed in special events, or played exceptional repertoire. In these selective ensembles, membership was often sought out by the musicians themselves, and the purpose was specific and goal-oriented, as in: “Playing in Carnegie Hall with my youth orchestra and traveling to the Far East and Europe for charity tours.”

Several participants said their most memorable musical experience had been performing in their hometown community bands. Only a few participants cited experiences that exist outside the large ensemble, for example, gigging with a rock band, taking private lessons, recording in a studio, or performing at a nursing home. Two participants said their most memorable musical experience had been attending a concert.

*Most memorable musical experiences: in school.* Sixty-one participants described their most memorable musical experience as in, or related to, formal music education in school. Note that responses did not total 100 as some did not answer all questions and some gave more than one answer. A few students merely cited being a part of a group as memorable: “being in high school band,” “performing in general and getting to make music,” “playing in marching band in high school was amazing,” or “playing in jazz band.”

Thirty-nine of these 61 memorable in-school experiences related to being adjudicated or winning competitions: “My high school band scored an outstanding rating for the first time in five years and our school won best overall” or “At a heritage music festival, we took first place twice.” Twenty-one wrote specifically about competitive marching band as their

most memorable musical experience thus far, for example: “Winning State Champions with my marching band my junior year of high school” or “I loved when our marching band in high school broke a record score.”

Sixteen participants wrote about specific performances, pieces, or venues as most memorable. Some of these overlap with the adjudication/competition category, as in: “playing in Festival ... it was a very challenging piece and we had just perfected it after nine months of practice” and “marching at Disney World at night with my high school marching band.” However, some respondents described concerts as memorable because of repertoire or venue: “performing at Symphony Hall,” “playing ‘Stars and Stripes’ on the piccolo,” or “playing percussion in the pit orchestra alongside professionals for our high school production of ‘West Side Story.’” In this category, we are also including those participants (11) who indicated that their most memorable experience was performing in auditioned, all-state or -county solo or group festivals in this group, as membership was usually reliant on the participant being member of a school music organization: “for several years I was selected to play in the Area All State Band/Orchestra. It was fun getting to play with dedicated musicians.”

*Research Question One. How and to what degree did the band members perceive the campus band experience as contributing to their musical lives?*

In answering this question, we found the most frequently occurring answers could be collected into four categories. The band members credited the campus band experience for contributing (a) joy and beauty, (b) skills and understanding, (c) a musical opportunity, and/or (d) a positive atmosphere to their musical lives.

*Joy and Beauty.* When asked their primary reason for joining Campus Band, or what they liked most about it, participants most frequently gave answers that we coded “love to play.” These indicate a strong fondness for music, for their specific instruments, or for playing music in general or in a large ensemble: “I really enjoy music and playing my trumpet whenever I have the time;” “I like music, I like playing;” “Playing in a large ensemble is my favorite activity;” and “I love being in a band and I love music.” When asked to share their expectations for the coming year in Campus Band, typical answers were, “Play fun pieces and have fun while playing music;” “To have fun and continue playing;” and “I hope to have a fun, enjoyable, musical experience.”

Beyond having fun, participants also provided deeper, more meaningful explanations of

how campus band contributed to their musical lives. A frequent appearance in the coding was what we labeled “the potential for an aesthetic musical experience,” which to us indicated the desire of participants to have satisfying musical encounters. For example, to the question “*What suggestions do you have for Campus Band?*” one participant responded, “to be more emotionally connected to the music;” other participants were less specific but wrote about “having good rehearsals,” “playing beautiful music,” and “mak[ing] some good music.”

Follow-up interviews with selected participants confirmed these ideas of joy and beauty. For example, we asked one participant what had been so enjoyable about campus band for her. She said:

It was incredibly fun. The best part I liked about it was performing. I really do enjoy getting up on stage. So it’s fun to be able to take an entire semester’s worth of work and be able to be on [Name] Hall stage, which is kind of rare for a non-music major.

Another participant said, “[the conductor] conducted about loving the music. He made it so that we would be more passionate about the music. And I loved that.”

*Skills and Understandings.* A large number of participants wrote on questionnaires about the desire to not just “keep playing” but improve their skills on their instruments or their musical knowledge base: “I hope to improve my flute skills and tone,” “Continue to grow as a musician,” “To get my fingers back in gear,” “To develop better technique and to practice more to be able to play with more confidence,” and “Grow on my instrument and encounter a wide variety of music and composers.”

