

Preparing Music Teachers for Change: Broadening Instrument Class Offerings to Foster Lifewide and Lifelong Musicing

By

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Abstract

This article addresses how music programs can help public schools fulfill their social mission by offering instruments, ensembles, and genres that Americans are interested in pursuing socially. Data from a 2006 Gallup poll, and music instrument sales are used to indicate that such musics utilize rhythm section instruments. A researcher conducted survey of sample universities reveals that those instruments are not included in music teacher education programs. Therefore, the author calls for music teacher education programs to broaden secondary instrument class offerings to include rhythm section instruments; thus preparing Preservice teachers to teach them and genres that utilize them. Finally, the author provides a model of one university's curriculum to illustrate how a university can develop a unique curriculum that offers rhythm section instruments and a variety of popular musics and jazz.

Introduction

It is important to bear in mind that public schools are not solely academic institutions, and music as organized sounds shouldn't be the only focus of music educators. Public schools have a vital social mission that should concern and inform music education. Nancy Kober (2007), writing in *Why We Still Need Public Schools: Public Education for the Common Good*, lists six "public missions" of public schools. Three of them are relevant to this discussion. According to Kober, public schools are to 1. "unify a diverse population", 2. "prepare people for citizenship in a democratic society", and 3. "improve social conditions" (7-13). Studies have found that amateur engagement in the arts helps accomplish all three. For example, a 2006 report from the

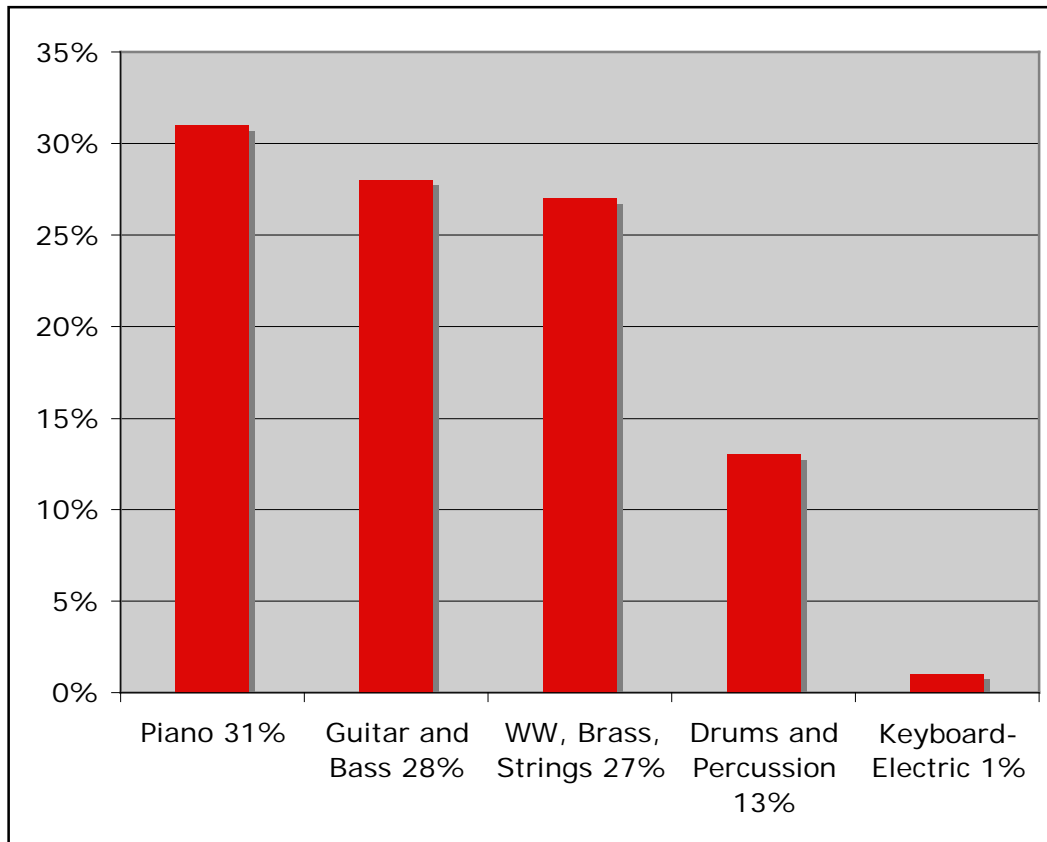
National Endowment for the Arts indicates that people who are engaged in the arts are more active in their communities (National Endowment for the Arts); Robert Putnam found a positive correlation between community arts engagement and honest and effective civic governance in his 1993 study of Italy (Putnam 1993); and Stern and Seifert, who studied Philadelphia neighborhoods for a decade, found that active engagement in community arts was a predictor of community revitalization in several measurable ways, including increased ethnic diversification (Stern 2001, 2002, n.d.). Thus, music educators can help schools accomplish their social missions to unify a diverse population, prepare people for citizenship in a democratic society, and improve social conditions by helping students develop the knowledge, musicianship skills, habits, and dispositions needed to engage musically with others outside of school and throughout their lives. Unfortunately, traditional school music offerings, limited by a narrow conception of what music education is, could, and ought to be, inhibit our ability to do so.

