

When I made the transition from school orchestra teacher to graduate student, and subsequently to university professor, I never envisioned the moment I would be nominated for, much less be awarded a career research award. I also never envisioned the letter about this award would come from John Geringer, or that I would be in the company of David Sogin, Marg Schmidt and Margaret Berg.

I have many people to thank, below and throughout this brief talk.

1. Bob Gillespie: Who patiently saw me through the transition from inservice teacher to graduate student and then, to university faculty member.
2. My students
 - a. Hundreds of public-school students and well over one hundred pre-service teachers currently working as music teachers.
 - b. The students and teachers of the USC String Project. The String Project is dear to me because I see children (and adult!) string students four days a week and it reminds me why I got into this business. The teachers of the String Project are an inspiration because of the joy and dedication they exhibit with *their* students.
3. My Colleagues at USC: All our string applied faculty are committed to the musical training of our education majors. We also have an administration that values the community outreach provided by the University of South Carolina String Project.

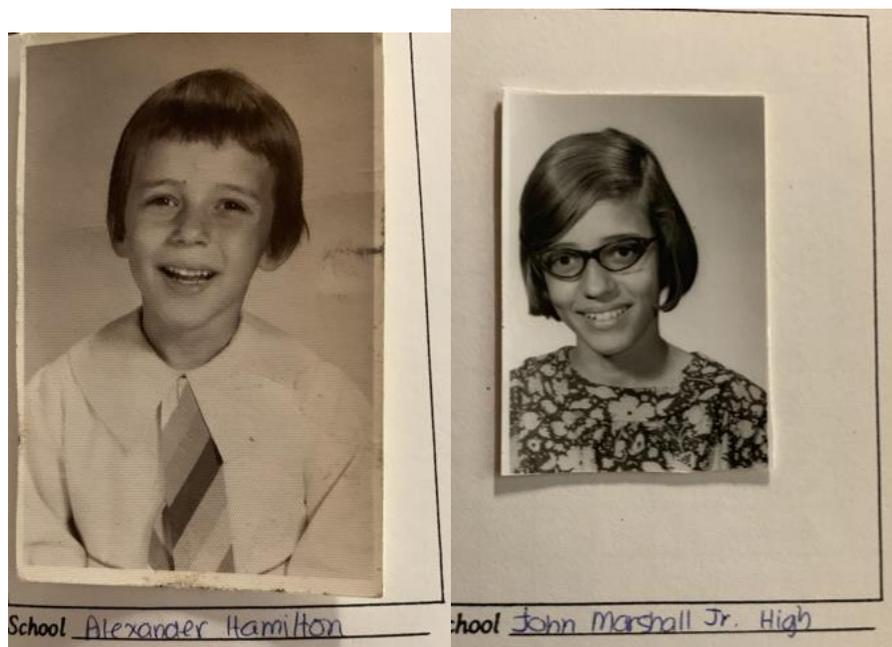
To begin the daunting task of writing this speech, I looked up the parameters of a Ted Talk. A typical Ted Talk is 18 minutes. 18 minutes is "short enough to hold people's attention, [including on the Internet] and precise enough to be taken seriously. But it's also long enough to say something that matters." I may go a bit beyond 18 minutes but I hope I say something that matters.

To preface, in their book, *Sociology for Music Teachers*, Froehlich and Smith cite Smith's model (2013a) of the Snowball Self. In this model, our various identities intersect as we gather form while rolling downhill. (Froehlich & Smith, p. 23-26). I hope to demonstrate how my three of my identities intersect: Student—Research Partner—Social Justice Advocate (but always, a Musician)

Student

I've been an information junkie from my earliest memory.

