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# The variety show: Why classical string musicians are exploring a multistyle approach to teaching

Kelly C. Wiedemann  
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Approved and recommended for acceptance as a thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Music.

Special committee directing the thesis work of Kelly C. Wiedemann

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Dr. William M. Dabback Date

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Dr. Gary K. Ritcher Date

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Dr. Pedro R. Aponte Date

Received by The Graduate School

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Date

The Variety Show:  
Why Classical String Musicians are Exploring a  
Multistyle Approach to Teaching

Kelly C. Wiedemann

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

In

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the degree of

Master of Music

Music Education

December 2014

## DEDICATION

Dedicated to my colleagues at Eastern Mennonite University, Sharon Miller and Megan Tiller. Sharon for your guidance, feedback, and support as my first violin teacher, current boss, mentor, and friend. Thank you for providing me with chances to pursue my passion for multistyle string education, directing me to useful resources for this paper, introducing me to the Carolina Chocolate Drops, and providing the opportunity for me to lead multistyle teen camp. Megan for your friendship, brainstorming sessions, and constant encouragement regarding the multistyle realm of possibilities. Thank you for your energy, optimism, persistence, and introducing me to Redwing! All of these fantastic experiences have helped shape my musical journey in a special way and I am forever grateful to you both!

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I want to thank the teachers featured in this case study for their willingness to open up and share their journeys and strengthen the case for a multistyle string curriculum. I am humbled by your honesty about the joys and struggles of teaching and energized by your passion. Keep up the great work!

Thank you to my parents and brothers for letting me think out loud and being my cheerleaders throughout the past three years of highs and lows, reminding me that there is always light at the end of the tunnel.

## Table of Contents

Dedication.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
Abstract.....	vi
I. Introduction.....	1
In the Beginning: Multicultural Movements in Music Education .....	3
Defining the Movement .....	7
Movements in the Music Industry and Performance Practice .....	11
Problems & Controversy.....	13
Importance & Goals.....	16
II. Literature Review.....	18
Multicultural Music Education .....	18
Informal Music Practices .....	20
Multistylishm in String Pedagogy .....	24
Multistylishm in Higher Education.....	27
Summary .....	29
III. Methodology.....	32
Research Approach.....	32
Pilot Study.....	34
Participants.....	34
Limitations of the Study.....	38
Researcher Role .....	39
Data Collection .....	39
Play of Analysis .....	40
Summary.....	41
IV. Multi-Style Motivators.....	42
Developing Creativity & Personal Expression .....	42
Developing Creativity & Personal Expression: Discussion.....	47

Mistakes Redefined.....	50
Mistakes Redefined: Discussion.....	54
Student Enrollment & Retention.....	57
Student Enrollment & Retention: Discussion.....	60
Employment Opportunities.....	61
Employment Opportunities: Discussion.....	63
Multistyle Motivators: Summary.....	65
V. Exploring Relationships with Classical Music.....	67
Classical as a Core Component.....	67
Classical as a Core Component: Discussion.....	70
Transferable Technique.....	72
Transferable Technique: Discussion.....	76
Reactions to Multistylism.....	78
Reactions to Multistylism: Discussion.....	86
Summary.....	88
VI. Conclusion.....	92
Research Findings.....	93
Areas for Future Study.....	99
Local & Large-Scale Implications.....	103
The New Normal.....	108
VII. Appendix A: Interview Questions.....	110
VIII. References.....	114

## ABSTRACT

### The Variety Show: Why Classical String Musicians are Exploring a Multistyle Approach to Music

Kelly C. Wiedemann

This case study examines the experiences of five classically trained string teachers who now include alternative styles in their teaching. The research questions are: (1) What factors inspire a classically trained string educator to begin teaching alternative styles to their students? (2) Why is it important to keep classical music in string pedagogy? (3) How have these teachers, their peers, students, and community reacted to multistylism? The interviews revealed four major points of motivation: Opportunities for developing creativity and finding a personal voice on their instrument, freedom to make mistakes without criticism, higher enrollment and retention rates, and increased job opportunities.

