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Developing Musical Independence in a High School Band

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study describes how a band director, whose objectives included the development of musical independence, designed his classroom, curriculum, and instruction and how his students experienced this pedagogical practice. Teachers and students of a secondary-level concert band were observed and interviewed over the course of an 8-week concert cycle. The lead teacher utilized a constructivist approach comprised of three interrelated elements: a deliberately structured band environment, teacher-moderated instruction, and student-led engagement. The teacher-moderated and student-led elements were situated within an educational space that emphasized musical rigor, social engagement, and extramusical skills. This environment promoted students' musical growth with support from social and extramusical resources. The teacher facilitated learning through scaffolded instruction that included modeling, guided problem solving and decision-making, and intentional vagueness. These strategies invited students to actively engage in critical thinking and take personal responsibility within the large ensemble setting. Students applied their learning from teacher-moderated instruction to student-led music opportunities in both large and chamber ensembles. The teacher monitored but did not participate in student-led activities, allowing the students to make their own musical diagnoses and decisions. He used his observations to determine specific student needs and inform his own instructional practice. Students demonstrated musical independence to varying degrees as the teacher facilitated learning differently dependent on student, content, and situation.

The development of musical independence has been an objective for music ensembles for decades. Regelski (1969), in a paper entitled "Toward Musical Independence," encouraged "the discovery or problem-solving approach, in which the student, through the structuring of learning situations and guidance through these situations by the teacher, participates in the formulation of concepts and the acquisition of meaningful musical learning" (p. 78). More recently, Kindall-Smith (2010) stated that "the primary objective of the school music program is fulfilled when the student can participate in music experiences independently by making personal decisions about the music" (p. 36). The development of musical independence has also been a rationale for incorporating specific instructional approaches, including authentic performance settings (Blair, 2008), chamber ensembles (Berg, 2008), practice monitoring (Johnson, 2009), and questioning techniques (Tutt,

2007). The National Core Art Standards (National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, 2014) expects students to analyze, interpret, refine, perceive, respond, synthesize, and relate to music and states that “students’ ability to carry out these operational verbs empowers them to work through the artistic process independently” (p. 16).

Paradoxically, concert bands are ensembles where, historically, director leadership “is a highly prized commodity, favoring decisive action informed by extant intelligence, ‘best practice’ professionalism, and custom” (Allsup & Benedict, 2008, p. 157). Band is a place where, for music students, “responsibility is not just dissuaded, but abdicated” (Allsup & Benedict, 2008, p. 161). By contrast, Allsup and Benedict (2008) describe a different, student-focused band designed to develop independent musicianship and heightened musicality. In this setting, music teachers:

Facilitate a rehearsal space in which students as well as conductors negotiate the meanings and understanding of both the ways in which dominant discourse frames subjective positions of musician, teacher, and learner, and also what music and music making is as well. (Allsup & Benedict, 2008, p. 168)

Similarly, Berg (2014) calls for conductor-educators to reject “teacher-directed, authoritarian approaches” (p. 263) and instead promote critical listening, musical thinking, and risk taking.

Allsup (2012) states that “the moral ends of public schooling are to equip young people to be independent thinkers and actors, to free them from adults’ care” (p. 182) and that the band is “an ideal space for moral exercise and growth” (p. 179). A student’s band education is judged “by the degree to which she can create and recreate—fuse and refuse—a life of complex and self-fulfilling musical engagement” (Allsup, 2012, p. 186). The current study investigates instruction in the secondary-level concert band as a vehicle for the development of musical independence in the spirit of the visions of Allsup, Allsup and Benedict (2008), and Berg (2014), emphasizing student agency, critical thinking, and self-directed music making as part of the band director’s teaching practice.

