

F A L L 2 0 1 5

*National Association for Music Education*

# NafME Newsletter

Florida Collegiate Chapter: University of Miami

Frost School of Music



## A Note From Our President: Jasmin Vilca

*It is with great pride (once again!) that I address this chapter of the University of Miami NafME Collegiate Chapter Organization. I was really excited to continue leading this group of students and am thrilled to report on our biggest achievements from this fall semester. We were very successful in producing our 2<sup>nd</sup> annual benefit concert. The event raised over \$100 that will go towards a Miami-Dade County secondary-level school that is in need of funding for their music program. We also had a very successful Shadow Day in which high school students from Miami Arts Charter visited the Frost School of Music and were hosted by undergraduate music education students. Today, we have our second collegiate petting zoo, a new fundraising event that we began last semester.*

*I am proud to present the Fall 2015 NafME newsletter to you all. Inside this newsletter you will find articles on various topics that our chapter members have learned about during their various musical journeys. What our members have learned and chosen to share with you here reflects the dedication to growth and development that we share as group of future music educators.*

*I would like to thank our chapter members for all of their hard work this semester. I would especially like to thank the rest of the NafME Executive Board: Donna Hewitt (advisor), Alex Colaizzi (President-Elect), Silvana Ferrarin (Secretary), and Brenda Gonzalez (Treasurer). Also, great thanks to the Frost Music Education faculty for all the support and guidance that you always extend to this chapter.*

*So with that, my time as president has come to an end and I pass on my duties to your next president, Alex Colaizzi. New E-Board members, congratulations on your being elected and I wish you and Alex the best in leading this chapter starting in January. I know you all will do great things! Current members, I look forward to seeing this chapter continue to grow and cannot wait to see what will come in the future.*

*Go forth with pride, future music educators!*

*Your President, Jasmin Vilca*

Edited by Silvana Ferrarin

## Inside...

*Musical Theater: What Should I Do?*

**Alejandro Senior**

*Synesthesia in the Classroom Setting*

**Teela Comeau**

*Music Education and Special Needs*

**Gabrielle Argimon**

*Are Toothbrushes Malicious Towards Vocal Health?*

**Ryan Gardner**

*The Importance of Networking*

**Sarah Young**

### **Our Executive Board:**

Donna Hewitt - Advisor

Jasmin Vilca - President

Alex Colaizzi - President-Elect

Silvana Ferrarin - Secretary

Brenda Gonzalez - Treasurer

## Musical Theater: What do I do?

*Alejandro Senior*

Musical Theater is a thriving industry and one of the main social aspects of a musically inclined individual in the school system. Students constantly look forward to the next musical. The ability to participate in numerous aspects of acting, singing, dance, and technology really intrigue an individual. Students are not required to be fully trained singers to be in the show, for they could be excellent dancers or intriguing actors. Everybody who loves to perform loves to tell a story. Not only is Music Theater highly in demand, it is also essential to the training of a musician. Musical Theater enforces story telling and emotional connection to music.

As teachers, we cannot ignore the demand for musical theater. We also cannot assume that since we know the choir world of music, we know that of musical theater. It is a whole other ballgame with extensive layers of work and research. Putting on a musical has proven to be an overwhelming amount of work, but extremely enjoyable and rewarding. There are several steps to putting on a musical, but before you start, you need to pick one.



Picking a musical for your program is often the hardest step. First, you must pick a musical in which you know success is possible. Do not pick 'A Chorus Line' when you know your students can barely do a jazz square. Most musicals are classified as: Dance Heavy, Vocally Challenging, or Technical Beasts. Find out the strengths of your program. If you have strong singers, pick a vocally focused show. For example, Little Shop of Horrors is a small cast with tight harmonies. Most of the boys don't have to be high tenors, and the girls do not have to be crazy belters. Remember, when picking a show, you must pick around the people you have in order to avoid surprises with the characters in the show. MTI is the main licensing company for Musical Theater Rights. They will send perusal scores when you can read the entire script, score, and character analysis before deciding to use the show.

After picking your show (lets use Beauty and the Beast as an example), you must draw out a budget. Study the script for set building and prop budgets. Study the character analysis and scene breakdown provided by mtishows.com to draw out a costume budget. You must always provide your budget with all the following aspects: Team salaries, Orchestra, Set, Costumes, Props, Musical Licensing Rights, Microphones, and any other possible expenses you might see in the future. If you need a fog machine, include it. The worst thing that could happen is your department chair or program supervisor declines it, and you readjust. Always aim high. At a prestigious private school with a successful musical theater program, Beauty and The Beast cost around \$30,000.