Participants were committed to keeping classical music as a core part of their curriculum. Upon implementing a diverse curriculum, participants felt some resistance from students and peers, but for them, the positive reactions outweigh the negative. Based on the findings of this study, I argue that including alternative styles in a classical string curriculum, whatever the style may be, greatly increase professional & personal potential for both teacher and student.



## Chapter 1

### Introduction

*A teacher puts a simple jazz tune in front of her eight-year-old violin student. Although he can already play Vivaldi concertos, he cannot sight-read the jazz tune due to the unfamiliar syncopated and swung rhythms. The challenge surprises him and from then on he asks to play jazz at the end of every lesson.*

*Two high school juniors take a break from the classical repertoire they are learning in orchestra and prepare bluegrass, Western swing, and Celtic tunes for their school's annual Barn Party. The boys usually play with sloppy bow technique, causing weak tone quality, but on these tunes their tone is strong and clear.*

*After playing Irish music for a St. Patrick's Day assembly at school, an unmotivated beginning viola student asks her teacher if they can play some Irish music at the end of their private lesson. Because of her newfound love for viola, the student's parents buy her a new instrument and she begins practicing without any prompting.*

*A beginning cello student is struggling with tone quality. The teacher plays a recording of "Clocks" by the popular band Coldplay, and helps the student pick out the bass line by ear. The student's tone instantly improves, without the teacher directly addressing tone.*

*A high school string ensemble listens to a recording of a rock cello ensemble and learns the chorus by ear. Several students raise their hand and ask if they can try improvising over the chord progression. These same students previously refused to improvise at all.*

*A group class of seven advanced Suzuki violinists is given several traditional Irish tunes. They can play advanced classical repertoire from Suzuki Method Book 5 but struggle to play these simple arrangements equivalent to late Book 1/early Book 2.*

These scenarios from my experience as a studio and classroom string teacher led to my interest in studying new movements in string education. I noticed that some of my students were losing interest in their private lessons, so I began to weave non-Classical repertoire into instruction. The students reacted so positively to the new styles that I began to seriously reflect on my pedagogy and question why and how I was selecting specific repertoire. I carried this interest into my graduate coursework and research and discovered that other teachers have experienced similar revelations in their careers.

Paul, a high school orchestra teacher from the Midwest, began style exploration as an undergraduate student. He and his classmates were searching for their musical identities during this formative period and discovered an entire world outside of classical music. “One night I’d be playing principal bass in the university symphony...the next night I’d play in the [local city] Symphony. Our band would be on stage at a jazz club and just experiment-kind of the outcasts of the evening music scene because we didn’t really live the culture, we just dabbled in it.”

Alice, a cello teacher from the East coast, annually attends and teaches at a music camp where she enjoys casual collaborations with other teachers.

In the summer when I go off to teach at music camp...there are some colleagues that I’ve been working with there. One is a jazz pianist and composer who also plays trombone and banjo and guitar...and is a magnificent composer in his own idiom. It’s very much jazz-informed but he loves Eastern music, like Bulgarian music, and he plays in a Bulgarian band...then the...third partner in this ensemble, is a Broadway clarinetist and composer who also plays saxophone and sings. And so we all sing a bit and we do all kinds of music together and have begun a program of welcoming people to make music together who might not

ever converse in that way otherwise. We work together a lot and it really stretches me. When the jazz pianist is playing the Brahms trio, he gets stretched. (laughs) And so we all stretch in different directions and that's been really good for me. So I keep trying to grow and that helps me grow as a teacher.

These scenarios from my research participants further exemplify the growing spirit propelling string education into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Teachers seek new and stimulating musical opportunities by studying various musical styles. They no longer limit instruction to a single style of music. Formal string education has traditionally utilized classical music pedagogies, yet the growing trend embraces a more diverse view with origins in general music education multicultural approaches.