Others seemed to be content with merely *maintaining* their ability on their instrument: “Keep up my skill level,” “Keep playing at a recreational level,” and “I just want to make music and maintain my skill level.” In interviews, participants described the campus band as a group where both groups of students, those highly motivated and the more recreational, can coexist quite successfully: “It was probably comparable as far as skill level to a high school level band. So it is really a welcoming environment for anyone of any skill level.” Another participant said:

I can miss a note or two because I’m pretty sure somebody in this room is missing one. It was just comfortable being around people that are not bringing perfection to the band ... The music was the appropriate level, and this is the

only opportunity that I have to pull the clarinet out of its case every week.

*Opportunity.* In a number of cases, participants wrote that campus band had become part of their musical lives because it was convenient, easy, and accessible to non-music majors: “I forgot to audition for [another] ensemble,” “It’s an Easy A,” “Campus Band fits in my schedule this year,” and “I don’t have time to devote to any of the higher music ensembles.” In an interview, we asked a participant to elaborate more on why he joined campus band. He mentioned his major, and scheduling: “The reason why I enjoy campus band is because I majored in the sciences. The reason I’m not in ensembles regularly is that I am in the lab or science building most days of the week.” He said he enjoyed the once-a-week rehearsal pace with 16 weeks to prepare a concert.

Another participant in an interview said:

I really need to play my instrument and feel empty without playing my instrument. Playing in campus band definitely helped me to fulfill that. And I knew when I came to [Name] College that I wanted to try out for one of the major ensembles or play in campus band, and campus band is what fit into my schedule, so I was very thankful to have that and will continue to use it whenever I can.

*Atmosphere.* Returning members of campus band frequently credited the relaxed atmosphere as something they liked most, writing comments like: “It’s very open and engaging,” “It’s a way for me to keep playing without having to stress,” and “I love playing ... but not at the level of an intense band.” Many participants wrote about their desire for a balance between challenge or competition and a supportive atmosphere, as in one participant who wrote she expected to “be challenged, but not struggle.” Similarly, another musician desiring harder music, also indicated that she expected “relaxed, low-stress rehearsals.” The “fun, not too stressful, but high expectations” sentiment was expressed frequently.

We asked several participants in follow-up interviews to explain what they meant by “low-stress” and why it is desirable. One said:

I feel like it [the stressful nature of his previous experiences] was the expectations ... the stress of having to prepare a concert. The expectations for the Campus Band was to come in, you play as well as you can and that’ll be our concert. I don’t even recall if there was a grade attached to it, but you weren’t in campus band for a

grade, you were in there because you wanted to play.

Another participant stated:

It’s just more low key. The challenges of the music fit into that very nicely. On our first run-throughs, I was missing notes. I had to practice once or twice or multiple times depending on the piece. At the same time, it wasn’t like I was slaving over it, and I didn’t feel that pressure that I had to get everything right.

*Research Question Two. How could the experiences and understandings of the band members prior to and during participation in the ensemble contribute to our knowledge of lifelong participation in music?*

In answering the second research question, we found most of the data related to the band members’ continued participation in music fell into one of three categories: (a) participants’ comfort and familiarity with, even nostalgia for, the band genre; (b) their satisfaction with being a part of a musical community; and (c) their strong desire to keep playing their instruments.

*Familiarity, comfort, or nostalgia.* Not surprisingly, specific band experiences were described in detail when participants were asked to share their most memorable experience. Beyond that, it was also not uncommon for participants to recall fond memories of past band experiences when asked to share their primary reason for joining: “I played throughout high school, I need band in my life,” “Band was my favorite class in high school,” and “I loved concert band in high school” were common responses.

Participants also seem to see the campus band as an opportunity to recreate or replicate these former band experiences, as in the participant who wrote: “I dropped band in 8th grade and always regretted it,” or the band member who wrote, “it [band] was hard in high school because not many people cared.” Another participant, in response to the question, “what do you like most about campus band?” wrote, “it reminds me of my high school band experience, which I do miss at times.” When asked why they wanted to join, participants frequently listed the ensembles that they were a part of in the past, as in this response: “Throughout middle school and high school I’ve been a part of marching band, jazz band, and concert band.” For many people, the primary reason for joining the group was the fact that they’ve done it for a long time; as one person wrote, “it’s because I’ve played in band since fourth grade!”

