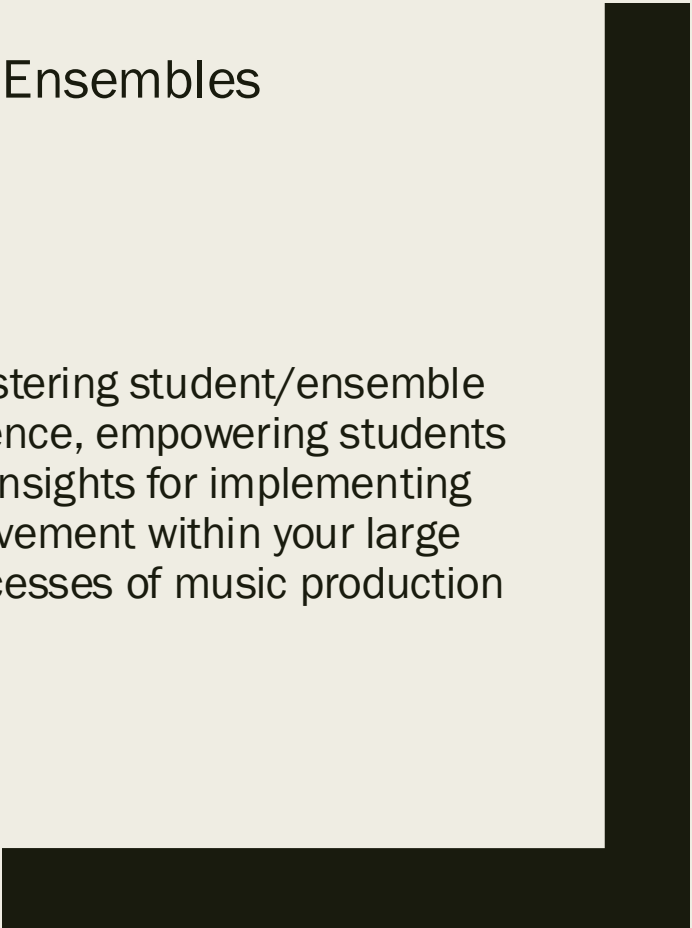


Session Title:

Learning to Listen: Recording Projects for Large Ensembles

Session Description:

Learn to leverage the power of large ensemble recording projects in fostering student/ensemble growth and discover how these projects can elevate the learning experience, empowering students to develop their listening skills and musicality. We will share practical insights for implementing recording projects effectively, nurturing a culture of continuous improvement within your large ensembles and connecting your artistry to your community and the processes of music production and distribution.



Learning to Listen: Recording Projects for Large Ensembles

- **Vince Kenney**, DMA – Director of Bands, Associate Professor of Low Brass, Drake University
- **Bradley Genevro**, DMA – Director of Bands, Professor of Conducting, Oklahoma State University
- **Jacquelyn Meunier** – Director of Bands, Southeast Polk High School





“Can you *HEAR* the Difference?”

-Brian Bowman

- “It took me 20 years to realize I’m not teaching my students how to play, I’m teaching them how to hear... If you can figure that out now, well then I’ve saved you 20 years!” - Dr. B
- The question of “how can I help my students to play better?” becomes, “how can I help my students hear better?”

When Should I Consider Recording?

- Short answer from the pros is “always” ...
- It can really help when you’re “stuck in a rut”
 - *Working sections repeatedly, but without clear direction*
 - *Feels like the music is as good as it’s going to get but it’s not “right”*
- When you’re in this moment, is it that you and the ensemble can’t PLAY at a higher level, or that you and the ensemble can’t HEAR/LISTEN at a higher level?
 - *(Notice we wrote YOU and the ensemble)*
- A great tool for when you want to go Above and Beyond.
- What percentage of us know that these things are good for our ensemble, vs what percentage of us follow through in doing these things with our ensemble? – I know I am guilty!!!

Recording Benefits

- Improved musicianship and attention to detail
 - *Vertical Alignment*
 - *Articulation*
 - *Note Length*
 - *Balance*
 - *Intonation*
- Return agency/responsibility for listening to students
- Develop an understanding of what needs to be changed, why it needs to be changed, and who needs to change to make the improvement



Why don't we already do recording sessions more consistently?

- Traditional barriers to entry
 - *Lack of knowledge of and/or access to recording equipment*
 - Microphone (types, placement)
 - Audio Interfaces (Inputs/Outputs, AD/DA Conversion, Latency)
 - Editing Tools (DAWs, EQ, Reverb, Compression, Mixing, Mastering, Noise Reduction)
 - *Lack of time (recording, planning, editing, publishing, moving files)*
 - *Lack of Funding*

Personal Barriers to Entry

- Fear of losing time in rehearsal
- Lack of connections - who knows how to do all of this stuff?
- Fear of asking questions and looking stupid... This is uncomfortable!
- Fear of what the quality of the end product will be
- Afraid it will expose what we can and can't hear, or expose other weaknesses
- I'M ALREADY AT MY LIMIT!!!
- It's not habit in our field



These barriers to entry are smaller than ever

- In the past, these barriers led to recording opportunities only being made available to professional and collegiate ensembles
 - *TODAY THIS NEED NOT BE THE CASE*
- Start small and figure it out yourself, or...
- Find someone who can do it and hire them – many communities have audio engineers floating around along with plenty of videographers

Recording on a Small Scale

What can I do to get
my group in a
recording mindset?