### **In the Beginning: Multicultural Movements in Music Education**

Throughout the history of formal music education in the United States “the teaching strategies, curriculum content and values associated with Western-style formal music education derive from the conventions of Western classical music pedagogy” (Green, 2002, p. 4). The increased immigration and integration of cultures in the United States brought growing unrest against this single-track curriculum, and the civil rights movement in the 1960s brought urgency for curriculum reform. Musicologist Patricia Shehan Campbell writes, “...multicultural education is the reflection of a society whose history is marred by periods of class consciousness, cultural insensitivities, and racial bias. It is a wholehearted effort to offer balanced treatment of all students, beginning at the earliest levels of their intellectual and emotional development through the continuing influence of schooling” (Campbell, 2002, p. 28).

The music education field has used a variety of terms to describe teaching and learning approaches that feature cultural diversity. One of the earliest terms was

“multicultural,” which became commonplace around the time of the Tanglewood Symposium in 1967. This descriptor has different connotations depending on the teacher’s level of comfort and familiarity with the music and culture they choose to share with their students. “Many educators see multiculturalism as a broad spectrum with assimilation (relinquishing one’s own culture or merging it with a dominant culture) at one end of the spectrum and cultural pluralism or cultural diversity (in which each person’s culture is honored, valued, and respected) at the other end” (Edwards, 2003, p. 128). Later terms such as “musically flexible” or “polymusical” reflected the diverse materials presented in formal classrooms (Edwards, 2003, p. 133).

As part of the movement toward diversity in music education, Lucy Green advocates bringing informal music learning practices into formal settings. She explains how alternative styles, or vernacular music, have slowly worked their way into a partnership with Western classical music. What used to be informal practices were assimilated by classical music pedagogy. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the shift took place thanks to several key folk musicians. “...influential composers and music educators such as Cecil Sharp, Zoltan Kodaly, and Ruth Seeger worked to include European and North American folk music in the school curriculum. In various guises, most notably settings by classical composers, folk songs have had a place ever since” (Green, 2002, p. 4). Before this transition students had different options for music instruction that was geared toward Western-classical music. Students took classical music appreciation and singing at school but if they wanted to learn classical music on an instrument they had to find instruction elsewhere (Green, 2002). By the end of the

twentieth century, a much greater variety of musics were found in curricula in many countries (Green, 2002, p. 4).

In 1967, the National Association for Music Education (formerly known as Music Educator's National Conference) organized the Tanglewood Symposium to discuss the state of music education in the United States, share ideas, deliberate over potential changes, and generate a formal response to growing unrest in music education.

“Performers, conductors, educators, sociologists, anthropologists, government and industrial leaders, scientists, and others met to discuss...the reality of a musical hierarchy (with European art music at its apex)” (Campbell, 2002, p. 29). They recognized the need for a redesign in response to an increasingly diverse population along with the rise in new and returning genres such as rock n’ roll and folk music.

The Tanglewood Declaration summarized the discussions and convictions of the symposium participants. “Music of all periods, styles, forms, and cultures belongs in the curriculum. The musical repertory should be expanded to involve music of our time in its rich variety, including currently popular teenage music and avant-garde music, American folk music, and the music of other cultures.” (Britton, Broido, Gary, 1968, p. 139)

The idea caught on quickly in the general music classroom setting and instrumental programs in the form of jazz, swing, and Big Band. Percussion learned these American styles along with world music styles and traditions such as African and Latin American rhythm ensembles and Balinese gamelan ensembles. In 1994, NAFME created national standards for music instruction that included improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments. Yet according to renowned violinist and composer Mark O’Conner, string education has lagged behind band programs. “During the last 50 years,

surprisingly few classical violinists have become skilled composers, arrangers, improvisers, or bandleaders. Once, they thrived in all these capacities—now, violinists play second fiddle in those roles to guitarists, percussionists, pianists, wind players, and brass players.” (O’Connor, 2013)

Multicultural thought and practice in music education leans toward programs in the elementary school, with teachers of children in general music classes assuming the greatest responsibility of a district’s mandate (Campbell, 2002). However, with the increase of school string programs and additional support resources for string teachers by professional organizations such as ASTA, there has been an increase in diverse options for string teachers. From mariachi (Sullivan, 2008) to fiddle (Reel, 2003) schools across the United States are incorporating alternative styles in their music classrooms. David Littrell, a former ASTA president, commented on the shift in string instruction, “We’re trying to address all the different needs and different constituencies of our membership. We have never addressed fiddle playing before, but fiddle playing is taking place in the public schools. It helps capture kids’ attention, and it may reach some kids who aren’t turned on by doing Mozart,” (Reel, 2003).

