

FALL NEWSLETTER

Presented by the University of Miami Florida Collegiate NAfME Chapter

A Note from the President

Dear NAfME Family,

What an incredible semester this has been! Frost Music Education continues to thrive, grow, and evolve both on and off campus, and we're only halfway through the year. This Fall, we welcomed a huge class of bright-eyed and dedicated future music educators, and we are that much better of a chapter because y'all are here.

Fall semester marks our largest fundraisers of the year, which support our members attending the FMEA Professional Development Conference in January, as well as our annual grant in the Spring. We had some awesome bake sales—one that broke our all time record of sales!

We also hosted our 5th annual NAfME Benefit Concert on November 7th, which was full of performances both by our talented members and other Frost ensembles. Thank you to our committees and committee heads for a great night of music, food, prizes, and laughs!

Continuing in our nationally-acclaimed advocacy efforts, we hosted an advocacy workshop during MED Forum in September to get the ball rolling on this year's plans for our Social Media Advocacy Campaign (#IStandForMusicEducation). We are so excited by the prospects of this year's advocacy projects!

Fall leads to Spring, and I believe that this Fall laid a solid foundation for the many projects Spring semester will offer. Thank you all for your hard work this semester, and for believing in NAfME!

It has been my sincere honor to serve as your President-Elect/President for the last three years, and I am so inspired by every one of you. Thank you for your hard work and dedication to our shared profession, to our program, to our chapter, and to each other. This organization does not exist without each and every one of you, and I cannot wait to see what the future holds for UMFC NAfME.

Happy Holidays, be safe, and as always, do good!

LYGC,
Caterina Papadopulos, Immediate Past President of UMFC NAfME

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Stress in the Life of a Music Major

By Julia Gorordo

Every college student experiences a certain amount of stress. Between balancing schoolwork, extracurriculars, work, and what little social time can be squeezed in, these will be the busiest 4 years of anyone’s life. Now add to that several hours a day of practice time, ensemble rehearsals, concerts, and juries, and you get music majors. These students are so full of stress that it is not uncommon to see someone crying, yelling, or fast asleep in a practice room. Music students are some of the most stressed out people on a college campus, and it is their art, their expression, their vice, that causes them stress in the first place.

I asked a few of my non-music major friends what they do to manage stress and was intrigued to find that most of them turn to music. Many people think that the ideal way to relax is to turn on some music and focus in on it, letting the stress in you release to the beat. As a music student, this is foreign to me. I can’t turn on music without immediately analyzing it, figuring out the chords, the meter, the phrasing, etc. Music majors spend our days studying, practicing, analyzing, creating, and breaking down all types of music. Students cannot easily turn to music as a form of relaxation when these sort of expectations surround it in their academic world.

I’ve found that this problem exists in many artistic majors. Art majors, theater majors, writing majors, etc. We often will get tired, get stressed out, and experience major ‘burnout’, which makes the concept of relaxing to music alien. When we choose to study our art forms, we choose to sacrifice the recreational side. We are no longer playing music for fun, or drawing pictures for fun, we are studying it, living by its rules, and working to perfect it in ways that other majors and artists do not understand. This does not mean it is never fun, but it is no longer an outlet the way it was when it wasn’t our main focus.

So, what do you do when your stress is caused by your outlet?

Well...you cry in practice rooms.

Or...

Find a hobby, join a club, start a project that exists for you and you only.

Find some way to create an outlet that is separate from your studies.

Incorporate music by choosing to learn a song you’ve always wanted to learn, not for any class or teacher, but just for you. Or, leave the music alone and bake cookies for the other strung out music majors in your classes. Express yourself physically by joining an IM sports team and beating someone up legally, or by dancing.

Find yourself another outlet.

I’m going to say it again because it’s so important.

Find yourself another outlet.