My objective in this paper is to raise awareness that our traditional secondary instrument classes, that have evolved almost strictly to support school-based ensembles, limit music education from having a greater impact on society and helping schools accomplish their social mission. I will do this by illustrating a disconnection between the amateur musicing of Americans and teacher preparation in instrumental music. I will then discuss the program at one university that was developed to redress this in order to provide an example of how teacher education can be conceived differently from the norm.

Amateur Musicing Of Americans

Fifty-two percent of American households reported in a 2006 Gallup poll that they have “at least one person, age 5 or older, who currently plays a musical instrument” (NAMM 2006, 111). If one includes all those who sing but don’t play instruments, it is safe to assume that well over half of American households have at least one person actively musicing. Music educators could point to this as a sign of success if one could determine causation, or at least a correlation, between school based music education and this amateur musicing. However, Americans are widely engaging musically in ways that are not taught in schools. The results of the Gallup poll indicate that rhythm section instruments of piano, bass, guitar, and drums, account for 73% of those instruments played, and band and orchestral instruments, which are the ones typically taught in schools, accounted for just 27%. The results of the survey are listed in Table 1.

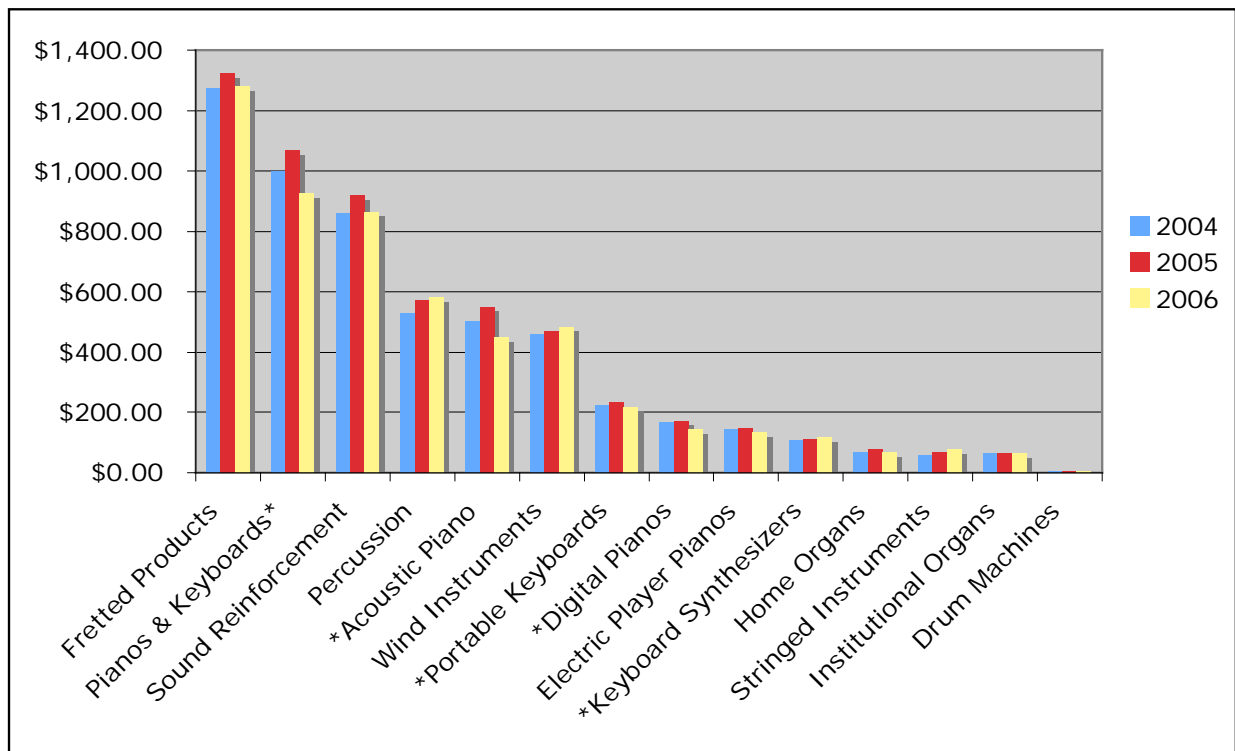
Table 1. – Instruments Americans Reported Playing on 2006 Gallup Poll (NAMM 2006, 123)