Similarly, in an interview with pedagogue and multi-style string advocate Julie Lyon Lieberman, the Turtle Island Quartet stated, “String players have finally reached the point in their daily musical lives where American popular styles and indigenous music from around the world are part of the ubiquitous whole, and no longer the exclusive province of specialized and somewhat lonely innovators” (Lieberman, 1999, p. 5). The quartet suggests that multistylism is becoming more common and accessible to the general public and no longer reserved for specialists.

## Defining the Movement

Extant literature distinguishes between Western-classical, non-classical or alternative, and multistyle or style-flexible string players. Because the string instruments played in the United States come from the Western Classical tradition, the predominant methods in formal string education have comprised classical music traditions. String education used “alternative” as one of the earliest terms to describe its practices in the multicultural movement as a reference to any string-music style other than classical (Reel, 2003). Many teachers supplement their classical curriculum with alternative music, hence the label.

In 2003, ASTA decided to take steps to change the state of string education in the United States. In response to the growing interest in alternative styles, they added an Alternative Styles portion to their National Conference, now called the Eclectic Strings Festival (ESF), which featured numerous sessions in improvisation, jazz, and fiddle, to name a few. The addition supported the concept that curricula should include alternative styles parallel to and not as a replacement for classical studies (Reel, 2003).

In selecting the label for this new conference component, Lieberman writes, “The term *non-classical* implied that classical was innately superior, so we discarded that title. In the end, *alternative strings* seemed the best option” (Lieberman, 2004, p. 6). Yet many teachers have vocalized their concern that “alternative” suggests a musical hierarchy in which classical dominates as the ideal musical foundation and everything else remains alternative. Other descriptors are slowly replacing the term.

The popular music industry business uses “crossover” as a common label. This refers to musicians who are crossing from one genre to another.

“...the crossover Billboard chart reflects much higher sales than the traditional classical one. Broadly speaking, there are two kinds of crossover music: classical artists exploring other musical genres, and non-classical artists taking the plunge into classical. For classical musicians, crossover projects generally imply letting one’s hair down. For non-classical musicians, by contrast, moving into classical music signifies a kind of mastery. Classical music may be dismissed as elitist, but it has not lost its cachet as a kind of ne plus ultra of artistic expression. (Midgette, 2010)<sup>1</sup>

This basic term led to many other sub-definitions including Classical Crossover Cover, Classical Incorporation, Classical Remix, Collaborative Crossover, Contestant Crossover, Easy-Listening Crossover, Popera, Progressive Rock, all of which are explored in a study by Karyn Garvin (2012) on crossover movements and definitions. Perhaps the most common form that string teachers encounter from their students is the Classical Crossover Cover. This is where classically trained artists play a cover of a popular song while sticking to their classical origins (Garvin, 2012). An example would be the Vitamin String Quartet who take popular songs by artists such as Coldplay, Lady Gaga, and Nirvana and arrange them in a classical style.

Violinist Mark O’Connor uses yet another term to describe the mixing of musical styles. “[American] music grew out of the cross-pollination, one might say, of peoples from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds.”<sup>2</sup> Much of the profession currently uses terms such as “classical” or “Western European” to distinguish from “popular” or “vernacular.” (Thibeault, 2009, p. 257) Thibeault proposes “work centered” and “activity centered” to refer to classical music, as it emphasizes the use of printed or notated music

