

## EDITORIAL

By

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The authors in this issue address the challenges of being a music teacher who is gay, teaching high school band students to sight read, forming choral agency in amateur singers, and examining student journals to identify those issues of interest and relevance to pre-service student teachers in instrumental music.

The relationships among and between articles connect to the phenomena of identity and agency, and touch upon issues that are more global. What constitutes agentive high school instrumental students, college instrumental student teachers, gay in-service music teachers, and adult amateur singers? How can students of music, engaged in the act of becoming their own possible selves, contribute to a better world? How can teachers reconcile who they are in an environment that is sometimes intolerant and hostile?

Joshua Palkki discusses teacher identity quite directly as he explores how gay teachers negotiate decisions about “coming out” in the workplace: how, when, where, why, and with whom to share status as gay individuals. His research identifies themes of the “closet door,” LGBTQ issues and (Music) teacher education, privilege, and mentorship. Clearly, while the United States Supreme Court recently opened doors for all

who wish to marry to do so, we are not yet in a world where sexual identity is no longer a concern.

Nathan Kruse examined the journals of pre-service teachers in an instrumental methods course to identify those topics students chose to discuss. Revelations about teaching, positive interactions with students, rehearsal techniques, and distracting climates were common themes. Again, these relate to teacher identity and agency. While Jacqueline Smith doesn't directly discuss agency in her article, her interest was in exploring ways to improve the sight reading skills in members of a high school band. Her overarching goal was to improve musicianship, thus producing a more agentic player. Using the Watkins-Farnum Performance Scale to pre-test current sight reading skills, she chose a book of sight reading exercises for band and engaged a colleague to work on sight reading for twenty consecutive band rehearsals. Smith found that the instruction did not make the difference she had hoped.

Hermione Ruck Keene investigated how the presence of professional singers, added to an ensemble close to performance time, affected the individual and collective ethos of the choral ensemble and specifically the musical identities of the amateur singers. Additionally, Keene examined how collaborative music making—amateurs with professionals—confirmed or challenged perceptions of hierarchical relationships between both types of singers. Data gleaned from online questionnaires revealed themes of enjoyment, sense of belonging, musical competence, and musical life stories. Her conclusions suggest that the addition of the professional singers challenged the amateurs in positive ways. Amateur singers reported feelings of increased confidence in their existing musical identities, and indicated that the inclusion of the professionals

contributed to a more aesthetically pleasing performance. However, the addition of the professional singers changed the affect and identity of the ensemble as a whole.

We publish this issue of *Visions of Research in Music Education* just after the United States Supreme Court ruled to make same sex marriage legal in every state throughout the Union. In that same week, terrorists attacked in France, Tunisia, and Kuwait, and the financial issues in Greece reached a crisis state. In addition, the young man responsible for bombing the Boston Marathon in 2013 was sentenced to death, and a deranged confederate shot and killed nine parishioners at a prayer meeting in an historic black church in Charleston, South Carolina. MERS infections in Korea and Ebola in West Africa pose health threats worldwide.

Leonard Bernstein once said, “Music . . . can name the unnameable and communicate the unknowable. . . [It] will be our reply to violence: to make music more intensely, more beautifully, more devotedly than ever before.” The authors in this issue of *Visions of Research in Music Education* are concerned with the relevancy of music education and focus on the student as musician. As a collection, the authors offer work in service of a more just and humane world.