It is so important as music majors to do something other than music, but many of us don’t, because music is all we have had for so long. We spent our high school years practicing to get to where we are, and we are spending our college years practicing to move forward. This does not mean we cannot still enjoy music, or turn to it to relieve stress, but I urge everyone to find something else as well. Pick up a book, bake some cookies, join the quidditch team (Yes we have one). Find something to take the edge off, I promise you won’t regret it.

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND, UNLESS THEY PLAY PERCUSSION

By Steven Mailloux-Adler

Here I am, a fifth grader, standing in the back of the band room with my friend, playing golf with a drumstick and a cymbal felt. We were very invested in our game because the band director wasn't giving us any attention. Instead, she was showing the rest of the class how to properly play a Bb. When she finally came around to us, around the 11th or 12th hole, she just pointed to the Bb key on a xylophone and said "hit that one." So that's what we did, all week.

Eventually we added C and D in the coming week or two and we hit those too- all while playing golf, making instrument monsters, throwing pencils, and playing on the floor, wall, cabinet, and anything else we could find. For those of you who were fortunate enough to be in a beginning band, this scene may be a familiar one. Even in middle and high school, the actions may change to playing on a drum pad, texting, and talking about the party last weekend, but the scene remains the same. In primary and secondary education, most percussionists experience a much more shallow learning curve than the rest of the band because of a lack of knowledgeable and structured instruction.

In beginning band, while the wind players develop their embouchures and technique by learning how to produce a sound, most percussionists just sit around not learning anything more than what keys match the pitch the band is playing. In addition, the little technical instruction that is given is usually faulty or incorrect because of the limited percussion knowledge of most band directors. So by the time students get to middle school,

they lack musicality and technique, but good thing they know how to hit a Bb and make a bazooka out of a guiro, shaker, and cowbell.

But this shallow growth curve isn't simply the result of a poor use of time in beginning band. In fact, every level of education creates its own learning stunt for these young musicians. Skipping middle school so I don't bore you, let's look at high school, where middle school percussionists are either thrown in front of a heavy drum with a new technique and different sized sticks, or thrown in front of a keyboard and expected to match techniques with a line of people playing the same instrument. There is so much for these students to learn but healthy technique and musicality get sacrificed to cram in uniformity and notes. Meanwhile, most of the winds have already developed some technique on their instruments and just need to work on marching and musicianship.

As much as there is still more to be said on this topic, the result is clear, percussionists get left behind in the learning curve because teachers lack the knowledge, resources, and structure to help their young boom boom players. So how can you help your percussionists rather than stunt their musical growth?

1. If your school funding allows for it, create a separate class for your percussionists so that they can learn real techniques from a real percussionist rather than have a second recess. If not, put them in a different room during class time or afterschool to have little masterclasses with students from a local school of music.

2. Encourage your students to seek regular private lessons. Help them

find a local percussionist or teacher that is willing to take on a student. However lessons can get expensive, so try to find a college student or more experienced high school student if necessary.

3. Do not neglect healthy technique and musicality for the sake of putting on a pretty show for the first home game or family show. It is going to take time but the time spent at the beginning will benefit your students and your overall group in the long run.

4. Hire an instructor. If not full time, at least for marching band and the occasional masterclass. If you're not a percussionist, it can be hard to identify and correct technique problems on your students. This can lead to the development of bad habits which could have been fixed if an instructor was constantly watching them play.

It can be hard to accommodate all of your students, however, as educators, we have a responsibility to educate all of our students to the best of our abilities and go above and beyond to help them. If you let your percussionists fall behind, they will go into college auditions with bad habits and unhealthy techniques that can lead to cysts, carpal tunnel, and tendonitis. Don't be a bad director, don't neglect your percussionists.



A Major Change and A Major Benefit

By Katherine Attong-Mendes

My freshman year in high school, I walked bright eyed and bushy tailed into one of the best magnet band programs in Miami-Dade County. Reeling from the honeymoon phase of playing with musicians who were so far beyond the middle school level I was used to, and appreciating a band director who pushed me to aim far beyond what I thought I was capable of, I decided within the first month of school that I wanted to be a high school band director someday. That was the first time that music education as a profession ever really entered my mind.