In an interview, a participant said band in high school filled an important niche, and that if campus band weren't available to her a void would open up:

I would miss the opportunity to be able to play. Part of high school, playing the flute and being in band made a world of difference in making friends and how my whole high school was. The flute was a part of my life all throughout high school, and it's just been a part of me that I really enjoy. There would be something missing.

*Community.* Many participants voiced an appreciation or desire for the element of community they associate with playing in band, which one participant described as "feeling the family atmosphere." Another wrote, "I love the atmosphere in campus band. People keep the spirit of the band alive." Some participants cited existing friendships as a plus: "I enjoy being in an ensemble with my friends." Others stated their wish to meet other people with similar interests: "it brings together people from all majors across campus to meet people they may not have ever run into" and "[I like] the chance to play with other people who love music and enjoy playing it!" A more ineffable aspect of community, that of being a part of something bigger than one individual, seemed to be verbalized by participants in responses like, "I just always enjoy performing and just playing with a group of peers," and those who looked forward to "playing new music with a new group of people," "hearing the ensemble develop as a whole," and "just enjoying the ensemble."

In an interview, one participant talked about meeting people in campus band:

It [knowing people in campus band] made it more fun, and we could all relate to things. After the next semester, I had kids from campus band in one of my classes, so I knew them and that was good.

*Desire to continue.* As indicated in much of the data already described, many participants have a sincere interest in continuing to play their instrument after leaving high school, but not commit to major in music in college. A total of 57 participants mentioned specifically that their primary reason to play was to "continue to play [their] instrument." This theme was more prevalent than any other that emerged during the coding process.

It was not uncommon for a participant to write that not only do they wish to continue playing their instrument, but that they "miss having music in my life," "want to keep music in my life," or "need music in my life." These responses may suggest that campus band is the *only* opportunity for them to play their instrument and without campus band, they feel they would lose music, as in, "I love playing, and I really didn't want to have to give it up." Other examples of these type of responses are: "I want to keep making music and not lose touch with making music," "I love music and can't see myself not continuing to play," "I love to play the flute and need to keep music in my life," and "I can't imagine my life without music."

Follow up interview data provided additional information on this finding. One participant wrote on his questionnaire, "Need an ensemble to play in. I miss music in my life." We asked him to explain, and he talked about why music is important to him:

I do not have the opportunity to play back home. Being in band just helps me use other parts of my brain. I think it balances me out and rounds me out as a person. Playing in band is fun. It's something I can do to relax.

Another participant stated campus band was the only way she knew to keep up on her instrument:

I think I enjoyed the most, just being able to keep up with playing my instrument because if I hadn't done that [*campus band*] I wouldn't have had any other way to keep playing. And I've been playing since 3rd grade.

One participant said in an interview that he knew how to play in bands, and on trips home could seek out the bands with which he formerly played, but had little additional outlets at college for performing:

I always have the opportunity to play with the groups that I played with during high school when I'm at home. So I have a very similar opportunity for me at home, but definitely not any other opportunities like that for me at school.

## Discussion

Analyses from both the written responses and follow up interviews provide evidence that the campus band is indeed a special opportunity for the members of this campus who wish to continue playing their instruments. It is clear that the ensemble

satisfies a variety of needs on both individual and collective levels. These data also provide support for the continued presence of ensembles for non-majors in all college and university settings. Not only do students enjoy and benefit from participating in the ensemble in a variety of ways, but the institution of higher education itself can also benefit by having an inclusive ensemble on campus as part of the culture of the college experience. It is important to note that the participants in this study were not randomly picked nor were they representative of all non-major band members everywhere.

Beyond the individual and institutional benefits of the campus band experience, we believe two conclusions can be drawn from the data that highlight some deeper issues in music education. The first arises from findings that illuminate the nature of competitive experiences in high school. The second provides insight on the nature of lifelong participation in music—these students clearly wish to continue playing their instrument, but do they have the desire or ability to play in musical settings outside of the concert band?