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<sup>1</sup> Midgette, Anne. “‘Classical Crossover’: A label not necessarily to be feared.” *WashingtonPost.com*. October 3, 2010. [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/10/01/AR2010100103179?pf.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/10/01/AR2010100103179?pf.html) (accessed February 14, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> O’Connor, Mark, “How traditional string education is letting down students and stifling creativity,” *Parting Shots: From a Musician’s Perspective*, May 31, 2013, [http://markoconnorblog.blogspot.com/2013\\_05\\_01\\_archive.html](http://markoconnorblog.blogspot.com/2013_05_01_archive.html).



in a performer and audience setting. He proposes “setting-centered” to refer to alternative non-Classical styles because of their focus on playing by ear. In these social settings, music making is a fluid and creative activity that thrives on spontaneity.

“Because how things should sound is known (admittedly, with some flexibility on the part of the director), what must be done physically and musically can be fixed and decided, leaving a clear path for musicians to go from where they are toward the goal. In contrast, the setting-centered musical object is, by definition, largely unfixed, undecided, and much more open to negotiation in a way that invites conversation of musical meaning and can promote the formation of musical judgment, the very kinds of discussions and goals music educators strive to foster in their classrooms” (Thibeault, 2009, p. 271).

Multistyle may stand as the most neutral, all-encompassing label. An umbrella term covering various American genres and world cultures, Mari Black stated that multistyle referred to “at least two types of music that are sufficiently distinctive from one another that most musicians would hear them as coming from different musical traditions” (Black, 2012, p. 3). Multistyle suggests a lack of hierarchy in that different styles can have equal place in a musician’s repertoire. Lieberman writes, “In all conscience, I cannot teach young people that there is a hierarchy among the musics of the world. How can you say that there is nothing of value students can learn about the melodies, rhythms, scales, structures, theory, or practice techniques created by the rich musical imagination of all cultures?” (Lieberman, 2004, p. 11).

For this paper, I will refer to a diverse approach in string pedagogy at various times as alternative, multistyle, and style-flexible. I chose to include alternative because classical traditions continue to underlie the dominant pedagogies in string education, and other genres are certainly alternatives to the current traditional core classical repertoire. I chose to also use “multistyle” because this term is becoming more commonplace, particularly in academic research, and gives equal weight to more than one style. I earlier

cited Edwards (2003) use of the phrase “musically flexible” in the context of multicultural education. Based on this concept, I will use “style flexibility” to credit the diverse skill set required to effectively and authentically engage with a variety of styles and to describe the type of musician a multistyle approach produces.

Multistylism is slowly becoming more evident in school string programs thanks to efforts of a growing number of multi-style teachers and performers and the support of the American String Teachers Association. The increasing publication of alternative method books over the last three decades indicates a gradual shift toward style flexibility in school string programs. The rise of student-lead multi-style string ensembles represents another contributing factor to creating national awareness. A pioneer on this front is noted string pedagogue and current (e.g. 2012-2014) ASTA president Bob Phillips, who founded the Saline Fiddlers in 1994. His vision was to provide public school students with a way to learn fiddle (also referred to as bluegrass or Old Time) music alongside their classical instruction. Their set list has expanded to include Celtic, Western Swing, jazz, and popular music.

“I used fiddling in the classroom as a motivational device and for technical development,” [Phillips] says. “Kids in a large strings program are very motivated by rhythmically based music. Fiddling and jazz tend to be rhythmically driven, whereas a lot of classical music is more harmonically driven. It’s more of an acquired taste for kids, whereas fiddling and jazz they can access more quickly” (Reel, 2004, p. 47).

Phillips has worked with other musicians to create method books covering fiddle, Celtic, jazz, and Mariachi styles in an attempt to promote style flexibility within elementary and secondary school string programs.