Going into my sophomore year, I began to take on more responsibility as a student leader in my band. As I fell more in love with marching band and with my band program itself, I also started to see the cracks in its façade. I noticed issues within the program, problems that I took it upon myself to try to fix in whatever way I could. Although I was frustrated at times, I dedicated myself to fixing, and my dream of having my own band someday was alive as ever.

But it was in my junior year of high school that I was finally faced with some of the realities of running a band program (admittedly my role as drum major had nowhere near the amount of responsibility that a band director does, but it was an obvious parallel). Dealing with kids who didn't care and didn't try to be good frustrated me constantly; I always felt responsible for the (rare) successes,

but especially the (much more often) failures of my band. I became frustrated with my peers, my band program, and most of all, myself. I had to stop and take a step back and realize that I couldn't fix everything that was wrong with my band, and I took that as a personal failure on my part. I decided that because I couldn't do that, I definitely could never be a band director.

So my college applications took me looking for "well rounded" degree programs, from universities with stellar academic reputations and equally outstanding music programs. I ended up at the University of Miami (go canes), pursuing a degree in Music Business and Entertainment Industries. I wasn't sure what career I wanted, but I knew I wanted it to be something in music, and I figured that a versatile degree program would give me the most options when I graduated. I was registered in an introductory music business course my first semester, and I was excited to learn about an aspect of music that I had never previously considered.

But then something interesting happened: NAFME. One of my best friends from high school (if you're reading this, you know who you are) encouraged me to join our CNAfME chapter, because Music Business doesn't have a regular forum meeting so I could come to all of the CNAfME meetings and Music Education forums in my free time. I wanted to see what it was all about; I knew the CNAfME people went to FMEA in the spring, and I wanted to go to that because I had been as an All-State student in the

past; and I figured there was no harm in doing all the Music Ed activities because they were fun and interesting.

I really enjoyed the Music Ed forums that first semester. I loved them, actually. I started being more and more interested in what was going to happen in forum each week than I was in my Music Business class. When the time came around to go to FMEA, it was a total game changer for me. I finally felt like I was surrounded by people who cared about all of the same things that I cared about, and were interested in all of the things I was interested in. It didn't take much more convincing for me to realize that I needed to become an Ed major, and I couldn't wait to sign the dotted line.

So the fall of my sophomore year of college took me from a balmy 15-credit load to a whirlwind of an 18-credit fall semester (with marching band), where I was trying to play catch up on two semesters of Ed curriculum. Luckily I had quite a few transfer credits from high school, so the catch up wasn't a huge problem, but making the transition was definitely an interesting experience. It really feels like Music Ed majors are some of the most overworked people on campus: there are so many different things that you have to be learning about all at the same time, on top of all of the activities and ensembles that we're involved in, and then trying to juggle field experience or get practical teaching jobs on the side. I'm not complaining (even though I kind of am), because I love it, but it can be really hard to find a balance between always pushing yourself

to learn more and do more, versus putting yourself down for not being “good enough.” I think that we all stick with it because we love teaching (and for some of us, because it’s too late to back out now), but sometimes it’s hard to remember why we do.

I think that because I spent my first year in a different major, I have a different perspective than I would have had if I had started out in Ed. When I feel overwhelmed and start to say things like, “I should just change my major,” I always mean it as a joke, because I know that this is the only one for me; I’ve literally tried another major and it didn’t work out. I actively remind myself that I chose this path, and that even though it’s an uphill climb, that struggle is how I’m going to learn the most, and do the most, and be the best teacher that I can be. And then I remember why I wanted to do this in the first place: because of the feeling that I get when I explain something to someone and I can see their lightbulb moment. I do this because of the satisfaction everyone in the band feels when we’ve been working on something for the past 20 minutes and it finally locks in. And mostly, I do this because of the amazing, emotional, I-still-get-goosebumps-thinking-about-it feeling that I got, in high school, when our band performed at marching band state championships my senior year, and knowing that I want to make it possible for some other kid to have that feeling. We all have to make a conscious effort to remember that music is powerful, and we have the chance to use it to shape the future of our society, and the world, through teaching.

