

## IS Music

## Narrative

- Write the story of an experience that is significant to who you are as a musician and/or learner and/or teacher
- Refine and hone the piece of writing until it richly communicates to the reader what you have noticed as significant within the piece
- Analyze the piece, identifying and describing what is significant to you in terms of music teaching or learning. What does the piece tell you about who you are? About what you value? About what you know/ have learned about teaching/learning/music?
- The final section of the assignment will describe personal implications for you as an educator – connections between your own experiences, what you have learned from them, and what you plan to do in your own teaching as a result.
- Bring in some readings! In your final ‘implications’ section, connect to the literature from this course or elsewhere (bring in quotations, make reference to authors’ ideas, etc.)
- The Narrative should be submitted as a short paper (approx. two pages in length) with the following structure:

### Story • Analysis • Implications for Teaching

#### Possible story prompts:

- a meaningful music moment
- a teacher that worked for me
- when education failed me
- when I failed as an educator
- significant experiences as a learner
- favorite pieces of music and why

#### *Assessment Rubric*

**Richness of Narrative Piece:** Is the piece *a) well chosen* and *b) thoroughly refined and honed* so that it will richly communicate to the reader what *you* have noticed as significant to you as a musician/learner/teacher? *Please be aware: the process of richly telling your stories (for example by adding descriptive detail) allows you to come closer to them, providing you a better chance of understanding the knowledge embedded within.*

*A (Excellent)*

*B (Very Good)*

*C (Adequate)*

*D (Marginal)*

**Analysis:** Have you shown thoroughness and thoughtfulness delving into the meanings that the narrative pieces hold? *What do the pieces illuminate about you and your understanding of music, teaching, and learning?*

*A (Excellent)*

*B (Very Good)*

*C (Adequate)*

*D (Marginal)*

**Implications for Teaching:** How thoroughly have you pondered the implications for your own teaching, and explained how the knowledge developed here might inform your teaching? Have you provided specific examples of what you might do and say and put in place when you teach? Have you connected to music teaching and learning literature (e.g. course text or other articles/books/presentations)?

*A (Excellent)*

*B (Very Good)*

*C (Adequate)*

*D (Marginal)*

## Self Study Part 1 Exemplar: *Cracked Clarinet*

### *Piece*

I found playing clarinet in my high school concert band to be a profoundly un-musical experience. It quickly became apparent that taking initiative with any dynamic or rhythmic nuance was pointless; my voice was drowned out by the masses. I once soundlessly played an entire concert with a broken clarinet. We were on tour, and when I unpacked my clarinet before the performance I noticed that it was badly cracked. I showed the director, who said there was nothing to be done – I would just have to pretend to play. By the end of the concert I had come to a rather disturbing realization: the fact that I was not actually playing made no difference to the band's performance at all.

### *Analysis*

This realization was utterly disheartening. I felt as though there was simply no point in playing in the band – I felt as though my contribution was meaningless and irrelevant. While the school music program continued to provide me with social opportunities and high grades, I learned to abandon any expectations of aesthetic enrichment or opportunities for meaningful artistic contributions. As a musical performer, *my voice was silenced*.

### *Implications for Teaching*

As identified in my story of the cracked clarinet, a musician may find it difficult to find meaningful opportunities for self-expression when buried within a large ensemble. Shively writes, "With the teacher-conductor transmitting musical decisions to the ensemble members and each ensemble member playing a specific role such as 3<sup>rd</sup> Clarinet or Alto 2, the purpose becomes re-creating the teacher's musical ideas as quickly as possible without any real attention to individual musical growth" (2004, p. 181-2).

In my own teaching, in addition to working within large ensembles, I will strive to create opportunities for my students to participate in solo, duet, and small ensemble music making. In such contexts they will have more evident opportunities to explore and experience meaningful musical decision-making, and the musical growth that results. Through increased personal opportunities for expressivity and ownership, each student's own, distinct voice can be heard. Students deserve to hear their own voices above the tumult of the school music environment.

### **Reference**

Shively, J. (2004). In the face of tradition: Questioning the roles of conductors and ensemble members in school bands, choirs, and orchestras. In L. Bartel (Ed.), *Questioning the paradigm*. Toronto, ON: Canadian Music Educators Association.