- Communicate the Purpose
 - *This is for YOU to improve your hearing as well*
- Ensure you have equipment to record your ensemble and a way to share the recordings
 - *Zoom/Tascam recorders, Ipads (Tonal energy works GREAT!), mics (overhead/stand)*
- Create a variety of assignments/techniques to get them listening
- IMPORTANT QUESTIONS to ask yourself “What am I asking them to do?” AND “Have I taught the HOW to do it?”
 - *Ultimately: “What do I do in my rehearsals to encourage live listening?” AND “How do I hold them accountable for listening?”*



Teaching Your Students to Listen

- Develop exercises/prompts to get them hearing other parts outside of their own during rehearsal
- Provide listening assignments, they don't have to be intensive
- Make in-class discussion a part of your routine. "What do you hear?" "How do we make it better?"
- Use a variety of different set-ups that encourage listening
- Most bands focus on playing right notes and rhythms... GO DEEPER!



Assignment Suggestions

- Written Critiques
- In-class guided discussion, give them ownership to rehearse themselves
- Play service/university vs. our recordings and discuss – “Compare & Contrast”
- Require a band notebook in each folder, write often!
- Teach students how to write S.M.A.R.T. Goals
- At a minimum - ALL concerts should be recorded and some sort of listening assignment should be made



The Payoffs!

- Incorporate writing into your band class (credibility as “academic” course)
- You become a better teacher. Through their writing/reflection, you learn what you have taught well and what you need to improve in your teaching
- Students are able to demonstrate their knowledge of important vocabulary and how to articulate their thoughts
- Most importantly, you learn what they can hear and what they cannot hear

Important Things to Remember:

- Students will likely be resistant to sharing their observations in person. Make band a SAFE place for students to feel not judged
- It is YOUR responsibility as a teacher to teach:
 - *Why listening, responding, and being able to articulate, (accurately) what you hear is important*
 - *The importance of listening and how it can ultimately affect the performance of an ensemble*
- Be transparent. Tell them the “WHY” for everything you do. Nothing should be assumed. Don’t give in to the whining. If you truly believe it is important, they will too!

Sell it with passion!

Preparing for a Recording Session:

- Repertoire Selection and Project Scoping
Repertoire Curation Strategy: Define the criteria and rationale for selecting the specific musical works to be recorded.

Preparing for a Recording Session:

- *Recording Timeline Estimation: Determine the estimated duration required to record the selected repertoire.*
 - This estimation is a prerequisite for scheduling and logistical planning.
 - Crucial Consideration: Account for factors such as mental and physical endurance, ensuring the session schedule optimizes performance quality and minimizes fatigue.
- *Intellectual Property and Licensing: Secure all necessary performance, mechanical, and synchronization licenses, along with any other required permissions, prior to the commencement of recording.*



Session Scheduling and Logistics

- Venue Selection and Booking: Identify, evaluate, and formally reserve a suitable performance space.
 - Acoustic and Environmental Assessment: Conduct a thorough review of the venue for potential extraneous noise interference, including but not limited to external traffic, HVAC systems, and lighting-related hum.

Session Scheduling and Logistics

- Production Team Acquisition: Engage and contract the essential personnel for the recording session:
 - Recording Engineer: Responsible for technical recording quality and setup.
 - Recording Producer: Oversees the artistic direction and performance continuity.
- Artistic and Technical Philosophy: Establish the overarching artistic and technical approach that will guide the entire recording project (e.g., sonic aesthetic, editing style, performance capture method).



Other Preparation Considerations

- Creating a Schedule
 - How long is each session
 - How many sessions a day
- Stage Preparations
 - Risers/Percussion Equipment Options
 - How do the microphones hear the group?
 - Willing to adjust seating to help balances
 - What type of microphone philosophy will be used?
- Pedagogical Preparations
 - Record rehearsals and make available for students
 - Review protocols for session
 - Mindset leading into rehearsal