#### *Competition*

An apparent paradox emerged when we examined the most memorable experiences of the campus band members. We approach these findings with the acknowledgment and understanding that “most memorable” did not always mean “favorite” or “most enjoyable.” Indeed, researchers have found that problematic experiences may be stronger and longer lasting than positive ones (Riessman, 2008). On the one hand, membership in selective groups and/or highly competitive environments appear to leave indelible impressions upon young musicians in school and are often considered more unforgettable than other musical experiences prior to college. On the other hand, the vast majority of students, even those nostalgic of their earlier years in band, do not wish to recreate those experiences that were competitive. Both the written response and the interview data indicate the overwhelming majority of participants sought an atmosphere that lacked the competitive environment they recalled so strongly. Furthermore, words like “stress-free,” “relaxed,” and “fun, noncompetitive atmosphere” which appear frequently in questionnaire and interview data seem to be at odds with these competitive, high-pressure experiences in the past, as does the sentiment that many participants wish to just “keep up their chops” and keep playing at a recreational level. We theorize the absence of competition and a relaxed atmosphere were among the most attractive aspects of the campus band environment for these participants.

Regardless of the manner in which the term “memorable” is defined in this context, the paradox seems noteworthy. If these were indeed favorite memories of the students, then it seems odd that, given the opportunity to participate in a similar ensemble, participants would wish to avoid the recreation of, or a return to, these competitive and selective environments. Alternatively, if for some of the participants, “memorable” has a negative connotation, then this would be further evidence that competitive environments can have a detrimental impact both in general terms (Kohn, 1986) and in music education programs (Austin, 1990).

While it is possible of course that a healthy paradigm of competition for performer and educator alike does exist (e.g., Gallops, 2005), there is research that highlights the negative impact competition can have in music education settings. Findings from a recent study of the perceptions of values, competence, and interest in music study (in school versus outside of school) among 3,037 music students in the United States suggest that a narrow emphasis on performance and competition may limit the accessibility and appeal of school music to some students (McPherson & Hendricks, 2010). The competitive emphasis common in North American music education programs has also been shown to lead to restrictions in learned repertoire, limited opportunities for an elite minority of students, and a focus on achievement-centered rather than student-centered instruction (Radocy, 2001).

#### *Competition and Lifelong Learning*

Does this interpretation of competition shed any light upon our understanding of lifelong learning and continued participation in instrumental music in particular? At the very least, for the participants in this study, we theorize that the absence of competition and a supportive environment were key components in their desire to continue to play their instrument, as in this interview quote:

My high school band was very strict. We had to put in hours and hours into practicing, which was good because we produced a lot of good music, but at the same time it almost discouraged me from playing more because it became so much of something that I had to do. Compared to campus band, I thought that campus band was a lot more fun.

The participants in the campus band also explained that they play their instruments, not for grades or accolades, but for the simple joy that it brings to their life. Not coincidentally, these

characteristics (i.e., lack of grades, lack of competition, and music for music's sake) are also found in many informal settings outside of the public school setting (Green, 2008). It seems logical then, that public school music educators may help foster continued participation in music if competition is deemphasized, placing more attention on educational outcomes that emphasize individual expression, musical independence, and intrinsic growth over extrinsic large ensemble goals such as trophies, contest scores, and ribbons.

Clearly, competition in some form is a component of professional and semi-professional careers in music. High-stress competitive environments in high school then could be considered very good paradigms for future careers in the music business. The majority of students who participate in public school music programs however, do not choose to pursue careers in the music business.

#### *Lifelong Learning—Preparation for Music Making Beyond High School*

If lifelong learning in music is truly a goal of music education then a greater percentage of students will need a skill set that allows them to participate in settings outside of school, where concert bands are less common. Perhaps more young students would be attracted to secondary school music education programs and continue to play their instruments beyond graduation if a broader experience was offered in P-12 music education, one that provided more opportunities for autonomous and self directed activities in addition to the larger, more traditional ensembles so common in schools today. If more students enjoyed this varied experience in high school, it is possible that more would graduate with the skills and/or desire that would best prepare them to participate in a variety of settings.

It was striking how many participants indicated that they wanted to play in campus band because if they did not, they would not have a place to play. For them, the absence of a concert band equated to an absence of further participation in music. Not a single person indicated that if the campus band was not available to them, they would seek out other settings for music making. We asked the 20 participants this very question in the follow-up interviews and they responded flatly, like this participant: "Most likely not. I don't think so."