### **Movements in the Music Industry and Performance Practice**

Trends in the popular music industry and hit songs on the Billboard charts provide further insight into the alternative strings movement and how this has influenced current music students. The alternative track for strings, while slow to evolve in pedagogy, is clearly evident in the popular music industry. Many groups have used classical string instruments in their music. Examples include “Eleanor Rigby” by The Beatles, “The Dangling Conversation” by Simon and Garfunkel, “Bittersweet Symphony” by The Verve, “Bonedrive” by Bush, “Wonderwall” by Oasis, and more recently “All of the Lights” by Kanye West and “Run Boy Run” by Woodkid. While pop music has utilized general background string arrangements for years, more recently the crossover musicians are known by name, including Boyd Tinsley, violinist with the Dave Matthews Band, Eileen Ivers, Celtic fiddle master and member of the original cast of *Riverdance*, and Apocolyptica, a rock group composed of four cellists playing popular heavy metal songs on electric cellos.

In 1995, musicians from three different music backgrounds came together to create a new type of multistyle chamber music. Yo-Yo Ma (world-renown classical cellist), Mark O’Connor (bluegrass fiddling champion), and Edgar Meyer (classical and jazz bassist) released their first collaborative album, *Appalachia Waltz*, which attempted to bridge the gap between classical and fiddle/bluegrass/Appalachian music. The album quickly rose to the top of the Classical Billboard charts prior to the creation of a Classical Crossover category at the Grammy Awards in 1997.

The trio won a Grammy for best Crossover Album in 2001 with *Appalachian Journey*, a follow-up album to *Appalachia Waltz*. Mark O’Connor went on to release

numerous recordings of collaborations with classical, bluegrass, folk, and jazz musicians. Yo-Yo Ma began the Silk Road Project, delving into the music of Asia, including Japan, China, and Mongolia. The recent and wildly popular *The Goat Rodeo Sessions* features original crossover compositions by Yo-Yo Ma, Chris Thile, Edgar Meyer, and Stuart Duncan. Edgar Meyer. The album blends various styles including bluegrass, Appalachia, Celtic, and blues.

Ma is a key example of a classically trained musician who has achieved major success and earned respect within both classical and alternative realms. His projects include music in many styles from many countries: Europe (classical), American (bluegrass, folk, jazz), Argentina (tango), Brazil (samba, choro), Japan, China, and Mongolia. "As a musician I'm kind of nomadic, Waldo-like," he says. "I show up in different places, and I'm witness to unbelievable things."<sup>3</sup>

Up and coming artists are reaching out to the younger generation. Two Cellos became an overnight YouTube sensation with their arrangement of Michael Jackson's "Smooth Criminal." The Vitamin String Quartet has released over fifty albums with classical string quartet arrangements of popular music by groups such as Led Zeppelin, Coldplay, and Lady Gaga. Violinist and YouTube sensation Lindsey Stirling records both original compositions and covers ranging from pop songs to soundtracks to video game themes. She specializes in visually interesting music videos where she plays violin while incorporating dance moves; *Strings* magazine commented that she is helping a new generation get excited about violin (Ramey, 2013). The new generation is open to a shift in how we view musical genres and boundaries. I will further explore the concept of style

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<sup>3</sup> Cook, Shannen. "Every Day is a Holiday for Yo-Yo Ma." *CNN Entertainment*, November 12, 2008, <http://www.cnn.com/2008/SHOWBIZ/Music/11/12/yoyo.ma>.

flexibility in the following chapter including why it thrives more on the performance stage than in studios and classrooms.

### **Problems & Controversy**

The multistyle approach for string musicians is clearly evident in the pop music industry and becoming more evident in string pedagogy. Publications such as *American String Teacher* and *Strings* magazine feature monthly articles on how to include improvisation and various styles in the studio and practice room, but there is limited formal research specifically focused on multistyle pedagogy and curriculum design for strings.

Woodwind, brass, percussion, and keyboard instruments have played multi-styles (i.e. classical, modern, American, folk, jazz, etc.) in symphonic, marching, and jazz bands for years, and yet strings (specifically violin, viola, & cello) lack formal or standardized improvisation and multi-style curriculums. In 1995, Julie Lyon Lieberman remarked, “Today, there are so many improvising string players, that it’s dizzying. I’m constantly astounded by the new names and the rising level of capability. Yet, resource materials do not equal those available to guitarists, pianists, or sax players” (Lieberman, 1995, p. vii).

