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Final Statement: Application of Coursework & Artifact Presentation

Throughout my graduate studies, I was able to synthesize a variety of teaching methodologies and philosophies that have contributed to my growth as a musician and educator. Each item in my portfolio has contributed not only to my daily instructional methods in my classroom, but also a shift in philosophy and expectations that I place on my students. The music curriculum presented by large institutions often felt limited and singularly focused throughout my education. After completing this degree, I feel much more equipped to present a broad, fresh approach to music of all styles for children of all ages. While some items in my portfolio deal in the abstract and analytical, others are more practical and ready to be used to teach a lesson on-the-spot. This statement aims to further clarify the role of items in my portfolio and how each contribute to my daily thought processes as an educator.

Regarding *MUSI 663: Aesthetics of Music Education* (Dr. Charles Ciorba), I chose an article co-written by Giovanna Sabia and I on the application of Suzanne Langer's theory of symbolic transformation in the music classroom. My greatest takeaway from this article is that process of symbolization – both as a tool for advocacy (strengthening cognitive processes through music), and as a way to use discursive and presentational symbols to explain abstract and non-discursive thought *through* music. “Langer urges us to look beyond the limits of language and consider that music may help our students conceive their reality through symbolic transformation.” This philosophy has guided my instruction in a metacognitive sense; I am able

to explain to students the process of symbolization in music and how it is similar and different from speaking a language. It has also helped me better explain my fascination with music notation, and its ability to use presentational symbols to create non-discursive/non-logical statements that creates deep emotion in our psyche, without using a single logical statement that has inherent “discursive” meaning (a sentence vs. a melody).

I felt that *MUSI 661: Psychology of Music Teaching and Learning* (Dr. Lisa Billingham) was highly applicable to the art of *teaching* music due to its direct and necessary reference to behavior, feeling, and identity, rather than the “harder” acoustical and theoretical sciences associated with music education. Of all subjects, music is very close to the emotional and non-logical, and understanding the processes that govern emotion, mood, efficacy, and psychoacoustics is fundamental to teaching the subject well. I chose to particularly focus on the role of gender in the music classroom, as I’ve noticed teachers subconsciously attributing different expectations on the musical development of their male and female students. Through my article reviews, chapter presentation, and final paper, I feel that I am much more prepared to tackle gender constructs openly and respectfully in my classroom. The bottom line – students should be exposed to gender-atypical role models to assist in breaking stereotypes on perceived ability and self-efficacy of all genders. I am also much more aware of the state of research and “general trends” of the general attitude of male and female students on various topics in music. This knowledge will inform the expectation I place on students and helps explain gender-related questions when they come up during class; understanding gender biases is the first step to questioning and changing them. Creating a space for self-expression is vital to any music program’s success, and my research on gender undoubtedly assisted in my growth as an educator.

I also chose to include my final research proposal from *MUSI 662: Introduction to Research in Music* (Dr. Charles Ciorba). The ability to form a question, collect data, and answer that question is crucial to any music educator's job – whether it be directly in the classroom with our students, or with a much larger scope. My study proposal aimed to answer a much larger question: what music *is* being programmed in band, orchestra, and choir programs in public schools, past and present. My study aims to draw connections to shed light on specific data of exactly what pieces are performed, in what frequency, and to analyze and categorize this data to better understand the current programming trends, and how we may move forward to better reach more future music students. I believe that music educators must put great effort into understanding the culture, background, and importance of a wide body of literature that can be applied to differing classroom situations in America. This understanding must first come from an analysis of what is truly being programmed today, and current trends in this educational body of literature. By studying these trends and making an active effort to include music that truly fits differing classroom situations, culturally and socially, I feel better prepared to be versatile and sensitive to the needs of the community I serve as a music educator.