The frequency of questionnaire responses like, "I would hate to have to give up the flute" lead us to believe that for many of these participants, campus band is not only the easy, logical means for their musical participation but perhaps the only viable one. Interview data support this, as in the participant

who said, "If I weren't in campus band I don't really know where I'd get a chance to use my saxophone." Another said: "My skills, although I did play in high school and since 5th grade, it's not like I am all that fantastic. So, if it wasn't campus band, it would be nothing really. That's about it."

Due to the narrow skill set acquired by these students, their ability to make music beyond high school seems predicated upon the presence of a very specific ensemble: a concert band. If this is indeed the case, then our theory is what these participants experienced in high school could more accurately be described as a "*concert band* education," more so than the broad comprehensive *music* education reflected in the National Standards for Music Education and promoted by the National Association for Music Education (MENC, 1996).

People who have experience learning music on their own outside of school learn music in ways unlike the approach found in traditional music education programs (Green, 2001). In vernacular settings, learners often choose music themselves, they copy recordings by ear, learning takes place in unsupervised or peer led locations, and the skills of listening, composing, performing, and improvising, are integrated and favored over reproduction. According to Green (2008), these skills are acquired in "haphazard idiosyncratic and holistic ways, starting with 'whole,' 'real-world' pieces of music" (p. 10). In contrast, skills acquired in traditional music education settings involve purposefully composed music, and students follow a planned progression and curriculum under the supervision of a teacher.

In an attempt to document some of the individual differences between vernacular and formal "classical" musicians, Woody and Lehmann (2010) found that formally trained musicians were less efficient and less accurate than musicians with vernacular training in playing by ear. Furthermore, playing by ear has been regarded as the most foundational of musical skills, contributing to the ability to sight-read, improvise, play from memory, and perform rehearsed music (McPherson & Gabrielsson, 2002). Although these skills were not assessed among the participants of this study, we believe that their responses regarding their inability to play in settings outside of the concert band support the possibility that they too lack these proficiencies. We also believe that the findings from our study support a recent recommendation of Woody and Lehmann who suggest,

The skills of vernacular musicianship may be more facilitative of active participation among



adults once they have graduated beyond the structured environment of school music programs. Without published arrangements of large ensemble pieces, a director to rehearse them, and regularly scheduled rehearsal times, young instrumentalists may be unequipped to engage in music making. (p. 113)

Important lessons can be gleaned from the voices of students who, at a time when others may stop making music, chose to pursue a relatively formal, serious involvement with a musical group on campus. If more is known about the experiences of non-music majors in a campus band, music educators at the secondary level and in higher education may acquire a better understanding of the factors contributing to lifelong participation in music.

