

Advocating for Popular Music Education – Where do we go from here?

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As Popular Music Education continues to grow, I'm often asked the difference between "traditional" music education, jazz education, and popular music education. Over the past 20+ years of teaching PME, I often run into questions including:

- Why not a marching/concert band?
- Why not an orchestra?
- Why non-traditional or popular music?
- What are the educational benefits of PME?
- You don't really consider PME to be "real" music education, do you?
- So you just want to teach people how to be in wedding bands?

With that in mind, over the past year I've written several articles on the topic sponsored by the National Association for Music Education. My first article was titled *The Argument for Commercial Music Education*. It received more retweets, shares, and likes on social media than any other NAFME sponsored post in the last year, highlighting the growing interest of adding a third facet to music education.

"Traditional" music education must adapt to not only incorporate diverse styles of music, but must also address disparate learning styles and the diverse backgrounds of our students. The tide is turning, as a growing number of educators find ways to implement PME into their existing program. How do we go about continuing this trend? How can we, as a community of experienced PME educators, help develop, advance, and implement principles of PME across a wider educational landscape? These are some of the questions we'll discuss, and I hope to provide insight from my experiences.

"Today, jazz education is an integral part of American music education -- but that was not always the case. During the 1930s - 1950s, jazz often came under attack in music education texts and journals because it was thought to have a degenerative effect on school music. Indeed, a majority of music educators in the United States felt it was inappropriate to include jazz in their music curricula. In fact, many teachers of "serious" (classical) music went so far as to ban jazz from being played in practice rooms at their colleges, universities, and conservatories. However, attitudes began to change in the 1960s and 1970s and jazz was gradually accepted by the music education community at large. Two reasons for the shift were:

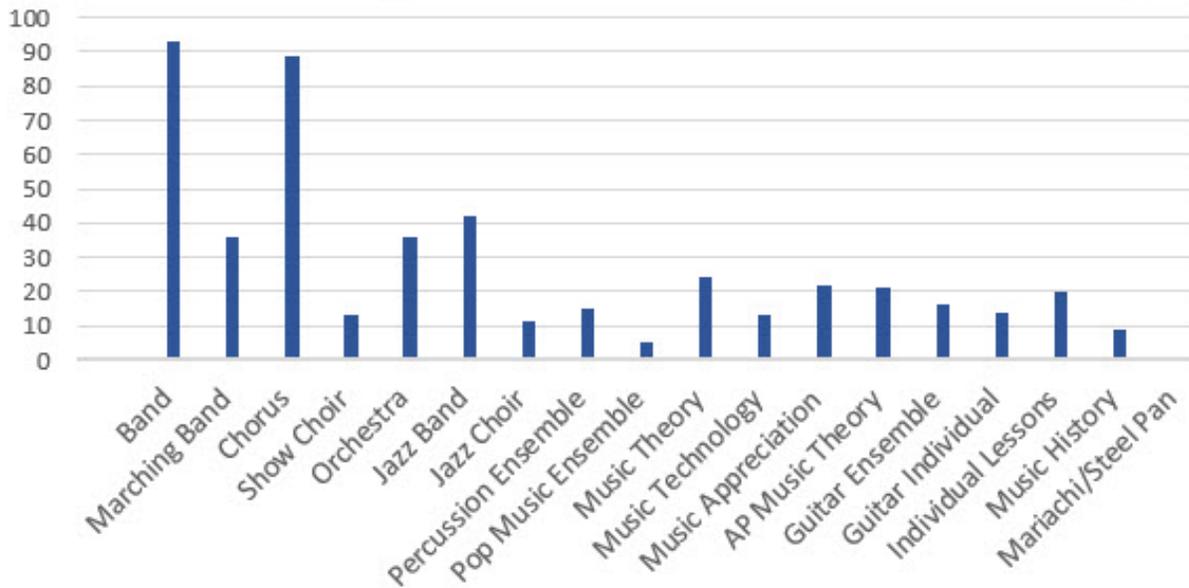
- 1) jazz came to be regarded as art music and not as mere entertainment; and*
- 2) extracurricular jazz activities on college campuses were highly successful.*

By the mid 1970s to early 1980s, the music education mainstream began to signal their approval of jazz. In the 21st century, jazz education still has its critics but is now considered a vital component of music education in America."

~ ***JazzinAmerica.org – The Thelonious Institute of Jazz***

Traditional, ensemble-based music education is by far the most common form of music education in America. *Courtesy of GiveaNote.org*

High School Course Offerings



Additional Resources

The Status of Music Education in US Public Schools – 2017, Give a Note Foundation

When Genres Collide – DownBeat, Rolling Stone, and the Struggle Between Jazz and Rock, Matt Brennan

Transforming Music Education, Estelle Jorgensen

The Routledge Research Companion to Popular Music Education, Gareth Dylan Smith, Zack Moir, Joe Bennet, et al

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“Music Education at the Tipping Point” - John Kratus, *Music Educators Journal*

“Popular Music in Schools: Remixing the Issue” - Robert Woody, *Music Educators Journal*

“The Problems of Band: An Inquiry into the Future of Instrumental Music Education” - Randall Everett Allsup and Cathy Benedict, *Philosophy of Music Education Review*

“What All Teachers Should Learn from Jazz Band Teachers” - William Klemm, *Psychology Today*

“Blending Traditional and Contemporary Teaching Methods: The Argument for Adding Commercial/Popular Music to Your Program” - Steve Holley, *Music in Minuet* blog