

# Music is a Place for Everyone

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*As a music educator/band director, my philosophical focus/foundation has always been:*  
**MUSIC FOR THE SAKE OF MUSIC!**

While it is obvious there are many additional benefits generated via the music learning and music making process, these all stand a far distant second in comparison to the priceless value of learning and expressing the language of MUSIC. As musicians we inherently know we MAKE MUSIC to MAKE MUSIC. The intrinsic payoffs are beyond measure. To justify the importance of MUSIC in any other fashion seems less-than-authentic and (in a sense) diminishes the one-of-a-kind experience only MUSIC can deliver.

No doubt we have all trudged through the frustration of trying to explain the intrinsic joy and positive worth of being involved in the world of music to someone who has never been a music-maker. Music is a language unto itself. I'm reminded of this bit of wonderful wisdom: **People hear (and listen to) what is of interest to them.** If we are touting the value of "participating in band/music" to a group of parents, let's make certain the message is crafted and presented in a fashion it resonates with THEIR wants and needs. With that said, it would be advantageous to express the unlimited benefits of learning/making music from every possible angle including both the intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. Ultimately, "What will get and keep the listener's attention? What will compel parents to take action and connect their child

to the music community? What will convince an administrator to support music within the school schedule?"

If there is a shred of reasoning in the above thoughts, then the discourse (WHY MUSIC? WHY BAND?) takes on new meaning. We often tend to answer these questions from an artistic position:

- **Music lifts our spirits.**
- **Music helps us share our inner thoughts and feelings with a vocabulary beyond the common word.**
- **Music avails us to emotions we otherwise will suppress or ignore.**
- **Music is a universal language.**
- **Music makes life worth living by touching our souls.**

These are all well and good and a resounding "AMEN!" is extended by this author.

The only way one can explain music is with music. If we are to convince non-music makers about the importance of music learning, we may have to step off our podiums and put the **recruitment spotlight** on the extended human needs and essential human qualities:

- **Music has a direct impact on academic achievement.**
- **Music creates a forum for healthy human exchange.**
- **Music enhances perceptual motor skills.**
- **Music supports the qualities needed to survive and thrive in the modern-day society.**

Music is NOT a frill subject or a fringe activity, but music-study is a microcosm of society bringing the

requisite disciplines of success to the ensemble experience. Music learning for the sake of music; and music learning for the sake of life. What better way to prepare for a successful future?

**WHY MUSIC? WHY BAND?**  
*(from the non-musician's point of view)*

Who should study music? Who should be in the band?

Music is a place for everyone. Our traditional music programs have inadvertently promoted a false concept of: *Music is for the musically talented students.* This elitist view has found its way to more people than we might expect. The study of music actually breaks down societal barriers from race to socioeconomic strata. Music often reaches the students who are struggling with their other academic studies. Advanced brain research continues to verify and confirm all brains are "wired for music." Eric Jensen, research author on brain-based learning, writes, **Music is part of our biological heritage and is hard-wired into our genes as a survival strategy.** (Jensen, E. 2001, *Arts with the Brain in Mind*, p.15.)

Do parents, administrators, community leaders, and teachers of other disciplines understand (even know) this information? Are we (as music educators) sharing this extraordinary news with our educational partners? Music is NOT for the "chosen few," but music is for all those who want to pursue this exciting pathway of learning, and shouldn't that be everyone?

*(continued)*

## Music is a Place for Everyone

### *Why study music if my child isn't going to be a musician?*

So many parents (at the point of registering a student for music) do not understand the extended value of learning music. There's far more to this than investing in an instrument, scheduling lessons, driving to and from rehearsals, and/or attending concerts. The discipline of music making is transferable to every learning situation in and outside the academic community. We have pointed to music students as "the smartest and most responsible students in the school." We now understand it is really the study of music that puts them in this favorable posture alongside their non-musical counterparts. We must be cautious not to suggest "music makes you smarter," but we certainly can point to the overall accomplishments of the students of music and find a similar high level of achievement in both academic and non-academic arenas; this is NOT an accident or a coincidence. Arguably no other discipline in school can better prepare the mind and spirit for the challenges of, medical study, law school, classes in engineering, education/teaching, business college, etc. Ultimately, don't we want MUSIC to be a part of every person's life? From singing in the church choir to playing in the community band, music should not be relegated to the school environment, but music becomes our trusted friend of expression forever.

### *Framing the message for the welfare of the child.*

What is the most important priority for all parents? THE FUTURE HAPPINESS OF THEIR CHILD! Mothers and fathers around the world dedicate their lives to creating an even better life for their children. In a highly competitive

society, they want to see their sons and daughters have every possible advantage in their educational climate, their chosen profession, and their selected community of living where, once again, the cycle will repeat itself with and for the next generation. The complexity of society's evolutionary standards (some favorable, some not) puts

responsible parents "on alert" 24/7. What is the best use of their child's time and energy, both in the classroom and outside the classroom? Might I suggest the study of music is a cultural imperative fulfilling all the wants, needs, and wishes of every caring-sharing parent.

Instead of being overly cautious about emphasizing the "off the podium" benefits of music learning and music making, we

might consider SHOUTING this news to every accountable parent, and to every administrator who seeks a better school environment, and to every student who wants to enjoy a life of happiness and success. This is not to replace or overshadow "music for the sake of music," but to reach out to all students so they can avail themselves to the rewards of MUSIC. We know we have the most convincing recruitment information available to bring them to our rehearsal rooms: MUSIC CREATES SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE. The "learned outcome" of music study is a certain success blueprint. What parent could say NO once he/she understands the immeasurable value of music study?

Why music? Why band? It might be more appropriate to ask: Why NOT music? Why NOT band? It is evident music education should be experienced by every student. We, as a culture, will be best served if the hearts and minds of our youth are filled with the knowledge and the understanding of MUSIC. The time has come, the time is now!

### **STRIKE UP THE BAND!**

*Following his tenure in the college band directing world, Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser created Attitude Concepts for Today, Inc., an organization designed to manage the many requests for teacher inservice workshops, student leadership seminars, and convention speaking engagements focusing on the area of effective leadership training. To date, some three million students have experienced one of his popular sessions. Tim presently serves as Vice President of Education for Conn-Selmer, Inc. He is a nationally recognized voice touting the importance of arts education for every child. His books, produced by G.I.A. Publications, Inc., continue to be bestsellers in the educational community. Tim is also the Senior Educational Advisor for Music for All, and NAMM (The National Association of Music Merchants). He holds degrees from Ball State University and the University of Alabama. In 1995 he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from the VanderCook College of Music. He continues to teach as an adjunct faculty member at Ball State University, Indiana-Purdue/Ft. Wayne University, and Butler University. In addition, he is a member of the Midwest Clinic Board of Directors and the Western International Band Clinic/American Band College Board of Directors. He is presently the Chair of the National Association for Music Education Music Honor Society (Tri-M).*