The data in Table 1 indicate that rhythm section instruments of piano, bass, guitar, and drums account for 73% of those instruments reported played, and band and orchestral instruments accounted for 27%.

These preferences are also reflected in new instrument sales for the three year trend of 2004 - 2006; rhythm section instruments and sound reinforcement equipment were the largest selling categories. They were far above orchestral strings, winds and brass, as listed in Table 2.

Table 2. – New Instrument Sales for 2004, 2005, 2006 in Millions of Dollars (NAMM 2006, 5, 2007, 5)



The data in Table 2 indicate that rhythm section instruments and sound reinforcement equipment were the largest selling categories in 2004, 2005, and 2006; they were far above orchestral strings, winds and brass.

The rhythm section instruments and equipment Americans are purchasing and playing are used in a variety of genres of the 20th and now 21st Centuries that are typically not taught in schools, such as pop, rock, Latin, and other popular music styles. This is concrete evidence that there is a disconnection between school music offerings and instrumental performance activities of the majority of Americans. Charles Leonhard

observed this disconnection in 1999 stating, Americans are “doing on their own what we should have been helping them do in school” (1999, 42). We have failed to redress this in the intervening nine years in spite of a good deal of scholarship both investigating popular music activities among youth in and outside of schools, and various scholars advocating for schools to include popular music and instruments (Allsup 2004; Boespflug 2004; Campbell 1995; Davis 2005; Durrant 2001; Emmons 2004; Frith 1996; Green 2002, 2008; Hebert 2000; Humphreys 2004; Jaffurs 2004; Jones 2005, 2006, 2007a, 2008, in press; Kratus 2007; Rodriguez 2004; Souza 2003; Wemyss 2004).

The preparation of US music teachers to offer popular music in general has received relatively little scholarly attention. The extant literature addresses teacher preparation models where Preservice teachers learn through participation in popular music ensembles or as a component of existing methods classes (Boespflug 1999; Ferguson 2006; Jones & Clements 2006). Both models provide little or no actual instruction on how to play the instruments. Boespflug (2004) and Emmons (2004), in separate articles, developed lists of the knowledge and skills music teachers need in order to teach popular music; both listed facility with rhythm section instruments as being essential. Thus, Preservice teachers need to learn rhythm section instruments if they are to offer such ensembles in public schools.

Status of Secondary Instrument Class Offerings

To determine the extent to which these instruments are taught in Preservice programs, I reviewed the secondary instruments class requirements of ten selected universities across the US in 2007. My sample included one university from each of the ten regional

chapters of the College Music Society to provided an even geographic distribution.ⁱ