While the teaching of independent musicianship in large ensembles has not been previously researched, the development of independent practice has been studied in the private lesson and small ensemble settings. Factors such as on-task time with a teacher (Sloboda, Davidson, Howe, & Moore, 1996) and deliberate instruction including modeling of behavioral and metacognitive strategies (McPhail, 2013; Miksza & Tan, 2015) have shown to be effective in supporting the development of independent practice skills. Musical independence has also been discussed in informal music learning in school settings with small groups (Allsup, 2003; Green, 2008), where student responsibility and democratic action emerged as critical for the development of student skills and critical thinking. As Allsup (2003) notes, “our [collaborative small group’s] experience depended on acts of reciprocity and caring. I needed to teach *with* my students, rather than *to* my students” (p. 34).

Teaching “with . . . rather than to” students is a social constructivist approach to instruction where “learners act in agentic ways, supported by teacher and peer scaffolding.”

folding, but in the context of a meaningful, conceptual curriculum” (Wiggins, 2015a, p. 116). The students actively build knowledge from old and new material through engagement with content and skills guided by the teacher. “In a constructivist classroom, learners, not the teacher, are at the core of the learning process” (Shively, 1995, p. 122). Shively (1995) finds that the requirements for the constructivist teacher are the possession and continued development of “a knowledge base that reflects the domain knowledge of musicians and teachers” and the ability to “design learning environments that respond to the constructive process of the learner” (p. 130).

A model for this broad knowledge base of content and pedagogy is Comprehensive Musicianship through Performance (CMP). It developed from the Contemporary Music Project and the Manhattanville Music Curriculum Project and addresses music making in the ensemble in a broad, deep, and comprehensive manner. The original proposal of CMP directly linked it to musical independence stating that “musical independence as a performer and listener is an important goal of the program” (Sindberg, 2012, p. 96). CMP focuses on the content and processes of musical learning in its framework comprised of learning outcomes, literature selection, music analysis, music and teaching strategies, and assessment. While CMP is not definitively constructivist, its focus on meaningful student engagement and deep content knowledge are conducive to constructivist practices and provide an operational and observable definition for Shively’s (1995) domain knowledge of musicians and teachers.

In addition to *what* is taught, the teacher is also aware of *how* students are taught in the constructivist classroom. The teacher remains engaged in the learning process through artful teacher scaffolding, which relies on a thorough understanding of music concepts, practice, and pedagogy and is used to guide student-centered construction of knowledge and skills through active student engagement (Wiggins, 2015b). A constructivist learning design for music is contingent on two components: a teacher who (1) offers “direct instruction when students need specific content knowledge,” and (2) “in dialogue with students, provides educational environments where students bring analytic awareness to music and the processes of music performance” (Scott, 2011, p. 192). Teacher-led instruction and student-focused engagement constantly interact through cognitive apprenticeship, which includes direct instruction and modeling, guided practice, and independent work (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989). Prichard (2012) proposes a similar model for large ensemble instruction that sequentially uses cognitive modeling, performance modeling, and independent practice to build student knowledge. In these models, increased student independence is the result of scaffolded teacher instruction and monitoring.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate how a secondary-level band director, whose ensemble objectives include the development of student musical independence, designs his classroom, curriculum, and instruction and how that design is experienced by his students. At the center of this study was a guiding question: What are the characteristics of a band experience when its teacher is focused upon developing student musical independence?

METHODOLOGY

The site for this study, Lakefield High School (LHS), was intentionally selected due to its lead director, Pete Guss. We had collaborated numerous times on honors ensembles and student leadership camps while serving as band directors at neighboring high schools. At the time of this study, Mr. Guss was in his 17th year of teaching and his second at LHS. He had impressed me with his focus on developing student independence, initiative, and decision-making and his methodical approach to teaching coupled with high standards of musical excellence. During his 8 years at his previous school, he developed a regionally respected band program that included curricular chamber ensembles for all band students and a strong student leadership program. He brought that experience and philosophy with him to LHS as he assumed lead director responsibilities.

LHS Bands

LHS is a large suburban high school in the Midwest with a national reputation of musical excellence. Upon Mr. Guss's arrival at LHS, the expectations for the bands' musical excellence from the school, community, and music staff of six remained just as high as with former lead directors. Additionally, Mr. Guss added musical responsibility and independence to the bands' curricular objectives. He expected students to demonstrate musical growth not only from teacher instruction but also from their independent musical efforts.