---

## REFERENCES

- Austin, J. A. (1990). Competition: Is music education the loser? *Music Educators Journal*, 76(6), 21-25.
- Bergee, M. J., Coffman, D. D., Demorest, S. M., Humphreys, J. T., & Thornton, L. P. (2001). *Influences on collegiate students' decision to become a music educator*. Report sponsored by MENC: The National Association for Music Education, Retrieved Sept, 17, 2009 from <http://www.menc.org/networks/rnc/Bergee-Report.html>.
- Bowles, C. (1991). Self-expressed adult music education interests and music experiences. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 39(2), 191-205.
- Bright, J. (2006). Factors influencing outstanding band students' choice of music education as a career. *Contributions to Music Education*, 33(2), 73-88.
- Casey, P. F. (1994). A status study of nonselective concert bands at selected colleges and universities. (Doctoral dissertation, The Ohio State University). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, A 54/08, p. 2936.
- Flowers, P., & Murphy, J. (2001). Talking about music: Interviews with older adults about their music education, preferences, activities, and reflections. *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education*, 20(1), 26-32.
- Gallops, W. (2005). Developing a healthy paradigm for performers and teachers. *Journal of Music Teacher Education*, 15, 15-22.
- Green, L. (2001). *How popular musicians learn: A way ahead for music education*. London and New York: Ashgate Press.
- Green, L. (2008). *Music, informal learning, and the school: A new classroom pedagogy*. London and New York: Ashgate Press.
- Guba, E. G. (1978). *Toward a methodology of naturalistic inquiry in educational evaluation*. CSE Monograph Series in Evaluation No.8. Los Angeles: Center for the Study of Evaluation, University of California, Los Angeles. Retrieved August 2, 2010 from [www.cse.ucla.edu/products/monographs/cse\\_monograph08.pdf](http://www.cse.ucla.edu/products/monographs/cse_monograph08.pdf).
- Isbell, D. (2008) Musicians and teachers: The socialization and occupational identity of preservice music teachers. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 56(2). 162-178.
- Kohn, A. (1986). *No contest: the case against competition*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Leonard, C., & House, R. (1972). *Foundations and principles of music education*. (2nd ed.). New York, NY: McGraw Hill Book Company.
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Myers, D. (2005). Freeing music education from schooling: toward a lifespan perspective on music learning and teaching. *International Journal of Community Music*, 4. Retrieved Oct. 5, 2009 from [www.intljcm.com/articles/Volume%204/Myers%20Files/Myers.pdf](http://www.intljcm.com/articles/Volume%204/Myers%20Files/Myers.pdf).
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Poland, M. (1987). Is band outmoded? *Music Educators Journal*, 73, 47.
- Revelli, W. D. (1937). The school band movement. *Music Educators Journal*, 23, 32-34.
- Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- McPherson, G. E., & Gabrielsson, A. (2002). From sound to sign. In R. Parncutt & G.E. McPherson (Eds.), *The science and psychology of music performance: Creative strategies for teaching and learning* (pp. 99-115). New York, NY: Oxford University of Press.
- McPherson, G. E., & Hendricks, K. S. (2010). Student's motivation to study music: The United States of America. *Research studies in music education*, 32, 201.
- Radocy, R. E. (2001). North America. In D. J. Hargreaves & A. C. North (Eds.), *Musical development and learning: The international perspective* (pp.120-133). London: Continuum.

Woody, R. H., & Lehmann, A. C. (2010). Student musicians' ear-playing ability as a function of vernacular music experiences. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 58, 101-111.

### **Appendix A**

This semester, in collaboration with faculty at the [name of institution], I will be conducting a study designed to uncover information about the experiences of non-music majors in college instrumental ensembles. Please answer the following questions as honestly as possible. You have the right to refuse to participate. Take as much time as you need to provide thoughtful responses. (use an additional sheet of paper if necessary)

1. Describe your most memorable music experience (can be in- or out-of school)

2. What is (are) your primary reason(s) for joining Campus Band?

3. What are your expectations for this coming year in Campus Band?

For those that are returning members:

1. What suggestions do you have for Campus Band?

2. What do you like most about the Campus Band experience?

## **Appendix B**

### Interview Guide

- Introduce yourself, you're working with [name of researcher]
  - Last year you participated in a study during Campus Band. You answered questions on a survey during the first day of class about non-music majors in college ensembles. Would you be willing to answer 4 more questions? This should take 5-10 minutes.
1. What was campus band like for you last year?
  2. What did you enjoy most from last year's campus band?
  3. If there were no campus band, would you play your instrument anywhere else? If so, where would that be and why?
  4. I'd like to read to you your response to a question you answered on a survey at the start of the campus semester. Can you please provide a more detailed response?
  5. Is there anything else you would like to share about Campus Band?

**CHINESE ABSTRACT**

**中文摘要**

重拾舊時樂器：非音樂專業大學生參加校樂隊後的經歷與感受

Dan Isbell,

*Ithaca College—U.S.A.*

Ann Marie Stanley

*University of Rochester—U.S.A.*

很多音樂教師都希望學生們在高中畢業之後能繼續參加音樂活動。在最近幾十年的音樂教育研究文獻裏，人們一直在討論和研究這個問題。本文將探討非音樂專業學生在大學期間繼續參與音樂學習的動機。一百名大學樂隊成員書面描述了他們在樂隊裏的經歷和感受。二十名隊員與研究者進行了面對面的訪談。本文的研究問題是：隊員們怎樣看待自己樂隊演奏經歷？瞭解這些隊員的經歷會不會幫助我們理解終生音樂學習的原因與動機？很多被訪問的同學都在充滿競爭的環境中學習過音樂，但是他們都希望能在大學校園裏享受低壓力、非競爭的音樂活動。他們喜歡學校樂隊的學習環境與風氣。大多數參與研究的隊員希望繼續學習樂器，認為樂隊為他們提供了校園裏唯一能夠享有的音樂學習機會。