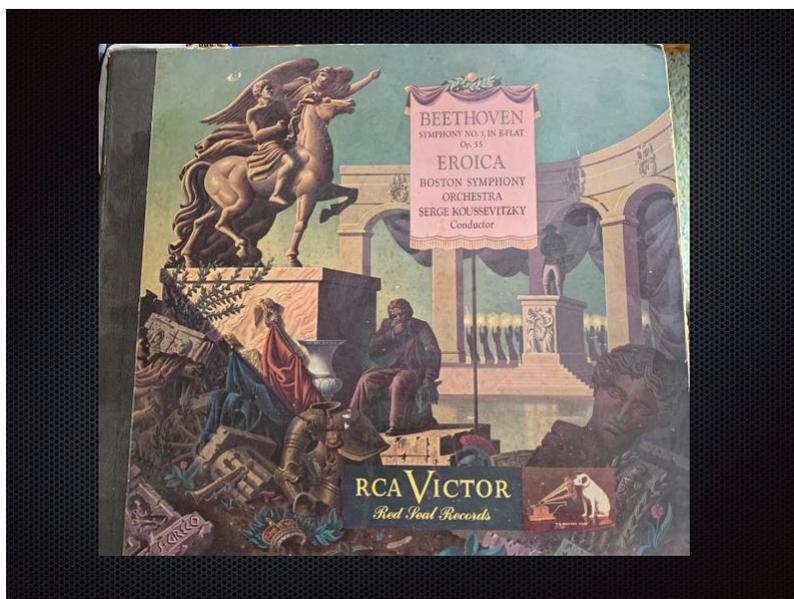
I was also a pretty nerdy little kid:



When I was 8, I got measles and mumps back to back, missing over two weeks of school at Alexander Hamilton Elementary in Westland, Michigan. I read the 16 Golden Book Encyclopedias my mother got as grocery store giveaways. I recently looked these up on Ebay and one can purchase the entire 16 volume set for \$30!! After I was done with those, she enlisted neighbors to bring me books. When I was done with the books, I started reading the dictionary, but one neighbor said, “Gail, people don’t read the dictionary.” What would have happened if she hadn’t told me that? I think we all need to remember not to create artificial barriers for anyone, particularly our students.

When I was ten or eleven, I was considered old enough to ride my bike the three miles each way to the library. My best friend and I would haul books home in our bike baskets and sit in the front yard and read. Those were halcyon days. That’s a word I knew by context, but had to look up on youtube to ensure I pronounced it correctly (hal-see-on) . Perhaps I should have read that dictionary after all . . .

My maternal grandfather and grandmother emigrated from Cappodoccia which was settled by Greeks in what is now modern-day Turkey. After emigrating to the U.S., My grandfather eventually owned a shoe repair shop. He also loved classical music. I have his set of Beethoven’s 3rd on seven 78’s: that’s 14 sides. . . 3 ½ minutes per side.



Papoo wanted me to play the violin, but when I signed up for strings in 4th grade, Ms. Mary Melville told me I should play the viola. My parents were a bit bemused by the whole music thing, but they took my sister and me to concerts, including Yehudi Menuhin at Meadowbrook and the Philadelphia Orchestra in Ann Arbor. I started private lessons in 5th grade, continuing even as we moved a couple of times. When we lived in Western Michigan, my mother would clock out of her retail job in Kalamazoo, drive 30 minutes to pick me up from school, drop me at my lesson at Western Michigan University and come back to pick me up after her shift ended.

In 10th grade, I got a scholarship to go to Interlochen and there took lessons with Mr. Frank Bundra, with whom I studied for the rest of high school and throughout college. Mr. Bundra was outwardly gruff and had high expectations, but he also gave me an hour lesson when my parents were only paying for a half hour. I also remember being ecstatic the first time he said, “not bad.” I completed a dual degree in viola and music education, but remember falling in love with teaching when I student taught at Slauson Junior High School with the legendary Dan Long.

After graduation and moving to Virginia from Michigan, I eventually married another viola player, became a mother to an 8-year-old and had a very rich life as both a school orchestra teacher and symphony musician. I was fortunate enough to marry Greg Barnes, who has always supported my career, through our time in Norfolk, then Columbus, Ohio, and ultimately to South Carolina. He had and still has a strong social conscience, establishing string programs in all-black schools in Norfolk Virginia with funds from the Johnson Great Society programs. I’m sure

that was part of the influence for an article I wrote in 1993 for the VMEA Notes, the journal for the Virginia Music Educators Association.