Required chamber ensembles met every Wednesday during scheduled band rehearsal, with each student assigned to a chamber ensemble. The band staff monitored the weekly rehearsals, but students were responsible for all aspects of music preparation and rehearsal. The chamber ensembles' purposes were to provide students with an additional ensemble model for post-high school music making and to promote the development of musical independence.

There were four bands at LHS, each with two directors. The Wind Ensemble and Symphonic Winds were the "performance-based," auditioned groups with mandatory private lessons. The Concert Band was a freshman-only ensemble. The Symphonic Band was the third ensemble open to sophomores, juniors, and seniors, required no audition and served as the subject of this study because of its focus on developing foundational concepts, including musical independence; its varied student enrollment; and its relative lack of students enrolled in private lessons.

LHS Symphonic Band

Mr. Guss and first-year assistant director Steve Kinder directed the Symphonic Band. Its membership included freshmen who auditioned out of Concert Band, "apathetic upper-classmen who were socially promoted," and students who were working on developing skills to move into the upper two ensembles. The ensemble's 47 musicians were roughly

equally divided in thirds as freshmen, sophomores, and upperclassmen and were evenly split male-female. The students were predominantly White, with one Hispanic and four Asian students. Fewer than a quarter of the students were in private lessons. For Mr. Guss, Symphonic Band was a place to establish musical fundamentals that students would rely on when they became part of the upper-level ensembles and that they could use them to pursue music after graduation.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

This study focused on one rehearsal cycle of the Symphonic Band lasting 8 weeks during the winter quarter of 2015. I observed 15 sessions of 45–55 minutes each, including large and chamber ensemble rehearsals and a concert, looking at the interactions between members of the band and instructional activities. I was granted full access to all rehearsals and met with students and teachers before, during, and after rehearsals. As a former band director of 12 years, I was invited to serve as a chamber ensemble coach, providing a participant-observer perspective.

I conducted semistructured interviews with three adults and 26 students. All participants were informed of the study's purpose and their right to not participate prior to each interview. All interviews were recorded and later transcribed to ensure accuracy and completeness. Participants reviewed all direct quotations in this manuscript, and Mr. Guss reviewed a final manuscript of the study to ensure its accuracy in reporting and interpretation, which resulted in slight changes. Aside from snacks during interviews, no participant compensation was provided.

Three interviews and numerous e-mail exchanges were held with Mr. Guss, and individual interviews were conducted with the assistant director and a student teacher. Adult interviews focused on program philosophy, objectives, instructional strategies, and assessment.

Short student interviews were held during rehearsals or passing periods while longer interviews were scheduled during lunch periods, utilizing both convenience and purposeful sampling. Student participation was voluntary, with some students choosing to participate and others being selected by Mr. Guss or me due to unique perspectives. The interviewed students reflected the band's makeup in gender, ethnicity, school year, and instrumentation. Student interviews focused on their band experiences, their motivations to participate, and their perceptions of the directors' objectives, behaviors, and philosophy.

Artifacts including the band website, the course syllabus, and evaluation documents were used to provide additional perspectives on the ensemble and to triangulate findings.

Access was granted by multiple gatekeepers, including Mr. Guss and school administration. Parents and students were informed of the nature of this study in writing and given the opportunity to not participate in the interviews. One student opted not to

participate. Institutional Review Board review was submitted for this study; however, Northwestern University's Institutional Review Board determined these activities were not research involving human subjects requiring review.

Trustworthiness was established through triangulation of data, peer scrutiny, participant review, and reflective commentary (Shenton, 2004). Findings were triangulated between observations, multiple interviews, and artifacts. A university professor and a fellow doctoral student researcher provided scrutiny of the process utilized in the study and addressed issues of reflexivity given my prior experiences with Mr. Guss. My familiarity with his philosophy and practice prompted the selection of the study site and provided me insight into my observations, but it also biased my expectations for his teaching practices. Efforts were taken in interviews to ensure that my interpretation of observed behaviors accurately reflected his intentions.

