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Creating a Culture of Change: Disrupting the Self-Perpetuating Cycle

I didn't know that my ideas would be considered "radical". I mean, it's simple to see that our music departments, by and large, do not reflect the demographics of our schools. Gender, racial, and economic parity, if you will, is not being achieved.

If we see our subject of *music* as an essential part of a well-rounded education, then we must want it for all kids, not just the ones who seek it out. It follows that your department must be reflective of the school population.

I've tried to present tangible solutions to help move our classrooms towards parity and have encouraged and pushed for us all to embrace a movement of change. My articles have been met with "thank you for voicing something I'm afraid to voice", and "I've been thinking this too, but didn't know who to say it to."

The Elks Club façade of our field makes it clear that certain voices are not welcome. "Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's just Kelly jib jabbering about feelings, jazz, and equity again." Friends, there is a swelling group of under-represented voices who aren't going away.

We need to come together as music educators to celebrate what we do well. We have so much to celebrate. Absolutely. But then, and I hope soon, we need to come together to acknowledge, reflect, and change what we *do not* do well.

Music teachers have a responsibility to be change agents. Men, especially cis white men, check in with your colleagues. Ask for their stories. Listen for understanding. Implement their ideas. **Do. The. Work.**

I've advocated for change loudly at the board level. I'll continue to do this as Chair of the Equity Committee. If you are interested in these "radical" ideas, and I hope you are, please join us! We need your voice to disrupt the system.

The Importance of Reflection, and the Challenge to Avoid "Getting Back to Normal"

Transformation, readjustment, reconstruction all imply prior existences; existences which have characters and behaviors of their own which must be accepted, consulted, humored, manipulated or made light of, in all kinds of differing ways in the different context of different problems. Making a difference in reality does not mean making any more difference than we find by experimentation...

John Dewey

In my work as a musician and an educator, I have come to appreciate the significance of reflection, particularly when learning. Whether I am in a rehearsal hall, a practice room, a classroom, or stage; my growth is dependent upon my abilities to plan, perform, and most importantly reflect. I often discuss with my current students, who are future educators, that learning can be understood as the conscious reflection of lived experience. That is to say, the process of learning comes from an awareness of how our prior actions inform our future decisions. As explained by Dewey in the epigraph above, our experiences, which are formed from "prior existence," are crucial to our understanding of who we are and who we are becoming. We assume that our intentions, which are dependent upon our "prior existence," prevent us from taking risks and affecting meaningful change beyond an often limited understanding. To the contrary, Dewey promotes the ambiguity of certainty through the critical reception of our past experiences. I hope to communicate, in this, my last article of my term as the WMEA orchestra curriculum officer, the need for reflection and experimentation as we continue to author ourselves as both musicians and educators.