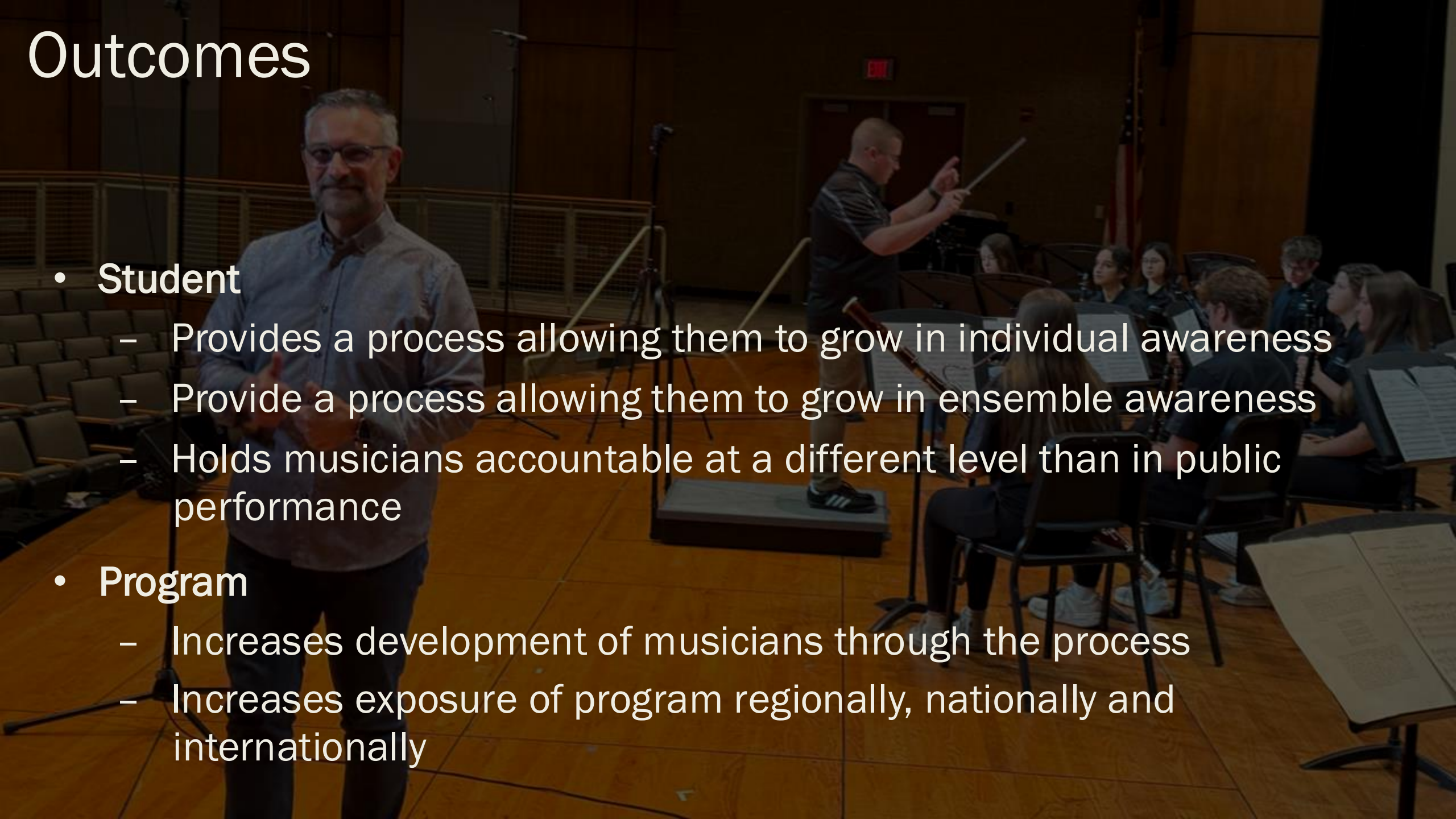


Additional Considerations

- **Media Production and Logistics**
 - Audio/Video Production Scope: Define the requirements and specifications for all audio and video media to be produced.
 - Distribution Strategy: Establish a clear plan for the release, marketing, and physical/digital distribution of the final product.
 - Intellectual Property and Licensing: Thoroughly address and secure all necessary rights, clearances, and licenses for content (e.g., performance rights, mechanical licenses, synchronization rights) before dissemination.
- **Financial Management**
 - Budget Development: Create a comprehensive and detailed project budget that itemizes all projected costs, including personnel, venue rental, equipment, and post-production expenses.
 - Securing Grant Funding: Research, identify, and prepare applications for external grant funding or other financial assistance to support the project.

Outcomes

- **Student**
 - Provides a process allowing them to grow in individual awareness
 - Provide a process allowing them to grow in ensemble awareness
 - Holds musicians accountable at a different level than in public performance
- **Program**
 - Increases development of musicians through the process
 - Increases exposure of program regionally, nationally and internationally



Bands That Record Are Better Bands.

VOCE



The educational value of the recording process heightens the musicians' awareness to a level that is hard to replicate in our normal rehearsal day. Once students experience it, they leave the process seeking out additional ways to grow. It creates a curiosity in our students that is hard to replicate.