All observation field notes and interview transcriptions were initially coded concurrent with collection using *in vivo*, process, and descriptive coding (Saldaña, 2013), resulting in 129 total codes organized in MAXQDA. During second-cycle coding, these codes were grouped into eight pattern codes by hand using *a priori* categories derived from the five components of CMP (Sindberg, 2012), the two components of Scott's (2011) constructivist model, and an additional "other" category. These pattern codes were used to create a network display to aid in analysis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). As the early versions of this diagram included extensive and confusing interrelationships between the eight *a priori* categories, further analysis and diagramming during an additional cycle of coding condensed the eight categories into three themes, built strongly around Scott's model. This display's final form can be found in Figure 1.

FINDINGS

The development of musical independence in the LHS bands derived from the interaction between three elements: (1) the band environment, (2) teacher-moderated instruction, and (3) student-led engagement. As shown in Figure 1, teacher-moderated and student-led elements were situated within a band environment that fostered musical expertise, social engagement, and extramusical skills. This environmental component was critical for allowing instructional activities to impact musical independence by providing students with music content and skills through social and extramusical skill support. At the same time, the other two elements shaped this environment and were dynamically altered by one another with the teacher both leading and responding to the students' engagement and the students applying and adapting teacher-moderated instruction to their own activities. Musical independence was observed on a continuum from dependence to independence, as Mr. Guss provided scaffolded support differently due to student and situation.

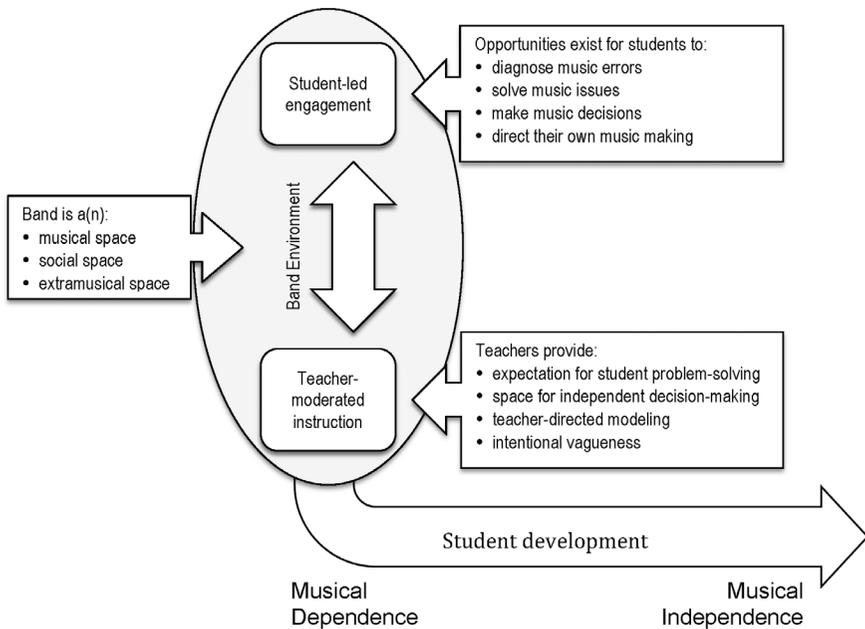


Figure 1: The development of musical independence in the LHS Band.

Band Environment

The band environment refers to the band's physical and emotional space, created by the activities and interactions of the teachers and students. This environment is identified as a musical, social, and extramusical space. In all three interviews and most casual conversations, Mr. Guss emphasized the importance of all three elements in creating a successful band environment. The musical elements addressed the development of musical expertise. The social elements recognized the relationships that form between members of the band, including the teachers. The extramusical elements included the development of skills necessary not just for academic and performance success in music but also for all academics and life. While band was explicitly a musical space, the social and extramusical elements were implicitly necessary as motivating factors, student and parent rationales for band participation, and support structures for musical growth and risk taking.

