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Bands are Community



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There are various contexts in which one can contemplate community. At its simplest level a community is a group that shares an environment, people living in a common location. Community can also refer to a

group organized around common values, thus exhibiting a degree of social cohesion. With the Internet and ease of travel, the concept of community is no longer contained by geographical limitations. We exist in a global community and can influence and exchange ideas regardless of physical location.

Phi Beta Mu International is one such community, and it exists on many different levels. There are thirty-two local chapters. Each chapter has a distinct culture and personality but is founded on the principles of fellowship, the pursuit of excellence, building better bands, developing better musicians in schools, and fostering an appreciation of quality wind literature and band performance. There is a strong sense of community within each chapter. Phi Beta Mu serves to inspire and connect musicians and educators from school to

school, across each state or province, and throughout the world.

Given the demands on our time and energy, it is easy to become focused on our own programs and lose the opportunity to support and provide encouragement to our peers. Instead of isolating ourselves we need to reach out to others, share ideas and resources, attend our colleagues' concerts, acknowledge and commend our colleagues' successes, commiserate, and celebrate this wonderful profession. The energy you expend alone and isolated always feels greater than when you are surrounded by a supportive community.

Phi Beta Mu International is our supportive community. It is far reaching and it is your connection across the country. In Phi Beta Mu you have a colleague who teaches in a university, in a small town in Iowa, in a thriving program in a busy metropolis, and you have colleagues in Canada – in Alberta and Ontario. You have access to composers, publishers, and industry representatives. In essence you have a support system across the continent that will inspire and inform you. Phi Beta Mu is not only about the people it serves, it is the people it serves.

We are trying to improve the opportunities to connect our members. We have a website that allows us to communicate, execute international business, and hold elections. The Phi Beta Mu International website really

does identify us and connect us. We will continue to improve this important vehicle of communication.

Another goal we share is to acknowledge the contributions and successes of individuals in our profession. Each year Phi Beta Mu International highlights the accomplishments of an Outstanding Bandmaster and an Outstanding Contributor to Bands. Look for the full-page promotion in this newsletter and in the Midwest program. Consider joining us at the Membership Assembly and Awards Breakfast on Thursday, December 16, 2010.

In closing, consider the Latin word *communitas* - the roots being *cum*, "with/together" and *munus*, "gift". This combination of fellowship and sharing of gifts is one of the qualities I value most about Phi Beta Mu. It is our responsibility to foster these ideals in our local communities and across the boundaries of state and country. Reach out and provide that fellowship to a new teacher, an established colleague, or a brother or sister you have yet to meet.

I look forward to meeting many more of you in this community we share, Phi Beta Mu International.

Sheryl A. Bowhay
 President
 Phi Beta Mu International

Notes re: community
 Sourced from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia



**Sissy Pierce
Director of Bands
Rison High School**

**MAKING IT HAPPEN
in Arkansas**

Building and maintaining a Superior performing school band in a small community would be an overwhelming challenge to some, but Ethel “Sissy” (you gotta love the South!) Pierce has been making it happen for more than thirty five years. The Rison concert band has an enviable chain of First Division per-

formances and this fall 71 students -- 8 through 12-- marched onto the field for another award winning season.

Upon graduation from college Sissy found there was not a big demand for lady band directors, so she was quick to accept the Rison job. She opened her first season with a band of 14 students including six majorettes. A vibrant personality and strong determination launched the Rison program into a growth cycle that now offers music education to 140 students in grade six through twelve. She gives her Father, also a band director and jazz pianist, credit for pulling her through the early years. As a second grader she often accompanied him to the band hall and found the musical surroundings to be an intriguing part of her life.

She started her school band experience as a saxophonist but quickly developed into an excellent oboe player to meet the needs of her Dad’s Lake Village Public School Band. Sissy entered the profession at a time when Arkansas’ strongest band programs were in her area. Hall of famers John Barbarotto, Homer Brown, and Scrubby Watson directing the Pine Bluff Band, which excelled in national competition, were a strong

influence in her development. Such mentors set high musical standards for the entire state and she treasures the experience of learning from their success.

The Rison band program includes classes in three schools which she manages with one assistant. She maintains a dedicated interest in mentoring young band directors and is readily available to help new teachers find their place in the profession.