The orchestra was \$12,000. The set, props, and costumes were \$15,000. There was a couple grand spent on lights and microphone installments. That is without team salaries. It is an expensive duty, but if the show prompts a cost issue, then you should reconsider.

So, you've successfully chosen your show and gotten your budget approved (most information is available on [mtishows.com](http://mtishows.com)). Now it is time to cast the show. When proposing these auditions, make sure you are clear with what you are looking for. Some programs will hold audition prep classes. If your program is trying to put on musicals for the first time, this is a great idea to make sure the students are prepared and have a good experience. The audition material for a younger group of individuals could be music from the show. Teach the music to them from several characters you are looking to cast at the audition prep. Like this, students will be able to audition comfortably and you will be able to cast accordingly. It is very important to make auditions comfortable because they can sometimes be very traumatizing for those doing it for the first time.

For an older more experienced group, announce auditions with the following criteria: "Please come prepared with a 32 bar cut of 2 contrasting songs from the Musical Theater Repertoire, along with a 1-minute monologue. You may be cut-off. Accompanist will be provided." "Contrasting" means they must be different emotional story telling pieces, for example Comedic vs. Dramatic. With the songs they may also do Ballad vs. Up-tempo. It gives the director and music director the ability to see the student in as many situations as possible. If you do not have an accompanist, be SURE that the students sing with a track. They should not be allowed to sing a capella. It does not give a director the appropriate standpoint of a person's ability to carry pitch. Auditions are 85% of a director's job, for once the cast is decided, it is mostly up to them to carry the show. You will be there to guide them in the vision you want for the show, but the performance is essentially in their hands.

Once your cast is ready to go, you start rehearsals. The best rehearsal times for a program are specific to that program. If you are at a single gendered school and are using students from other schools, rehearse at night three times a week. Monday Wednesday and Thursday from 6-9 are perfect. It gives students time to get to the theater and finish their own after school commitments. Mondays will be Music. They get Tuesday off to review the music they learned and block those numbers on Wednesday.

Thursday is Dance. If it isn't a dance heavy show, use it as review for the week. For elementary schools, right after dismissal for about two hours a week will be successful. They will also need more time to internalize the material. For high school, two to three months is perfect. For elementary, you might need five months depending on the level of the program.

So you've decided your rehearsal schedule, and your show dates. Your cast is ready to go. They're learning music with your excellent music director, and they're ready to put up the show. **PREVIOUSLY BLOCK YOUR SHOW BEFORE REHEARSALS.** You must know every inch of the script to be successful as a director. Good luck!



## Synesthesia in the Classroom Setting

*Teeela Comeau*

SYNESTHESIA

1234567890

Have you ever seen Vera Bradley bags: the bright pinks and blues and yellows all swirling together?

That's what the inside of my head looks like...all of the time.

I have synesthesia. Synesthesia is a condition that is the result of your senses crossing: one sense causes the perception of another sense. For me, the senses that crossed were hearing, smell, and taste, and these all crossed with my perception of color, which generally known as chromesthesia.

Because perception of color is linked to sound, taste, and smell, almost everything I receive from the world is a double-sense. Think about it like an input-output system: the input is what I hear, smell, and taste, and the output is the color that appears behind my eyes. And there is always, always input.

I've gotten used to it, because I've lived with it my whole life, but experiences that are new and involve large crowds will always scare me. I can get incredibly overwhelmed and experience a special brand of sensory overload. During these episodes, so many colors appear in my brain that it interferes with my actual vision. To end the overload I must find a quiet place or surround myself with "familiar" colors.

In the classroom, my synesthesia is a powerful tool. Every voice is like a fingerprint, the color of it unique to the person from which it comes. In an ensemble setting, if I focus hard enough, I can pick out the individual colors in a choir, or let those individual colors fade away and blend together. When we do it right, I only hear one color by the time we perform a song. On the way, sections of a choir adopt single colors, making it easier to lock in chords. I firmly believe my synesthesia makes me a better collaborator and musician.

Sometimes, I get confused in rehearsal. When teachers ask for a sound color, a specific idea comes to my head—but my idea often isn't actually what the teacher wants. A conductor may ask the choir to sing with a "purple" sound, which to me is the sonic version of milk chocolate; they may be asking me for what is a more maroon color, the sonic version of dark chocolate. That image works for everyone else, and I will adjust to what everyone else is doing around me as soon as I recognize I don't match, but it trips me up for a second.