Band as a musical space. The musical focus of the LHS bands was on the transfer of concepts and skills developed for a specific piece to long-term, nonspecific applications. According to Mr. Guss, "So while I'm using the pieces and the individual problems that we encounter, trying to troubleshoot and correct those, I think I am trying to always, sometimes overtly, sometimes less so, phrase it in the larger scale scope." While strong performance was demonstrated by the band, Mr. Guss placed little importance on the

concert, which he termed as “just another run-through.” Much greater attention was put on the experiences that led to the concert and the transfer of them to future musical engagement. Chamber ensembles were designed to facilitate this transfer. Mr. Guss noted that incorporating chamber ensembles into the curriculum showed students a different approach to music from the large ensemble and provided an opportunity for them to develop skills such as rehearsal technique and error diagnosis. These type of skills are necessary to be effective as lifelong, independent musicians outside of a school program.

Band as a social space. For many students, band’s social elements were their reason for being in band. Sophomore clarinetist Ann said that the main benefit of being in band is that she “got to meet new people and make new friends.” Other students talked about band members being their biggest circle of friends and a surrogate family, as well as band being their safe place. These social connections led to opportunities for building support for risk taking, critical thinking, and student agency. For example, freshman saxophonist Ray and sophomore bass clarinetist John made a game of identifying and correcting each other’s mistakes. John noted that there was no hostility toward Ray’s public correction of him because they were friends; rather, he said Ray was “just making sure we sound good, and making sure that no one messes up so that no one can hear it [an error].” Junior hornist Lizzie stated the reason why her section was able to work together on musical problems: “We’re just comfortable around each other.” Social relationships encouraged the demonstration of critical skills by creating a safe and supportive environment.

This social support network extended to the band directors, who the students saw as friends and teachers, which impacted the nature of their interactions. Junior trombonist T. J. said, “You didn’t realize how good of a friend [the band directors] could be. At the same time, it’s like a coach. They push you.” Mr. Guss developed this rapport through self-deprecating humor, personal stories, and fallibility, and students said that this created “a fun side” and “a serious side” that fostered a friendly relationship with the directors and drew the students into what was happening in class. Mr. Guss realized:

Most of the memories [of band] will be around the social stuff, because that’s how we operate, but when you think about the music side of it, you feel like you came away with quality experiences in terms of the literature, the social environment, the deeper musical education you got in terms of fundamentals.

The development of social relationships supported student willingness to engage actively, be exposed, and demonstrate musical awareness and skill.

Band as an extramusical space. The band ensemble depended on the development of skills that were necessary for, but not exclusive to, music. Mr. Guss identified “being prepared, working together with others, [and] understanding that everyone’s contribution is important” as key expectations for his students. Students identified extramusical skills as a benefit of being in band, noting that band increased their confidence, ability to engage, and independence in other classes. Mr. Guss felt that these skills benefited musical development as well as general personal well-being. He remarked that teaching extramusical skills

is going to pay off in terms of being a great musician, but that's also a good life skill too. We can target both of those [musical and life skills] with one activity, you know. I'm a big believer in music for music's sake, but music is also good for all those other things, so let's use it for both.

He saw these skills as being critical for musical independence and explicitly taught them as they benefited both musical and general growth.

Teacher-Moderated Instruction

Teacher-moderated instruction closely resembled the traditional approach to large ensembles. As stated by Mr. Guss, "The podium has been called the 'last great dictatorship.' I think that is all too true in the best of ensembles, simply for efficiency's sake." His approach differed from the traditional model in that he incorporated opportunities for students to interact critically, make decisions, provide feedback, and engage their own music skills. Specifically, Mr. Guss expected students to problem solve and make independent decisions. He supported their development by using cognitive apprenticeship (Brown et al., 1989), which modeled strategies and provided guided practice with intentionally broad and vague support.

Expectation for student problem solving. As part of his rehearsal technique, Mr. Guss gave problem-solving responsibilities to his students, particularly through his use of questioning techniques. In his words, "It's hard to have them question and answer, but in the long run, that builds better musicians. It's about making choices and making mistakes, letting the kids make some of those decisions." For example, when stopping to address balance issues, Mr. Guss asked, "What happens when we split from unison to parts?" and a trumpeter responded, "It gets softer, so we need to play out more." Similarly, when a flutist asked what a septuplet was, Mr. Guss responded, "Well, what does it look like that you already know?" When she told him it looked like a triplet that divides into three parts so a septuplet must do the same thing in seven parts, he nodded and said, "There you go. You figured it out on your own." Answers rarely came straight from the podium but were constructed by the students with varying degrees of teacher support. Rather than tell students how to perform music, Mr. Guss extended the critical analysis to them and expected them to diagnose problems and create answers.