The high school band now rehearses in a new state of the art building in testimony to a dedicated career which fosters strong school and community support, but occasionally as the last student walks out the door and a peaceful quiet settles in at the end of a long day, she well remembers her beginnings in a lone isolated building where her small band of musical converts forged into 35 years of superior performance, community service, and the knowledge of the hundreds of kids who experienced the fellowship and discipline that only a quality band program provides.

It happened in Rison, Arkansas, population 1261.

By Eldon Janzen



The Rison Marching Band lines up for an impromptu newspaper photo shoot during early rehearsals. Ethel “Sissy” Pierce is top left.

PHI BETA MU Outstanding Awards 2010

Phi Beta Mu, the International Bandmasters Fraternity, and its International Board of Directors Proudly Congratulate its 2010 Award Recipients!



Robert E. Foster

Phi Beta Mu International Awards | **OUTSTANDING BANDMASTER 2010**

Robert E. Foster was born, 1939 in Texas where his father, Estill Foster was a prominent high school band director. Foster attended the University of Texas. He taught in Austin and in Houston. He received his masters degree from the University of Houston. Foster served as the assistant and the associate director of bands and trumpet teacher at the University of Florida. He has served the University of Kansas for 31 years, he was conductor of the top wind organizations, and was the chairman of the Division of Bands. In 2006, he was inducted into the National Band Associations Hall of Fame. Foster has served as president and chairman of the board of directors of the American Bandmasters Association, the National Band Association, as president of the Southwest Division of CBDNA, and of the Big 12 Conference Band Directors Association. He is VP of the John Philip Sousa Foundation, and has been on the Board of Directors for CBDNA, ABA, NBA, the John Philip Sousa Foundation, and the Kansas Bandmasters Association. He was selected Bandmaster of the Year by KBA. Foster is an active composer, arranger, conductor, and clinician. He has served as an educational consultant for Wingert-Jones Music.



Mark J. Morette

Phi Beta Mu International Awards | **OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTOR 2010**

Mark J. Morette is the second generation owner of Mark Custom Recording Service, Inc. In Clarence, NY, Mark Recording was founded in 1962 by Vincent S. Morette, a music/ technology pioneer and innovator who brought together music education and the tape recorder. Mark followed in his fathers footsteps and has been recording for over 30 years. Mark has been privileged to work with Jazz greats, Bobby McFerrin, Dizzy Gillespie, John Faddis, Steve Houghton, Shelly Berg, Jeff Jarvis, Eastman Jazz Ensemble. Pop music favorites; Ginger Baker, Richie Havens, Denny Laine, 10,000 Maniacs, Goo Goo Dolls, Misfits, Men at Work. Classical artists; Fred Mills, Houston Opera, Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, Tokyo Kosei Wind Orchestra, US Air Force, Army, Marine, Navy, Coast Guard Bands, Rutgers Wind Ensemble, Pacific Symphonic Wind Ensemble (Canada), Texas A&M University, to name a few.

Mark currently spends over 30 weeks a year "on the road" recording. Mark has been honored with 160 Grammy Entry List appearances for his recordings, producing, and Mark Records releases. He has been awarded the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra's award for "Outstanding Service to Music Education", the International Percy Grainger Society's "Grainger Medallion", as well as the New York State Band Director's Association's "Outstanding Service" Award.

Help us to recognize these individuals at the following events:

Phi Beta Mu Membership Assembly

Thursday, December 16, 7:30 AM - 9:00 AM, Continental A , Hilton Hotel

Phi Beta Mu Awards Breakfast

Thursday, December 16, 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM, Continental B , Hilton Hotel



Phi Beta Mu

Phi Beta Mu is a non-political, non-profit fraternity organized to promote fellowship among its members, to encourage the building of better bands and the development of better musicians in schools throughout the world, to foster a deeper appreciation for quality wind literature, and to encourage widespread interest in band performance.



Travis J. Weller has been the Director of Bands at Mercer Area Middle-Senior High School since 1995. He earned his bachelor's degree in Music Education with a concentration in Tuba and Conducting from Grove City College and graduated from Duquense University in May of 2007 with a Master's Degree in Music Education. Travis is currently enrolled in the Doctoral Program at Kent State University in addition to his teaching duties at Mercer. He holds professional membership in [PMEA](#), Phi Beta Mu (Nu Chapter), and the [NBA](#). Travis is also a freelance arranger and composer of music for school bands.