Success in audition-oriented activities (regional orchestra, All-Virginia) is definitely increased with a decent instrument, private lessons and parental support. What can we do for talented students who are using school-owned instruments, may never receive private instruction and whose parents may have more elemental concerns? (VMEA Notes, 1993)

I believe the desire for social justice has been a motivating factor throughout my work as a teacher in both public schools and as a professor and Director of the University of South Carolina String Project.

Collaboration

In 2010, I was honored when Michael Allen asked me to speak in front of this audience and my theme was how we need to collaborate.

The abstract from the article based on that speech:

In order for research to be relevant and applicable, it is important for us to remember our constituency. Our students and colleagues in the public schools may see research as something abstract and distant, but string education researchers are conducting studies in a variety of areas . . . Collaborating with our current students and public school colleagues may offer opportunities for greater understanding on both sides of this imaginary dividing line. (Barnes, 2011, p.5)

I find collaboration on research projects not only enjoyable but a matter of practicality. In this ‘life of the mind’, we wear many hats and most of us are balancing our teaching, service requirements and our research. Three of the four articles I have published since 2010 have been co-authored and I hope that each have chipped away a tiny bit at the music teaching and learning mountain.

In *Participation in the School Orchestra and String Teachers Facebook v2 group: An Online Community of Practice* (2015), Jane Palmquist and I had great fun tracing the evolution of and the most common posts of the School Orchestra and String Teachers Facebook Group. In July of 2012, there were more than 2000 members. In March of 2019, there are 8372. This group evolved from an online community for string teachers that I designed with an undergraduate student: Stacy Wiley. I developed a companion site on a now defunct platform called Ning and

finally moved it to Facebook. In 2012, members were most interested in repertoire and teaching advice (classroom management, pedagogy) and that remains true in 2019.

Working with David Pope is a joy. I have known him for 16 years, first as a student and now as a friend and colleague. He is funny, enthusiastic, and has an impressive work ethic. I anticipate that, in the coming years, we will hear him speak to this group as a career researcher. In our study, *Influence of Education, Performance Level, and Presentation Medium on Evaluations of String Orchestra Performances* (2015), we asked high school orchestra students, college music majors and in-service orchestra teachers to evaluate three performances of the same piece. All participants were able to discriminate between the good, average, and weak performances when evaluating tone, intonation, and rhythmic precision. Findings from the study affirm something that is dear to my heart as a teacher: We can involve our students in evaluating the ensemble and give them a voice in how to improve, as well ownership in the musical preparation and performance.

The third collaboration was: *Parental involvement and home environment in music: Current and former students from selected community music programs in Brazil and the United States* (2016) with Aureo deFreitas and University of South Carolina colleague John Grego. Aureo was an unusual doctoral student, coming to USC with 2 performance degrees but an impressive record of music education outreach with his Amazon Cello Choir. He was fully funded by the CAPES program for four years and made good use of that opportunity. Aureo and I surveyed current and past students in our community programs, his in Brazil and mine in the U.S. While all groups felt they had their parents' support, the current U.S. students had the lowest rating for home environment in music. I believe that could be linked to current technology and how music listening, in particular, has become a more solitary activity.

For the last seven years, I have also been collaborating on method books with my wonderful co-authors: Brian Balmages, Carrie Lane Gruselle and Michael Trowbridge. I believe the three volumes of *Measures of Success for String Orchestra* (2013, 2016, 2019) are a product of experience, research and best practices. While not considered empirical research, these books are a way to disseminate these same best practices to thousands of children and hundreds of teachers.

Even though I founded the School Orchestra and String Teachers Facebook group, I could not administer the SOST without the 10 individuals who volunteer their time to monitor

the page. In addition, the page would not exist without 8300+ members who post and comment. Again, although not empirical research, it is a collaboration and I learn something new almost every day, either for my own practice or to pass on to my students. As I already mentioned, the members ask for and contribute advice on many topics: Repertoire, teaching tips and sometimes, social justice. I posed this question after the keynote speech by Aaron Dworkin at last year's ASTA conference: "How do you ensure all interested students have the opportunity to participate in the arts?" Some of the responses were: Take an active interest in them and their family, have a culturally responsive curriculum, have documents translated into the most common languages, and find ways for children to succeed.

