

## How the Portfolio Artifacts Apply to My Teaching

“You are about to enter another dimension, a dimension not only of sight and sound but of mind. A journey into a wondrous land of imagination” (Serling, 1959).<sup>i</sup> This is how I felt as I began my coursework at George Mason University. I suspect, and perhaps, even hope, you might gather a similar sense (be it other dimensional or not), as you examine the artifacts of my portfolio. The materials here only **represent** my educational journey, which was one of considerable time. For any given assignment, where my professors provided four readings, I would locate and voraciously study a dozen more. As I see it, these portfolio items are only oblique remnants of the learning I gained. I will attempt to describe how I will use some of the artifacts in my teaching, and how creating the artifacts have helped me to grow as a music educator.

*Choral Literature* was my first course. The topic gave me confidence, however the technology provided a steep learning curve for this Gen Xer. The history courses, along with Covid, demanded I learn technology I had previously tried to avoid. Creating recorded presentations allowed me to critique, and work to change, my often monotone, spoken delivery. Although my presentations are lengthy here, I am confident my zeal for the material and history learned can be scaled down, to the strictly necessary information needed, when making multimedia presentations for my students. In creating the Composer Comparison Chart, I now have a valuable reference tool, accompanied by a fine-tuned understanding of performance practice across the stylistic periods. Working the composer projects - of both *Choral* and *Orchestral Literature*: (Ariel Ramírez and Howard Hanson) - allowed me to hone my skills and confidence for analyzing and reading orchestral scores (which skills are only occasionally required of high school choir directors).

The music theory of the *Analytical Techniques* course had me miffed in the beginning; not because of the level of analyses, but because of the narrative technique. I was expecting one thing,

(detailed, roman numeral analysis, even Shenkerian), but got another- narrative, which seemed obtuse and non-actuarial. Learning the various techniques has given me an appreciation for looking at the elements and forms of various music through a different perspective. I now appreciate that I can explain and discuss music with my students in different ways: What's really there and what we perceive.

Throughout my graduate work I have experienced many epiphanies, great and small. The "Perspectives and Philosophy Courses" provided me with many opportunities to think deeply about, and continue to nurture my earlier "Philosophy of Music Education." For example: The collaborative work with David Webb on "Green Bean Pizza," helped me to "listen" and share my voice in concert with his. Webb's clever example with green beans enabled me to still be creative with my *Aquabats* and "Pizza Day," while conveying the shared message. From this experience I am more confident about my ability to meet (and hear) my students where they are, and provide meaningful value to our work together in their educations (as well as my own). How is my newly-educated philosophy applicable to my teaching? I am more sure about the important responsibility music teachers have for selecting music of qualities worth experiencing and committing to memory. Now I look deeper at musical options and will better consider, "good, better, and best" music that best matches the *musicking* outcomes I intend to pursue.

Researching a problem statement set me on a journey toward what I will call my "Capstone Project", that is, *The American Heritage Songs Project*. I understand a need to restore American heritage songs to our classrooms and people. I located the previous work of Marilyn Ward (2003) and sought to tackle one of her suggestions for further study.<sup>ii</sup> It is my intent to make the 84 Identified American Heritage Songs available to teachers online and free of charge. I am working to provide sheet music, accompaniment tracks, related historical facts, and song background, appropriate for school aged children (K-12), in one website.

*The American Heritage Songs Project*, beginning here at GMU, will hopefully continue and be added to by others. I am motivated by applying knowledge and skill to creative projects (performing, composing, and collaborating). My goals, beginning this master's degree program, were to acquire new knowledge and skillsets and to apply this knowledge to create opportunities for students to learn and grow. I can say that my time at GMU has been successful; it is my hope that GMU can confidently say the same.

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<sup>i</sup> Serling, R. (Writer), & Houghton, R. (Director). (1959, October 2). *Where is everybody?* (Season 1, Episode 1) [TV series episode]. In B. Houghton (Producer), *The Twilight Zone*. CBS.

<sup>ii</sup> Ward, M. (2003). The extent to which American children's folk songs are taught by general music teachers throughout the United States at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.