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Founding Beliefs in my Philosophy of Music Education

One of my more critical beliefs about music education is its responsibility to be an integral force in shaping, educating, and influencing culture and society. Like Reimer (2003), I believe that music education has a responsibility to make our students aware that music is a universal experience, the meanings drawn from music are contextual to the culture in which they occur, and that through exploration and study of other culture's musical forms and practices students can come to a better appreciation, understanding, and value of the music indigenous to their own culture. While some exploration and study of music of other cultures is a worthy endeavor, we are limited by our shared experience of that culture's music, and we must be sensitive that our instruction through the represented medium in our culture may in fact not accurately represent the accepted practices of the culture from which the music originates (Jorgensen, 2003).

If we can recognize this limitation and seek means by which we are able to bring a better understanding to our students through authentic representation or performance, we demonstrate our commitment to the universal experience that music offers. The respect and inclusion of music from other cultures is a

valuable undertaking, but our profession must also consider the traditions and social values of our own culture as we select music for study. Our goal should be to provide an authentic musical learning experience for all involved. That goal requires us to extend our search for appropriate music to many traditions, eras, styles, and genres so that we find music that is consistent with the desires of the community in which we teach (Rideout, 2005).

As part of our responsibility to educate and influence culture and society, we must develop and provide creative responding and listening opportunities "*including but going beyond* those that are readily available within the culture" (Reimer, 2003, p.160). I will first address the opportunities within music that are engaged by the majority of the population and later will discuss the importance of those engaged by a smaller portion of the populace. Each side, for reasons of authenticity, aesthetic appeal, history, performance demands, and relation with aspects of the culture is worthy of study for students at every grade level. When music's ability to contribute to moral conditions, regulate behavior or social norms, integrate society, enhance personal relationships, and promote social and political awareness are considered in addition to the reasons listed above (Alperson & Carroll, 2008), it becomes apparent that music is deeply integrated and functional within society and culture. My goal here is not to make qualitative judgments or imply preference, but rather to view music of our own culture from a broad perspective and illuminate reasons why there should be a diverse selection of music among our curriculum choices.

The majority of my teaching experience thus far has been as a high school band director and teacher of instrumental music. The nature of this teaching position has required me to prepare soloists, chamber and small ensembles, and large ensembles of a traditional school setting for numerous public performances. An additional part of my teaching duties includes instruction to students in a general music classroom, and although this portion of the student population does not have aspirations to enroll in one of the curricular ensembles, they are just as deserving as ensemble students to be engaged in musically meaningful ways (Reimer, 2003).

We must achieve a healthy balance between the objectives of professional music educators and the desires of students and community members as we select music for study. When the demands of the community prevail over the insight and experience of professionals, education can be stagnant. Conversely when community values are ignored and the choices of the profession dominate, a rift develops between the two groups (Reimer, 2003). In considering Reimer's discussion in his third edition, I conclude that one of the more significant rifts has involved the exclusion of popular music from classrooms. Reimer (2003) notes that "popular music" is engaged by the vast majority of the American populace, yet it has remained largely unused in the music classroom or rehearsal hall. British philosopher Kevin D. Skelton (2004) offers an interesting perspective on the idea of engaging students in studying music. He says,

"Unlike most disciplines, students continuing to post-secondary education in music are likely to have undertaken private instruction in their principal instrument, if not also in history and theory. For this reason, it is my rather extreme opinion that pre-university music education would be served better by catering to the average students. Such a focus would encourage more people to engage with music at a level of some personal importance throughout their lives. By this I do not mean a 'dumbing-down' of the curriculum, but rather a shift in focus that could benefit the musically proficient as well as the musically interested."

