

# Letter from the Assistant Editor

by Stephen Calgaro

In a time where arts education has been tested on practically every front, it is imperative to take stock and evaluate where we have been, where we are, and where we are going. Do practice journals really work? What does inclusion look like? How can music educators adapt their classrooms to the 21st century? How can we make the most of the situation in which we find ourselves? These questions and more will be answered in this first issue of the Active & Integrative Music Education journal: Overcoming Obstacles.

Some of these questions might seem like they're settled, but they certainly are not. Although defending general music education has been ongoing for many years, Lois Guderian applies research gathered in the last year and thinkers as old as Lev Vygotsky to create an advocacy for general music which speaks to contemporary concerns. Josh Barker contends that grades should be motivating, and that standards-based grading can be effective if established clearly, leaning heavily on Ken O'Connor's 2018 writings on the subject. Patrick Lawrence outlines proper instrument repair procedures and upkeep for brass and woodwinds, something that could save students and teachers a lot of money. New and relevant information is in perpetual production about these older topics, and these articles are fresh takes on those subjects. Obstacles exist, no matter how long they've been around.

With a focus on the present and future, Elizabeth Bucura describes her journey and reflects on the COVID-19 pandemic and the questions associated with it. Brian Cyr conducted research into the effectiveness of practice journals, and his findings might surprise you. Brenna Ohrmundt, a young educator herself, addresses mental health problems in many young educators and how to combat them. Cody Miller offers a self-reflection of how his collegiate choirs recently soared to new heights of excellence by changing his own mentality. Andrea Hunt discusses online and technological resources and means for education to adapt the classroom for the 21st century. Michelle Yaciuk and Judy Bond both discuss what inclusivity in the music classroom looks like, and what it should look like going forward. Adrian Barnes takes inclusivity beyond individual classrooms and looks at the obstacles for creating music educators in the first place, especially teachers of color.

My vocal pedagogy professor would call these "hot topics," and I would be inclined to agree with him. There is something in here for every educator to read, whether you are brand new to the field or an old veteran. I had the pleasure of reading every one of these, and each one contributes a different obstacle to consider and overcome. As Elizabeth Bucura says close to the end of her article, "Among great changes and challenges, we can address pathways forward in a spirit of togetherness and care. We can liberate ourselves from traditions and expectations in order to collaboratively embrace surprise and confusion. We can demonstrate value for the wonder and possibility of a decentered struggle that moves us to grow together." I think this best summarizes why we put out this journal and held this past year's conference; to come together to overcome the obstacles we face today. As a graduate student, after carefully reading and evaluating these articles, I know I came away with a great amount of new knowledge and perspectives I had not considered. I hope you will as well.

Stephen Calgaro, Assistant Editor