For the longest time, timbre was described to me in terms of color, so I thought, "Oh, duh, timbre is the *color* of the pitch!" This idea worked for me for a long time; my sonic synesthesia is based on timbre of sounds, but you can only tell your teacher the color of a sound so many times before they start asking for other descriptors. And, surprise, surprise, I had none.

Yes, you had all these problems, you may be thinking. But you ended up in music school! It can't be that bad, can it?

Students with synesthesia often go unnoticed in the classroom, because we tend not to be as disruptive. Oftentimes, we function just fine. In my case, I thought everyone around me had the same synesthesia, until a teacher pointed out to me that seeing colors when hearing noises isn't normal.

So why am I writing an article about synesthesia if it hardly ever caused me problems? I got lucky; I had good teachers. Some students don't get as lucky.

A good teacher needs to use multiple aids to help their students achieve the correct sound. Do not rely on telling your students, "give me a round sound!" whenever you want their sound to be fuller and more resonant. Give them colors and tastes to aim for; give them kinesthetics if possible, model for them, have the students explain back to you how they should be performing. If they are exhibiting problems related to technique (a breathy tone, or lacking energy), alternate specific technique work and general mental goals.

A good teacher should be including all different styles of learning from the very beginning. Help the introverted students feel that their input is valuable and wanted in this secure space, while also allowing extroverts a space in which they can voice their opinions to their peers. Have students learn by doing, but also give them concrete, on-paper rules and theories to follow. Provide out-of-class resources like Auralia. Let the students get out of their seats and move, if possible! Have them dance to the music or walk around the room to the tempo.

A good teacher will give students the opportunity to figure things out independently and in groups. If your band, orchestra, or choir is having trouble with a passage, use sectionals so that the students can identify and fix their own problems, instead of you standing at the front of the room saying, "Again! Again!" Let the students work in pairs when you introduce a new idea.

Most importantly, a good teacher provides a safe space to learn. Let students know that you are there to facilitate their growth, and back that up with your actions. If a student wants to prove to you that they can perform according to your standards, give them the opportunity to do so. If they are having trouble understanding a concept, do not embarrass them in class but approach them individually and provide other assistance. Make your classroom somewhere your students want to be, not somewhere they dread being.

In all reality, synesthesia should not be common in your students. According to the American Psychological Association, only one in 2,000 people has synesthesia. But helping synesthetic students does not require much extra effort. Most of what we need is covered by being a good teacher; by varying your lessons, by varying the language you use to get results, and providing multiple ways of thinking about concepts. Human brains are fascinating and incredible things, but they need our help—teaching using multiple methods helps strengthen connections in our brains.

Students have their own unique way of understanding music. Synesthetic students are just one example; some students approach music with solfege and hand symbols, while others approach it by studying the rhythms, and these are only two different ways of approaching learning music.

Just for fun, run a survey among you and your friends. What do you do as soon as you get your music? How do you learn the bulk of it? How do you memorize it? You're bound to come up with a variety of methods. And it's the same for your students! So keep your lessons varied—not only will it help your students, but it will keep your classroom fun for you.



## Music Education and Special Needs: 5 Things A Music Educator Needs to Know

*Gabrielle Argimon*

*"Music releases autistic students from their chains" (Salter).*

Every Saturday morning I have the privilege of providing an hour lesson to my brightest and most receptive piano student. He is fifteen years old, the son of the sweetest science teacher from my alma mater, with intermediate-functioning autism. I remember the day his mother begged me to become his piano teacher.

"He was taught the Suzuki method when he was seven. He's not great with numbers, but he's an incredible auditory learner," she mentioned. (I can definitely attest to this – the first day of lessons, he spent five minutes experimenting on the keyboard, repeating the exact theme to Shadow of the Colossus for PS2 that played in his head over and over.) "I have so much faith in you, Gaby. It would mean the world to me if he learned how to read music and play the piano again."

I must be honest. *I was scared out of my mind.* How do I approach the curriculum for a student with special needs? How will I ever get him to understand music theory without incorporating its complex, math-oriented relationships and principles? Will I ever get him to understand?