Space for independent decision-making. Mr. Guss's rehearsal technique relied strongly upon students making independent decisions about how they performed their individual parts, making changes in their performance, and being able to back their decisions with reasoned support. In some cases, he provided a series of options, such as vocally modeling several articulation patterns for an excerpt and then telling the students, "Play it the way you think is the clearest out of the ways I just showed you." In other cases, he prompted where students should make a choice." For example, when an excerpt was marked "loud and scary," he told them, "What would a piece that looks like me sound like?" as he made a hideous face. Students recognized Mr. Guss's expectations for them

to make independent decisions within the large ensemble. As junior horn Lizzie stated, "It really is up to the directors whether they approve of what you are doing or not, but for the most part, you are allowed to take liberty with what the music is trying to convey."

Providing opportunities for independent decision-making weighed heavily into Mr. Guss's literature selections. Reflecting the literature selection component of CMP (Sindberg, 2012), he selected "well-crafted music," where every part has meaning and space for interpretation:

The up side is that it really informs your teaching when you can go to the tuba player and say, "I know it looks like you only have half notes, but this line is really important. I know this composer's thinking about this half note and wants you to do something with it. So you need, as an individual, to do something with it."

He regularly encouraged his students to not only play the notes but to interpret their parts. He also recognized that the difficulty of musical interpretation was dependent on whether students had teacher support, so music for chamber ensembles was less demanding than the band literature. In both settings, the literature served as a catalyst for skill development for musical decision-making.

Teacher-moderated modeling. The one time where Mr. Guss regularly used traditional, direct instruction was in teaching practice and rehearsal strategies. He did this using extensive explanation and modeling. While this modeling took many different forms, his approach followed the process suggested by Prichard (2012). First, students were shown how to use a strategy, then given structured opportunities to try it in the large ensemble, and then given independent practice.

Modeling took many forms. In some cases, Mr. Guss modeled behaviors himself either verbally or vocally. For example, when working through a section of fast runs, he worked the students through a practice strategy as he very meticulously detailed each step, starting and ending the sequence with, "When you encounter runs like this one, here is how you can practice it." When observing chamber ensembles, I saw students utilize the same sequence in their own work. As stated by sophomore flutist Cassidy, "It's really just watching how Mr. Guss does it [rehearsal practice]. How he listens to it. . . . I'm watching them [the teachers] for what is important to them." Students transferred the explicitly taught strategies to self-directed practice.

Other modeling occurred by pointing out strong models from inside and outside the classroom by isolating individuals or sections or playing recorded examples. When a model was absent, Mr. Guss mentally created it for the ensemble: "If I handed soon-to-be-Dr. Weidner a blank score, could he notate the dynamics that you just played? Then you didn't play fully enough." The next run-through demonstrated the characteristics of contrast that he desired.

Practice techniques and approaches were captured in what one student called "Gussisms." These were often stated reminders of good practice. When Mr. Guss said them, they sounded like instructions of the moment such as, "There are two options for playing

high notes: press ‘n’ pray or air,” “It’s okay to play a wrong note once, but then mark it,” and “Don’t tell me. Show me.” It was when I heard students repeating Guss-isms verbatim that I saw them as a form of method modeling. Students remembered how to approach problems by repeating these Guss-isms and then applying them to their own practice.

Intentional vagueness. Underlying Mr. Guss’s instruction was what I have termed “intentional vagueness.” These were moments of intentionally vague direct instruction that required students to think critically in order to reach understanding. Issues were addressed through broad, nonspecific questions, requiring students to consider their performance and approach carefully. Directions often required interpretation or were left incomplete, leaving students to bring their own musicianship into play. Additionally, analogies were used that made familiar connections from life to unfamiliar conditions within music. Many of these analogies became Guss-isms over time, such as the description of smooth dynamic contrasts as “ADA-compliant crescendos,” poor tone usage as profanity usage with Grandma, and out-of-control accelerandos as a bike ride down a sled hill without brakes. Whether analogic or merely broad, these techniques rooted in vagueness required students to actively engage in direct instruction.