And I know that I would never want to do anything else because in my time here, Music Ed and NAFME have become my home. There’s a strange bond that is formed between people who share the same experiences: whether they’re suffering through trying to work on six different projects for four different classes at the same time, or celebrating the marginal successes of learning to play drumset for the first time. We are truly all in this experience together, and we are the future of music education. So during this time of year that can be so stressful and so crazy, let’s not forget to remember why we do this in the first place, or why we are called to education at all. And always remember that you have a network, a safe space, and a family of friends, who will always be here to cheer you on. You can do this. Go be amazing.



MUSIC TEACHER BURNOUT

By Alexandra Carminati

I have always been motivated by my own love of what I do. If I did not love what I was doing in a class, I would have to find a way to love it or I simply wouldn’t do as well as I would like to. So, I was confused when I started to lose motivation to do things that I love. I was at school studying what I loved, but I wouldn’t find the consistent motivation to feel like I was on top of my work. I discovered this was burnout. I don’t think that I have to define burnout in 2018 to anyone who has ever been to college, but I’ll do it anyway. Burnout is a state of mental, physical, and/or emotional exhaustion caused by prolonged stress. As I learned more about burnout, I learned about the professions it typically occurred in. And one of them is teaching. Music teachers experience more stress because, of course, when you add being a professional musician to any profession, it makes it exponentially more stressful. So, I decided to do some research on burnout in music educators. Hopefully what I have found will be helpful to you, my fellow doomed future music educators.

What Causes it?

Regular teacher burnout is extremely common, and many factors contribute to it: too many responsibilities, lack of support, resources, or staff, too much paperwork, lack of respect, low pay, curricular issues, discipline problems in the classroom, and many more. In recent years, another factor has been added to the list: the fact that teachers are being evaluated more strictly and sometimes solely on how their students perform on standardized testing. Music teachers typically take on even more responsibilities because we teach classes during the day and also manage extra-curricular activities after school. Music educators and music departments in general usually receive less support and resources, especially when it comes to funding. Among the academic community, music teachers are less respected than other teachers, and in the music community, music teachers are less respected than performers. So, basically, we get teacher burnout, but way worse.

Signs you’re a burnt-out music teacher

Burnout can manifest itself in many ways and varies from person to person, so it’s difficult to narrow it down to just a few clear signs. One sign is extreme exhaustion. You might feel musically uninspired, leaving you unable to inspire your students. You may neglect to correct mistakes in rehearsal that you used to correct. Your voice may be gone by the end of every day, especially if you are a vocal or choral music teacher. Anxiety and prolonged unhappiness are also

clear signs of burnout. You may prefer to be alone rather than around other people. Another sign is cynicism. You might feel detached from your students and peers, and you think of them more negatively than before. Finally, a large sign of burnout is if you find yourself longing for patience, creativity, imagination, or enthusiasm for everyday tasks.

How to prevent it

Almost every article I read emphasized the need to stop yourself from checking your work email when you are not at work. This is the first step to separating your work life from your personal life. Allot a specific window of time that you allow yourself to use your email. Because music is such a big part of our lives, both personal and professional, and we love what we do so much, it's difficult to give yourself a break from music and leave the job at work. Get a hobby. Sleep. Find the right balance in your life.

In your professional life, be constantly seeking new ways to find inspiration. Attend conferences, clinics, and workshops. Find a mentor. Allow yourself to trust your coworkers. If you can delegate some of your responsibilities to your peers, do it. Not only will you lessen some of your stress and workload, but you can also learn from your peers.

I know all of this seems pretty simple and obvious, but sometimes we need reminds to be the best version of ourselves that we can be. It's simple and obvious that students should go to sleep at a reasonable time, but do I stay up doing work, practicing, or watching Netflix? Absolutely.

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