While this statement is not meant to dismiss the value or heritage of existing performance ensembles within the school, educators must recognize that many students are already deeply immersed in some styles and types of popular music. Providing opportunities to create, listen, and respond to music the student can identify creates a learning atmosphere that is energizing, refreshing, and responsive. Skelton (2004) further advocates that our profession should

seek to recognize the role music plays in each student's life, and our classroom and curriculum should also seek to promote an increased and more diverse role outside the limits of school. As Woodford (2005) suggests, students should be reminded of the significance of expanding their musical and social perspectives, while learning to live in a society where people's values, morals, and beliefs differ from their own. We can challenge students to consider cultural, political, social, and moral issues that have been central in many different styles of popular music so that they come to a better understanding of the performance practices and traditions that have set it apart from other styles of music.

In my role as an instrumental music educator, I select music for educational study with opportunities for creating, listening, and responding going beyond what is provided by the culture. I utilize music of various folk traditions, instrumental music of Western classical traditions, and Jazz music traditions. This music has always been associated with the repertoire of music for school bands, and those ensembles retain unique characteristics that demonstrate its virtues. We should continue to preserve and present music that best represents this heritage in our instruction while we also seek new examples that extend the spirit and contribute to the advancement of our heritage. In our search to present repertoire that answers this calling, we should also, as Reimer (2003) points out, not force our ensembles to study a "varied repertoire of music" at the expense of compromising our artistic integrity.

Over the past ten years, there has been significant collaboration among conductors, composers, and educators to identify individual pieces within the repertoire of Western bands that represent authentic, well-crafted, educational, and culturally and stylistically diverse literature that should be considered for study. The efforts of projects like *Teaching Music through Performance in Band* series, *Composers on Composing for Band*, and *Bandquest* have yielded a considerable educational resource to those in our profession that are charged with educating, preserving, and advancing the heritage of instrumental music.

This is not a process whereby we will see the results in one year. I am distressed over the number of colleagues I know that have left the profession because it was a fight in which “they didn’t know where to start.” We must find ways to retain members in the profession so that in time they see the fruit of their labor.

I am distressed when I learn of concerts and programs where musical expectations are far removed from the community in which it is situated. We must find ways to preserve the heritage of instrumental music as it exists so that our audience experiences aesthetic, educational, and entertaining moments.

We cannot always fight the war of financial support for music education, though it is one of which we should be aware. We must be advocates that build knowledge, respect, and appreciation for our fine and performing arts programs within the schools. We must take responsibility to educate our communities about our program’s value so that no school administrator or board of director for a community group will ever think “well, we have to have this music program.”

I want them to NEED the MUSIC program like a fish needs water. This issue is bigger than me, and even bigger than the Music Ed Blogger Move-

ment. But we need to be having this conversation with our colleagues about this responsibility. I’m in. How about you?

References

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Opportunity is Near

Music educators often lust after a priority position among school programs. The surest way to achieve such a position will always be to build a successful program. But there are other possibilities on the horizon. The attention pendulum may swing our direction for reasons that we have always claimed but can now prove.

Because music lights up the brain with activity and Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging shows that, scientists have made us the poster child (or the lab rat) of brain research. They have proven that music changes the brain.

Using Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging, scientists have found that music performance activates and changes the brain. Technology has also confirmed that music activities use areas of the brain that are important to success in language, mathematics, and other academic areas. Those newly discovered situations mean that music activities improve parts of the

brain required for academic success. In fact, there is evidence that improvement in rhythm performance skills transfers directly to improvement in reading skills. Due to the rarity of transfer of learning, it is difficult to overstate the importance of these findings.

Testing-conscious educators will soon act upon this research. I predict the following scenario:

1. The advantages of rhythm skill improvement will come to the attention of school administrators
2. School administrators will lead an initiative to use this new research to improve test scores.
3. Music teachers will be left out, and this promising program will fade into obscurity like so many others.

Nostradamus I’m not, but these are safe predictions. Somewhere that will occur. But there is a preferable scenario.

1. Music educators will introduce this research and lead the effort.
2. Dual purpose curricula will emerge so that rhythm improvement and traditional learning occur simultaneously.
3. Music will be front and center at every grade level and music educators will be indispensable academic leaders.
4. Music ensembles will be first choice electives for students with early rhythm fluency, and music programs will flourish beyond our imaginings.

The latter scenario asks a lot of busy band directors. But it offers us the chance to affect the academic success of every student while we build large successful programs from the position of an academic leader. What better legacy?

www.dana.org/news/cerebrum/detail.aspx?id=26122