Student-Led Engagement

Teacher-moderated instruction prepared students to lead engagement in music. At the same time, student-led engagement was monitored, though rarely interfered with, by the band staff to inform future teacher-moderated instruction. For the LHS bands, student-led responsibilities were shown in both large and chamber ensembles and included diagnosing music errors, solving music issues, making music decisions, and directing their own music making.

Diagnose music errors. For Mr. Guss, the large ensemble was a space for students to develop awareness of their music-making skills with teacher support, while the chamber ensemble was the place for students to test those skills with peer collaboration. He recognized that many students’ greatest challenges were that they had not developed mastery skills for self-diagnosis of problems. This was seen when a woodwind sextet found that they had lost their central pulse and went through multiple hypotheses to explain why, before realizing that the bass part with the pulse in it was being played by only one player and needed to be brought out.

To accommodate for the students’ lack of expertise with diagnosing error, Mr. Guss instituted the 60% rule: 60% of the chamber ensemble time should be spent playing. This helped control socializing during unsupervised rehearsal and aided in the diagnosis of errors through repetition and exposure. Mr. Guss remarked: “The least self-aware of them is aware enough that there is something that needs working on.” By playing more, they increased their chances of identifying problems and trying different ways of correcting them, usually by applying strategies taught in band.

Solve music issues. After diagnosing errors, students needed to find solutions for their problems. During large ensemble rehearsal, students not being addressed by teachers could be seen and heard developing solutions for challenges they encountered, ranging from how to choreograph percussion instrument changes to how to play a particularly difficult horn passage. Students were encouraged to independently solve their problems as part of band rehearsal.

In chamber ensembles, student responsibility for problem solving became much more apparent. The students stumbled into problems in their music and used relatively small skill sets to find solutions. These rehearsals were slow moving compared to the large ensemble rehearsal, but they allowed students space to test their own abilities. For example, the first chamber rehearsal I observed was of a brass quintet. They spent their first 30-minute session focused entirely on aligning entrances. They used three strategies in that time: macro-micro-macro, counting out loud, and measure isolation. All strategies had been modeled in class. In my last chamber music visit, 7 weeks later, I observed the same group again. They appropriately used an extended set of practice strategies and showed greater precision in their diagnoses of and solutions to problems in their performance. Over time, students became more proficient at correcting their diagnosed problems through practice, exposure, and expectations to find solutions on their own.

Make music decisions and direct music making. Student responsibility for making musical decisions was part of the entire band program, particularly in the chamber ensembles. As stated by Mr. Guss, "I could walk you through it, but I need you to decide, are your notes important? . . . You need to be responsible for your musical decisions. Don't be afraid to be wrong." The band environment played strongly into musical decision-making, based on the students' current knowledge. In chamber groups, students supported others' decisions and readily applied their interpretations. There was often uncertainty from students about their interpretive decisions, but the Guss-ism, "Don't be afraid to be wrong," would be stated by another member. Students supported or rejected interpretations with a specific rationale.

Most students saw the chamber ensembles as a mandate to develop their own musicianship. When asked about the benefits of the chamber ensembles, Sarah stated:

You have to be a leader and you have to figure out your part. Usually, during band, the conductor can help you out if he knows there's something wrong, but it's more based on you. It's your responsibility to figure it out.

Similar to informal music making (Green, 2008), student-led engagements were often disorderly with many false starts and detours. By contrast, students' strategy usage in chamber ensembles relied on the instruction of the large ensemble. Following band rehearsals that included concepts such as pyramids of sound and textural analysis of music, the students were seen applying these concepts to their own work along with other strategies that they had developed over time. These music-making skills developed

due to modeling, exposure, and practice with all types of musical engagement, both formal and informal, resulting in increased musical independence.