After countless hours of planning and research, care and understanding, and patience, I've begun to crack his code. More importantly, I've realized how beautiful of a person this young man is and his contributive potential as a capable human being in society. I've become an advocate for the training of music educators to courageously implement new learning techniques with special needs students, both privately and in the classroom. Over the course of the past three months since I started teaching him piano, I can guarantee it has been more of a learning experience for myself than it has been for him. Here are some things I have learned that make an effective impact on my teaching:

1. *Repetition is key.* Repetition is key, indeed (Sorry, I had to). One universal characteristic of students with autism is their frequent checking in and out as you're lecturing. In the most compassionate manner, I've grown accustomed to calling him by his name more often, and especially:  
*"Repeat after me: Whole Whole Half, Whole Whole Whole Half."*
2. *Make your lesson ten times more interactive.* The most ineffective moments for me have been while I'm sitting at the piano applying some ear training into the lesson. I find myself having him strenuously repeat everything I say and pay his closest attention to my hands, or else he will comfortably lie on the sofa and stare at the ceiling. Your special needs student should, 99%, be playing his instrument and listening to your instructions. Playing tracks from my iTunes that he enjoys works better for ear training lessons as opposed to switching our roles.
3. *Imagery works wonders.* I spent much of my time thinking how I could describe root and inverted chords. *"Root chords look like snowmen. Inverted chords look like they're decapitated."* I should mention my student in particular has a pretty cynical sense of humor, so this analogy was extremely effective. You should get to know the sensitivity level of your student before using such a PG13 metaphor... Just a little heads-up.
4. *Have a strong relationship with his or her parents.* Encourage their involvement in their child's practice routine. Luckily, I've been blessed that his parents are very actively involved in their son's education and success. His father ensures that his son practices 10-20 minutes daily, and it makes all the difference in the world!
5. *Don't be afraid to get to know your special needs student on a personal level.* Sure, this is a little controversial in the educator world. But, I'd like to pull an exception in this case. Learning more about who he is, what his interests are, and especially determining his level of self-confidence has given me the perfect gauge on how to not only maximize his learning experience, but to also ensure that he truly enjoys his instrument and recognizes his own abilities. By practicing patience and care, I've grown incredibly fond of him, and I make sure to tell him after every lesson how far he's improved (and, simply, how amazing of a person he truly is.)

I am certain that over the past three months, his confidence and attitude have improved drastically because of how quickly he's grasped music theory and piano playing proficiency along the way, and this has been the most enriching part of my experience. Just a gentle reminder, my friends: as educators, we're not merely responsible for thinking of the right phrase here and there, or cultivating talent whenever we see potential. We must always take the opportunity to simply remind our students that they are *great human beings who matter to you and to those around them!* Maybe they'll become a professional musician, maybe they won't, but your students will love you for *inspiring in them their purpose* – not for teaching them the time signature.

## The Telegraph



HOME > CULTURE > MUSIC

### 'Music releases autistic children from their chains'

Every year the conductor John Lubbock and selected musicians from his world-class orchestra spend 40 days at special schools, playing for children with autism – to astonishing effect.



Source:

*Salter, Jessica. "Music Releases Autistic*

*Children from Their Chains" The*

*Telegraph. Telegraph Media Group, n.d.*

*Web. 20 Nov. 2015.*



## Are Toothbrushes Malicious Towards Vocal Health?

*Ryan Gardner*

Over the past 6 months I have experienced a vocal disorder called dysphonia in which my vocal chords are out of sync with each other. Along the same time period I bought a sonic toothbrush. But why is this relevant? I believe that the vibrations in the toothbrush affected the natural vibrations of my voice.

There is something in the physics of sound called entrainment. Katherine Scott defines entrainment as “the ability of a strong rhythmic vibration of one object to change the less powerful vibration of another object and cause them to synchronize their vibration.” This is similar to holding down a sustain pedal on a grand piano and then singing a note with a lot of volume. While the keys aren’t being struck, the pitch sung still resonates in the strings of the piano. But how could the vibrations of an electric toothbrush be more powerful than the vibrations of the voice? In order to better understand this, the manner in which “sonic” toothbrushes work must be examined.

Sonic toothbrushes operate at 31,000 brush strokes per minute (as compared to a normal electric toothbrush that operates at 2,500-7,500 brush strokes per minute). That seems like a high number, right? So let’s convert that to determine the frequency (or pitch) of the brush, which is calculated in Hertz (cycles/second). So one brush stroke (either up or down) would equal half of a cycle. Therefore, two brush strokes equals one complete cycle. So sonic toothbrushes operate at 15,500 cycles per minute. Next we will divide this by 60 (seconds) to determine how many cycles per second these brushes operate at. This equates to 258.3 Hz, which is approximately middle C on a piano.

Middle C is well within almost every person’s vocal range. So if the amplitude of the toothbrush’s vibrations is powerful enough, at a frequency well within the range of the human voice, it is possible that the natural vibrations of the voice could be altered as per the principles of entrainment. It is also possible, that as we apply more pressure with sonic toothbrushes, it could increase the amplitude (or strength) of the rhythmic vibrations. To give an idea of how strong the vibrations are, when turned on, the toothbrush automatically emits clearly audible overtones in addition to the middle C.