There are several possible factors relating to this phenomenon. Major stigmas and stereotypes remain in relation to classical music, classical musicians, and their ability and willingness to collaborate with musicians from other genres. There has been recent discussion as to what Western Classical music’s role is in the twenty-first century. Mark O’Connor leads one such discussion.

“In the last 50 years, the role of the classical violinist has dramatically declined when compared to the trajectory of nearly every other instrumentalist in classical music... The art of playing the violin as a great human achievement has not only suffered dramatically in the last couple of generations, but the expectations of those classical string players by their own audiences, has also diminished.”<sup>4</sup>

Higher education also shows resistance to the trend; a majority of college and university music departments and music conservatories remain strictly classical-based, using alternative styles as electives only. Mari Black, multi-style violinist, studied relationships between higher education and multi-style string students. She elaborates on the tension between informal multi-style learning and formal Western-classical schooling.

Naturally, different musical traditions have different ways of helping young musicians transition from being advanced students to successful professionals. In Western Classical music, students typically get this training in a formal college-level music program. There, a prescribed curriculum of performance and supporting non-performance (i.e. music history or theory) classes helps students prepare for the professional jobs they will win after graduating (Black, 2012, p. 9).

Black emphasizes the classroom environment and schooling provided for students seeking Western Classical training. While it is set up to give classical-based string students training for a career solely in classical music it does not address the needs of alternative style string students who may come from an informal learning environment.

In many traditional styles, formal college training is often considered lacking when compared to the practical experience a young player could get by mingling with experienced musicians and living the life of a working professional musician. For many musicians in these traditions, attending college means delaying the start to this ‘real world’ experience (Black, 2012, p. 9).

Higher education built on Western-classical repertoire and education models are unable to effectively collaborate with multi-style string musicians who want a formal

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<sup>4</sup> O’Connor, Mark, “The Fallen Classical Violinist,” *Parting Shots: From a Musician’s Perspective*, March 4, 2013, [http://markoconnorblog.blogspot.com/2013\\_03\\_04\\_archive.html](http://markoconnorblog.blogspot.com/2013_03_04_archive.html).

education. “After all, for musicians who are coming from [alternative] styles... attending a formal college can represent a rupture in the natural trajectory towards professionalism” (Black, 2012, p. 11).

Various researchers have done work in have done extensive research on the incorporation of vernacular or informal music methods into formal music education. Both Green (2002) and Davis (2005) studied the performance and practice habits of musicians outside of the classroom performing music of their choosing (mostly popular styles such as rock) and how these habits transfer back to formal classroom settings. Their work will be further detailed in the Review of Literature.

Thibeault (2009) explored what happens when a student has contrasting music experiences, both with repertoire selection and learning methods, in and outside of the classroom. He studied the connections and disconnect between the students’ experience with formal classical instruction in the classroom and informal bluegrass instruction in the community.

Fetter (2011) explored alternative string pedagogy and curriculum design. He explained the need for further research on developing practice where teachers are engaging with different music cultures within string music classrooms and how this may reveal trends and discern best practices for teachers wishing to adopt a multistyle approach. Following his call for a closer look at alternative pedagogies, the present study will explore how and why teachers at the elementary and secondary levels are putting multistylism into pedagogical practice.

### **Importance & Goals**

There is very little research on pedagogies based on multistyle approaches. Most existing research focuses on multicultural curriculum within general music education, and few studies specifically address strings. The research we do have agrees that a disconnect remains between formal and informal music making settings. Students connect with and excel in informal music settings, yet the question remains: How are string teachers actualizing the multistyle experience in studios and classrooms including both formal and informal teaching strategies?

Multistylism appears to be gaining momentum, yet many teachers and institutions seem unwilling or unsure of how to incorporate different styles into their curriculums. Using a case study approach to investigate the use of alternative styles in private classically based string studio settings, this qualitative research aims to examine the experiences of five classically trained string teachers who include additional styles in their teaching. Rather than looking at exact methods of implementation, this study will focus on the philosophy and motivation behind the multistyle movement, more specifically the driving force behind musical style flexibility in string education. The following questions guide this research: (1) What motivating factors inspire a classically trained string educator to begin teaching alternative styles to their students? (2) Why is it important to keep classical music in string pedagogy? (3) How have these teachers, their peers, students, and community reacted to multistylism?

