

**PHILOSOPHY OF MUSIC EDUCATION**  
**From the College Wind Band Perspective**  
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**Introduction**

In my mind, there are three fundamental responsibilities of a successful music educator: Medium, Craft, and Audience. This philosophy is not only constantly evolving through new musical and educational experiences but also has been shaped by having high quality mentors in the wind band field.

**The Medium: Music & Performance**

The responsibility to the medium can seem rather ambiguous, but still significant to the development of the art form. The wind band most exists in academia. Since there are so few professional wind bands in the country, it the responsibility of educational institutions to advance the art form, specifically those of higher education. Wind band is unlike orchestra, choir, and string ensembles. Those other ensembles have a rich history and presence in the professional world, giving students easy access to the repertoire, which will let advancement take place on the professional level. Understanding this situation of the wind band, we must actively promote the genre by preserving compositions of the past (Harmoniemusik and music of the French Revolution), respect the foundations of the modern wind band (music by Gustav Holst, Ralph Vaughn Williams, and Percy Grainger), pay tribute to the great American band composers (Vincent Persichetti, William Schuman, Morton Gould, Fisher Tull, Clifton Williams, and W. Francis McBeth), and defend the music of our time (Mark Camphouse, David Gillingham, David Holsinger, Robert Sheldon, Julie Giroux, Jack Stamp, and Frank Ticheli). If we do not do this, the wind band medium will be a dying art form. Teaching music requires commitment and devotion to serving the music in researching repertoire, understanding the weaknesses and demands of yourself and your ensemble, and constantly improving your musicianship.

**The Craft: Pedagogy & Conducting**

Being a vital part of the college music curriculum, the band serves as the major performing ensemble for most wind and percussion players. Therefore, a key function of the ensemble is to educate students with a diverse selection of high quality wind literature that provides them both a historical perspective and encourages the exploration of current trends in instrumental composition. Few musical settings offer the opportunity to both preserve the old and open a door for the new. The wind band develops greatly in the commissioning of new works and supporting the efforts of wind band composers, both past and present. With that being said, researching the history of our “instrument” as well as interacting with those who are currently creating the musical art form is an opportunity that should be required for all college band programs.

Conducting is non-verbal communication to musicians. In order to advance one’s skills in conducting, it must be thought of as improving one’s communication skills. Sometimes conductors do gestures that no one understands, so the ensemble just ignores the conductor. Conductors can get wrapped up into feeling the music and lose the dialogue between conductor and musician. This is unacceptable. Conducting to communicate the music should be priority. This requires constant self-evaluation for improvement. It is common for conductors to only work with their ensemble, which means they develop communication with their specific students. Since there more time during weekly rehearsals, conductors can verbally tell their ensemble exactly what they want rather than show it. However when guest conducting, time is much more limited and those conductors are forced to communicate more through their conducting. I believe improving your conducting with this mindset will provide more clarity with your musical communication, both when working with familiar ensembles and guest conducting. Thinking in with this in mind will create more musician-centered conductors.

### **The Audience: Students & Musicians**

There are some teachers who are highly knowledgeable about music but do not show care toward their student's learning and development. Stereotypically, this tends to show up when a performance major chooses an education degree as a "back-up plan," or when a director uses the ensemble for their personal gain. Teaching should be considered an honor and in music education it is our responsibility to teach students to take control of their own musicianship. It requires frequent reflection, trust, research, and planning for the student's growth. As a conductor, being an exceptional instrumental performer is not enough. It is necessary to have command and expertise of ensemble techniques, a solid philosophical foundation, and makes the musical experience of the students top priority when teaching. We should remain hopeful that our students pursuing music education would gain the aptitude to distinguish the characteristics of quality literature and make educated musical choices when selecting works for their school ensembles once they become educators. Also, we need to show care for all our students. We need to show them they are valued as individuals. This forces us to not only to look at the ensemble as one group, but many individuals coming together and to create synergy. Music is more than just a subject that is studied, but a language that connects all humanity. I believe that studying music benefits all individuals, no matter the age or ability. Music study also promotes lifelong learning, appreciation, and love for music, plus important life skills including discipline, focus, commitment, devotion, determination, creativity, and independence.

### **Conclusion:**

These three responsibilities show us why teaching is one of the most difficult professions. Band directors have a responsibility to the medium, the craft, and to the players. It is the harmony of these three responsibilities that challenges every college band director's teaching ability. It should be a priority to persuade our students of the vital role they play in the development of the art form while nurturing their music education needs.