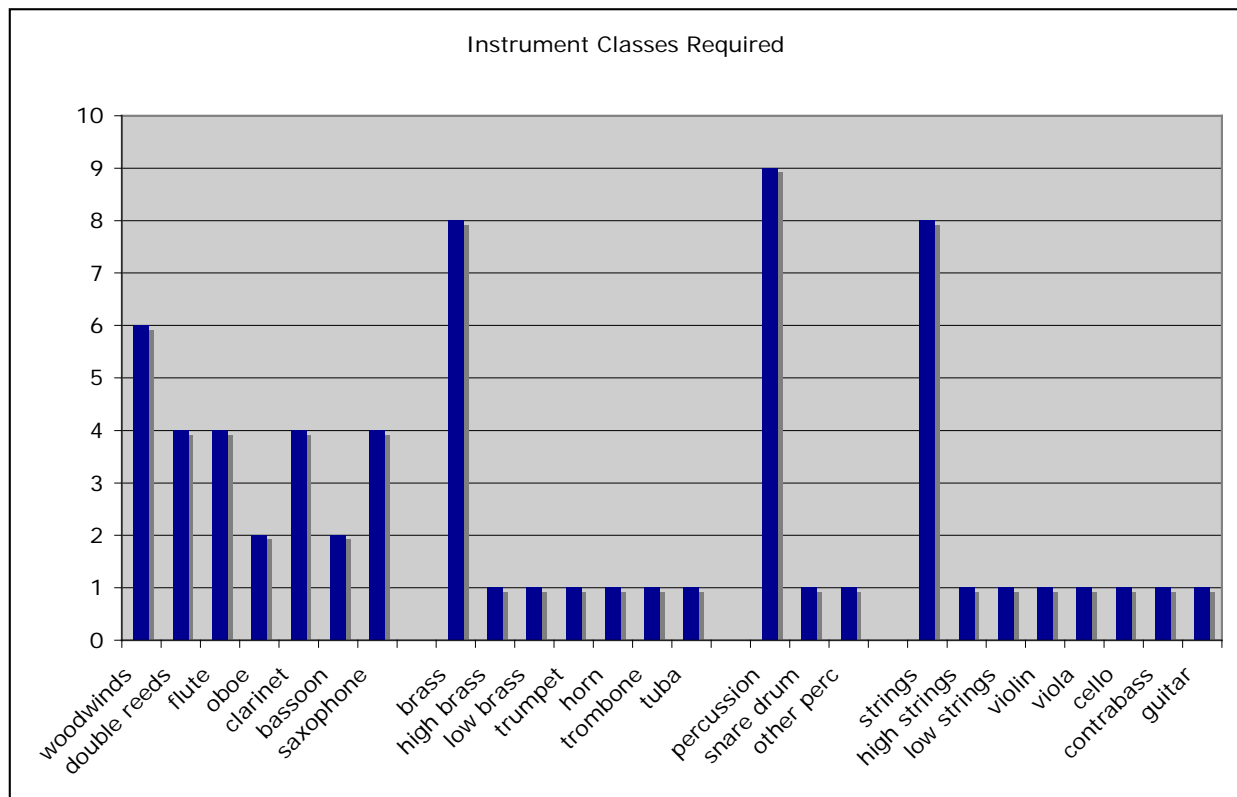
Within each chapter, I selected the land grant university from the home state of the chapter president in order to gain a snapshot of comparable institutions that are hopefully representative of the profession at large. However, two chapter presidents are from the same state, which only has one land grant campus that offers music education.

Therefore, a campus from the state university system was used as a proxy for one chapters' land grant university.

I reviewed the degree requirements and course descriptions available from university websites, handbooks, and bulletins or catalogues. The degree programs included were for initial certification. In cases where there were specialized tracks, such as instrumental or choral, the requirements for the instrumental track were used.

Limitations of this information are that course titles and course descriptions might not reflect the totality of what is covered in a course, and that instruments such as non-Western, social and popular instruments, could be taught within other courses, such as secondary methods classes. However, the presence, or non-presence, of popular and social instruments taught in discrete courses is sufficient for the purpose of this study. Even if these instruments are taught as components of other classes, they do not receive comparable time, academic weight, and perhaps instructional expertise afforded for instruments offered in discrete courses. This would indicate that they are less valued in the curriculum. The results of this study are listed in Table 3.

Table 3. – Secondary Instrument Classes at Selected Universities from Each CMS Chapter



The data in Table 3 indicate that all ten universities in the sample require students to take secondary instrument classes in band and orchestral woodwind, brass, percussion, and string instruments. Only one of the universities requires a guitar class. None of them require students to take rhythm section instruments in discrete classes, except the one institution with a guitar class.ⁱⁱ

This information indicates that secondary instrument classes appear to be preparing teachers to maintain the status quo ensembles of concert bands and orchestras. Graduates of these programs don't even appear to be prepared to teach jazz ensembles, which utilize the same rhythm section instruments Americans are interested in. This is odd since Jazz has been offered in schools since the 1960s (Volk 1998, 71). Clearly, teacher preparation in instrumental music remains ossified in an early 20th Century model in spite of incredible changes in the musicing of Americans and calls from MENC and NASM to broaden offerings (Choate 1967; Murphy 1968; Consortium of National Arts Education Associations 1994; *Vision 2020: The Housewright Symposium on the Future of Music Education* 2000; NASM 2007, 95-96). It suffers from what sociologists call 'cultural lag'; which is when a society is unable to keep up with innovation (Kao 2007, 101). This is an unhealthy situation that must be changed for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is preparing Preservice teachers to serve the social missions of public schools.