DISCUSSION

Mr. Guss's instructional practice serves as an example of Allsup and Benedict's (2008) imagined, student-centered band. The structure of LHS's program provided opportunities for explicit instruction (Miksza & Tan, 2015) and modeling paired with independent practice (Prichard, 2012) that are necessary for promoting independent musicianship. Mr. Guss's approach used artful teacher scaffolding (Wiggins, 2015b) to create a classroom that responded to student needs and provided opportunities for student agency. When concepts were new to students, his instruction was relatively direct, but when students already had necessary exposure, he guided and monitored their active engagement in problem solving and decision-making.

The chamber ensembles were a critical component to this process, as they provided the independent practice called for in cognitive apprenticeship (Brown et al., 1989). In other music programs, this same role of student-led engagement might be played by sectionals, solo preparation, or student-directed large ensembles, provided that students could practice making music without teacher guidance in a safe, supportive setting. The students' independence was advanced through constructivist opportunities to encounter and assimilate knowledge and skills into their own practice, initially with support from the teacher and later on their own.

Development of student independence required a broad, comprehensive understanding of music and teaching, as exemplified by CMP (Sindberg, 2012). With musical independence established as a long-term outcome of band, all instruction potentially contributed to its development. Literature was selected that allowed for the explicit teaching of music strategies and scaffolding of student engagement. Assessment focused not only on what students currently knew and could do but on what they still needed to develop in order to allow for greater independence. Students were made accountable for analyzing their own musical progress and adjusting their approach to music using the clear model of the teacher. The teacher's comprehensive musicianship was the foundation upon which the constructivist band was built.

The independence-focused band begins and ends with the band environment. Berg (2014) states that the conductor-teacher's first job is the creation of "a positive learning environment" (p. 264) through the formation of relationships with students and the promotion of musical awareness and critical thinking. Similar to Allsup (2003) who said that "participants [in cooperative peer learning settings] discover more thanks to the input of their peers" (p. 33), the students in the LHS Symphonic Band used the social support from the band community to safely "operate above their levels of competence" and take risks (Wiggins, 2015b, p. 156). The band environment created the space in which musical independence could develop with support and rigor. At the same time,

the environment was created by an instructional practice focused on constructing student knowledge toward musical independence.

MOVING FORWARD

These findings suggest that a band focused on musical independence requires varied and scaffolded musical engagement. Notably, students need to be provided with comprehensive exposure to all elements of the musical experience and have opportunities to experience music with teacher modeling, guided support, and finally independent practice (Brown et al., 1989). Preservice and continuing teacher education needs to promote collaborative teaching practices that encourage critical thinking and self-direction including questioning techniques (Johnson, 2011; Tutt, 2007), artful teacher scaffolding (Wiggins, 2015b), and small group music making (Berg, 2008). Teachers need a comprehensive understanding of music and learning, as limited understandings “result in a hit-or-miss kind of musical experience for students rather than one that reflects deeper musical values” (Sindberg, 2012, p. 53).

Finally, constructivist models of ensemble instruction need to be incorporated into preservice teaching to allow students the opportunity to see how these settings can be used to actively build musical knowledge in socially supportive environments. The conductor-dependent model that is traditionally presented in collegiate and precollegiate bands is one that is not conducive to developing the independent musician. Space, time, and opportunity need to be allotted not only for students’ independent engagement but also for the mistakes and the correction of mistakes that are part of that engagement, accompanied by scaffolding that gradually removes the teacher from the process. The change that occurs is a move from classrooms driven by the music literature to ones designed around the music learner.

This study provides an example from which future work can investigate the development of musical independence through large music ensembles, which is particularly critical as a majority of secondary students receive their music education in these settings. Greater understanding is necessary as to what theoretically and operationally defines musical independence and whether its requisite skills, competencies, and attitudes vary with musical setting and are able to transfer between settings. Additionally, longitudinal study of students would provide insight into how musical independence develops and is effectively nurtured through pedagogical practice. A better understanding of musical independence and its associated processes could result in large ensembles that are more student centered and nurture lifelong, independent musicianship.

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