Social Justice Advocate

What is consuming a lot of thought and energy these days for me are the social issues that impact our work. I am currently teaching a graduate course in the Sociology of Music Education. I am lucky enough to have 5 really smart graduate students who come to class with wonderful questions and strong opinions.

Some of the questions they have raised:

1. How do we balance meeting the needs of low SES students while also encouraging them to meet our expectations?
2. How do we balance the needs of our student teachers and also ensure they have experience in programs with fewer resources?
3. How do we ensure that our non-white students have models who look like them?

While I caution my own students not to conflate race and economic status, the rate of poverty in urban schools with high concentrations of black and Latinx students is six times higher than schools with high numbers of white students (Kozol, 2005). Race and poverty are correlated more than they should be.

One of the articles we discussed in our Sociology of MUED class was *Missing Faces from the Orchestra* (Lorenzo, 2012). This article is a wonderful example of researched based writing published in what I called a 'night-table-friendly journal' (Barnes, 2011, p. 11).

DeLorenzo writes, "Unequal access to educational opportunities is an issue of social justice" (p. 40).

Many in our field are trying to address this: I will name a few, although I am certain there are many others both in print and in progress.

In *Culturally Responsive Teaching Within Rural, Suburban and Urban Orchestra Programs* (2019), Beth Reed asked teachers in three different settings (rural, suburban and urban) about their own perspectives on primary components of their respective situations. She concludes that “. . .relationships established in an orchestra classroom are crucial to creating a supportive environment that includes various means for reaching success ” (p. 40).

Vicki R. Lind and Connie McKoy wrote the valuable *Culturally Responsive Teaching in Music Education* (2016) in an effort to address several facets of the needs of students from varied backgrounds. In reading this text, I realized that I was conflating cultural responsiveness with social justice. I do believe, however, that cultural responsiveness is a vehicle to address social injustice in schools and perhaps outside of schools.

In the study, *Making String Education Culturally Responsive: The Musical Lives of African American Children* (Boon, 2014), the researcher studied the violin experiences of African American students in northern Florida to consider the need for culturally-responsive string education. The children expressed their “desire to play familiar music on their violins” (p. 10)

In *Creating Culturally Responsive Ensemble Instruction: A Beginning Music Educator's Story*, (Schmidt & Smith, 2017), Marg worked with Michael, a professional mariachi player and his successes and obstacles as he tried “teaching ideas beyond the standard string class model.” She encourages teacher educators to do more than “write about alternative approaches to instrumental teaching.”

This year at the University of South Carolina String Project, 25% of our teachers are either African American or Latinx. I am thrilled because I know what a positive example that is for our students. However, as DeLorenzo wrote, “It would be absurd to state that only black teachers should teach black children or a similar comparison with Latino teachers” (p. 42). The vast majority of string teachers, however, are white and middle class, therefore it is necessary for all teachers, particularly pre-service teachers to develop cultural responsiveness. To that end, five years ago, we formed a partnership with Keels Elementary, a Title I school. Alvera Butler, the current principal and former string teacher and String Project alumna initiated this partnership and it was funded for 2 years by the Hootie and the Blowfish foundation. After the funding ran

out, Alvera found resources through her school to continue the program. Alvera wants *her* students to have access to string education prior to the district grade start and I want *my* students to learn to meet the musical and educational needs students who have different backgrounds than their own.

With an eye on the 18-minute mark, I close with an additional quote from Lorenzo (2012, p 45) :

As citizens of a democratic nation, teachers may assume that all children have equal access to the arts, but in fact, America is not a nation of equal opportunity for all people. The music field is no exception, especially in the area of arts music. Although a single music teacher can help counterbalance some of the barriers that face disadvantaged children, it takes a group effort to substantively reform the way we educate and recruit students of color into the profession. Perhaps it is time to approach music teaching with a larger purpose in mind: that social justice is as much a part of our job as teaching music itself.

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