MUSI 611: Analytical Techniques (Dr. Megan Lavengood) delved into various theoretical tools to describe music. Out of the artifacts I've presented, I found narrative analysis and lyrical/harmonic pop analysis to be the most directly applicable and useful methodologies in a classroom of younger music students. These tools can be used to help my students find meaning in ensemble music – students interested in literature may show a higher level of self-efficacy and interest if a “storyline” is attributed to the music. This narrative structure attributed to specific musical elements also may help students draw connections between concepts of form, phrasing, dynamics, and mood, and bring the notes “off the page” by using imagery and narrative

analysis to “tell stories” while performing. This analytical tool also helps encourage students to use music theory vocabulary terms to describe exactly what happens in music to create a change in narrative.

MUSI 660: Keyboard Literature (Dr. Emily Green) most aided my abilities as a private piano instructor. This class directly helped to expand my overall knowledge of the body of piano literature to select for my students, while honing my skills of form analysis. Having a framework to describe form and provide relevant theoretical commentary for new pieces of music is immensely helpful as a piano teacher. These newfound works of piano music and tools of analysis have shaped my descriptive skills, and my students certainly benefitted from this deep-dive into keyboard literature of past and present.

MUSI 630: Nineteenth-Century African-American Music (Dr. Emily Green) provided perhaps the most directly practical artifact: a 15-week curriculum delving into 19th Century African-American music! I will be using this unit framework and specific lesson plans in my classroom if I ever have an opportunity to instruct a general music course. Indirectly, I will certainly show not only the repertoire and music from this class to my students, but respectfully bring the discourse of race into my classroom when brought up. This class aimed to widen the conversation and scope of our “racial comfort zone,” and begin to unpack the complicated cultural and sociological history of a music that is often erased from the curriculum. With this important conversation, my primary focus is to celebrate and preserve the culture of African-American music in my classroom by delving into its recent history in whatever way possible.

My work in *MUSI 660: Assessment in Music Education* (Dr. Charles Ciorba) provided another truly practical artifact – a final exam to be administered to my students. The skills and varying assessment tools and measures taught in this class were directly useful, as grading is a

majority of the work done as a teacher. Having more tools to assess students improved my ability to build a larger curriculum and specific lessons tailored to a larger, assessed goal at the end of each class, each week, and each unit. This unit test, most suitable for early high school, will measure the ability for students to construct a written argument based on standard music terminology.

Before I took *MUSI 660: Grant Writing* (Dr. Charles Ciorba), grants were an abstract concept that never felt attainable as a young music educator. After this class, I have my first sample grant proposal, tailored to a direct and current need in my life as a music teacher. I hoped to work on this further and submit this for actual grants that were accepting applications, but unfortunately was laid off from the position due to the pandemic. Regardless, this class has armed me with the skills to draft a grant proposal or work on a committee in the future to whatever financial needs my music classroom or school district may have.

In *MUSI 712: Composition for Conductors and Performers* (Mr. Mark Camphouse), not only was I pushed as a traditional composer and teacher of composition, I was asked to create a proposal to improve the state of music education. After the global pandemic, my music education career began to fall apart – the few jobs I was able to keep were pushed to a virtual format, and students were becoming increasingly confused and frustrated by learning online. Because of this, I argued for a plan to integrate music technology curriculum into preexisting traditional music programs, and to bring the curriculum up-to-speed to the increasing demands of technology on the music industry. I hope to bring these ideals laid out in my proposal to all schools I work with, and provide best for my students by giving them the technological resources to create and produce their own ideas on their own in this new musical-digital economy.

Finally, *MUSI 660: Teaching Improvisation* (Dr. Charles Ciorba) most improved my curriculum for instructing middle and high school jazz bands. While working on my individual skills as an improviser on multiple instruments, the theory and structure of jazz chord changes and modalities, and the metacognitive “how to teach jazz,” I feel much more prepared to present improvisation to my students in a systematic and simple way. The artifact I selected is a one-unit lesson plan for teaching the 12-Bar Blues. I’ve used variations of this lesson plan in private jazz lessons and workshops with local school band programs, but this class helped solidify my explanation in a more succinct and logical manner. Included are two video submissions that were submitted for the class that also can be directly taught to students interested in jazz improvisation – one worksheet of minor ii-V-i licks, and a transposition application exercise.