But how do these vibrations travel from the mouth to the voice? Our bodies act as a medium for sound. Since sound travels through mediums, that means these strong vibrations are traveling through our entire body. If the vocal folds are in a relaxed state and strong vibrations travel through them, the folds are the “less powerful” vibrating objects in entrainment.

There are currently no studies on the effects of external vibrations on the voice, but when consulting my otolaryngologist, he stated that it could be possible. The possible medical applications of this can be instrumental in developing treatments for voice therapy. If external vibrations can disrupt the natural vibrations of the voice, then could it be possible to use external vibrations as a way to revert the voice back to its natural vibrations?



## The Importance of Networking (And Not the Social Kind)

*Sarah Young*

Like any college student, I was ready for summer- i.e. months of uninterrupted sleep. There was only one problem: my parents refused to stop pushing me to find a summer job. Luckily, I was able to get in contact with my middle school band teacher and secure a position helping him with his summer band camp program. Before I knew it, I was having flashbacks of third grade gym class in the middle of my old school's gymnasium while teaching overly excited seventh graders a strange band version of Bastille's "Pompeii."

My day ranged from teaching beginners how to hold their instruments to helping the more advanced students finally put some musicality into their playing. I worked with students who could not grasp the concept of an eighth note and students who could immediately sight read all of the exercise books I could find. Needless to say, it was a difficult situation for a Music Education major straight out of freshman year. However, I realized that sleeping until the next semester started would never bring me as much happiness as dusting off my clarinet and watching students discover the same passion for their instruments as I had.

Reaching out to my old teacher got my name on a concert program as Assistant Conductor and gave me the opportunity to conduct and teach all that I could. The importance of networking was as clear as it had ever been to me in that moment. I learned from last summer that you cannot be afraid to ask past teachers and mentors for all the help that they can give. To establish yourself as a passionate educator, you must pursue every opportunity you possibly can.



# Announcements

## SPRING 2016 EVENTS

*First Day of Classes  
January 11*

*FMEA Professional Development Conference  
January 13-16*

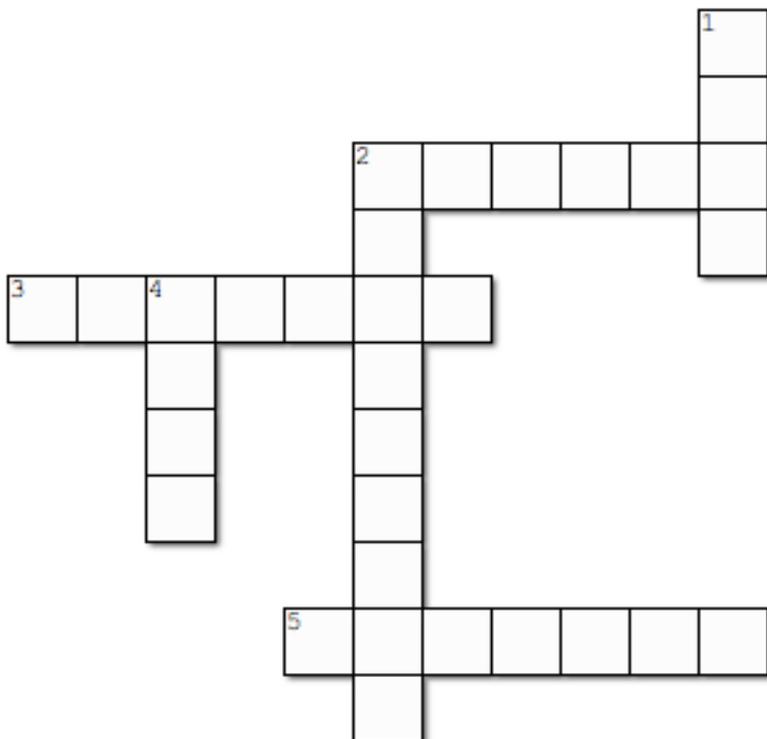
**Add us on Facebook + Twitter!!!**



**UM-FROST-Music Ed**



**UMMusicEducator**



**Across**

- 2. One of the three 'Artistic Processes' the NAFME standards are based upon
- 3. Chair of Music Education at UM
- 5. Ancestor of the trombone

**Down**

- 1. This American 20th century composer also worked in the insurance business
- 2. The lowest register on the clarinet
- 4. Part of the violin bow where the middle two fingers contact (hint: it's black)

Answers:  
1. Ives 2. Create (across);  
Chalumeau (down) 3. Coffman  
4. Frog 5. Sackbut