One cause for this situation is that university faculty were, themselves, prepared in traditional programs and lack models of other approaches to preparing instrumental music educators. Exposure to different approaches can broaden one's perspectives, cause one to critically analyze his or her approaches, and can inspire the development of new and innovative models. It is with that purpose in mind that I will share the framework of the curriculum developed by the faculty at The University of the Arts when I was Head of the Music Education Division there from 2002-2007. It is not intended as a one-size-fits-all prescription, since teacher education curricula should be locally developed and reflect the distinctive nature of their institutions. Instead, it is offered simply as one model of

how the faculty at one institution addressed the need to broaden Preservice teachers' instruments, genres, and pedagogical approaches; and did so in a way that was organic to their institution.

Model Program

This 'model' program is a Master of Arts in Teaching degree (MAT) housed within a jazz school. Students who pursue the MAT already have bachelor degrees in music. Those who attended the same university for their undergraduate degrees studied jazz and developed applied theory and aural skills and abilities in transcription & analysis, arranging, and improvisation as well as experience performing a wide variety of genres including Broadway, classical, commercial, jazz, pop, rock, world and world beat, both at the university and as working musicians in bands of all kinds. It is within this environment that the faculty developed a unique music education curriculum that met accreditation and certification criteria, yet was organic to the institution and served the institution's goals of fostering creativity in jazz, contemporary, and crossover genres.

The MAT curriculum includes discrete courses in the standard band and orchestra instruments, as well as acoustic guitar and electronic drum-set. It also includes a rhythm section course in which each student performs on two of the rhythm section instruments and covers tunes by ear. Their jazz theory and aural skills, as well as their performance experiences in jazz and popular ensembles of all kinds, prepare them well for this experience.

In addition, they have coursework in music education technology, digital/audio recording, conducting and rehearsal techniques for classical and jazz ensembles, private

lesson pedagogy, teaching improvisation, and performing and arranging for bucket drums and hand bells. This is all in addition to courses in music education foundations, site-based elementary and secondary methods, and student teaching.ⁱⁱⁱ

The combination of a core curriculum that develops musicianship skills and dispositions from a jazz perspective, music education courses in which students learn traditional band & orchestra instruments as well as rhythm section instruments; jazz rehearsal techniques and informal learning styles; and site-based methods experiences where they develop their own emerging pedagogical approaches with real K12 students, has resulted in alumni offering a wider variety of ensembles than many of their peers and employing informal learning strategies with their students. The major resistances alumni of this program have faced are traditionalist expectations of fellow music teachers and music educator associations, not resistance from students, parents, or administrators.

Conclusion

Preparing music educators to offer a wider range of instruments, genres, and ensembles and foster lifewide and lifelong musicing will require us to reevaluate and reconfigure current offerings, develop some different secondary instruments classes, ensemble experiences, and other courses, and perhaps jettison others. It will also require us to provide professional development opportunities for in-service teachers and to engage with music educator associations in order to help them move beyond current paradigms and also to pave the way for graduates who have been more broadly prepared. If we are successful, we will help music education truly serve society in more meaningful ways than most currently conceive and perhaps play a central role in helping public schools

unify a diverse population, prepare people for citizenship in a democratic society, and improve social conditions by helping students develop the knowledge, musicianship skills, habits, and dispositions needed to engage musically with others outside of school and throughout their lives.

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ⁱFor a listing of the chapters see www.music.org

ⁱⁱIt is beyond the scope of this study to determine whether or not drum set is included to any reasonable extent in any of the percussion classes; whether the one guitar class teaches rhythm section guitar skills, and whether or not any required piano classes teach rhythm section keyboard skills.

ⁱⁱⁱFor information on other aspects of this program see Patrick M. Jones, and Fred P. Eyrich, "Real World Methods: Preparing Future Music Teachers in Today's Classrooms," in *Teaching Music in the Urban Classroom: A Guide to Leadership, Teacher Education and Reform*, ed. Carol Frierson-Campbell (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2006); and Patrick M. Jones, "Developing Strategic Thinkers through Music Teacher Education: A "Best Practice" for Overcoming Professional Myopia and Transforming Music Education," *Arts Education Policy Review* 108, no. 6 (2007b).