I begin with a review of literature, exploring the history of multicultural music education and string education, presenting a brief history of string-specific crossover



music within the popular music industry, conclude with recent string-specific literature on multistyle pedagogy. The methodology chapter explains the approaches used for data analysis. I then present the data analysis along with supporting evidence and conclude with a summary and areas for future research.

## Chapter 2

### Review of Literature

The multi-style movement within standardized string education is a recent development, which limits the amount of available research. However, researchers have worked in related areas. Specifically, many studies on the multicultural movement within general music education, and particularly in the elementary classroom, exist. There are also emerging studies on informal learning methods from non-Classical settings and how such pedagogies can relate to formal learning environments. This research has particular significance to the present study as most of the alternative styles that teachers seek to integrate with classical string pedagogy originate in informal learning environments. Finally, there is increasing research on the crossover movement and work to define the multiple collaborations that are generating new genres.

I begin with multicultural research in the general music classroom, cover informal popular and formal Western classical methods of education, and conclude with string-specific literature.

#### **Multicultural Music Education**

There is an abundance of literature on diverse, multi-cultural approaches to music education. Campbell (2002) writes of multiculturalism as a societal movement with its genesis in the early twentieth century and links to the 1940s intergroup education movement that sought to reduce prejudice and build interracial cooperation. She

elaborates on the different labels preceding multiculturalism and how the terms evolved throughout history.

“First *ethnic studies*, the establishment of specialized courses about the contribution of specialized courses about the contributions of minorities to American society, and then *multiethnic education*, the provision of equal education opportunities for all students, were developed to counter the historical injustices of schooling and society. *Multicultural education* became the more encompassing term when other groups, such as women and disabled people, urged the incorporation of their histories and cultures into the school curriculum” (Campbell, 2002, p. 28).

Like general education, music education has wrestled with questions of multiculturalism in policy and pedagogy. With integration of non-classical and non-Western music into formal instruction came questions of authenticity. Teachers face the challenge of presenting authentic repertoire while simultaneously staying true to that culture’s teaching and learning process. How do teachers authentically educate students both in practice and repertoire about various styles when they themselves have limited or no training in these specific styles? For example, would teaching students a traditional Irish tune with sheet music instead of learning the tune by ear, which is how Irish musicians traditionally learn and teach their music, retain authenticity or does that foreign pedagogical process interfere with the essential nature of the music?

“The conventional downplaying of or inattention to the context-particular meanings of different musics in music education has led to situations in K-12 classrooms where the musics of different cultural traditions are included, but they are misrepresented, and where cultural misunderstandings and ironies are commonplace” (Goble, 2010, p. 9). Teachers run the risk of giving students a false impression of a given culture’s music if they themselves are unfamiliar with the nuances of that particular style and its cultural background. Campbell (2002) perceives that multicultural music education has often

emphasized diversity and deemphasized authentic contexts, processes, and cultural connections. If teachers only have time or knowledge to present the bare minimum about many cultures rather than delving deep into a few select types of music, they run the risk of presenting a watered-down and inaccurate picture of each style. Even teachers who dedicate themselves to learning a new style and sharing it with their students retain the perspective of an outsider. Louis Bergonzi writes, “Know that, especially if you are from a majority culture, you are not culturally neutral. The ensembles and opportunities you offer, the pieces you choose to bring to the classroom, and the themes you pick for concerts or festivals always reflect a culture, even if there is no exotic or multicultural dimension present. While seemingly ‘regular’ to some people, the orchestra is a type of world music ensemble, one that reflects Euro-American culture” (Bergonizi, 2008, p. 27).

Despite these potential shortcomings, the argument remains that even inauthentic exposure provides awareness and contact that students would not otherwise experience. People who embrace this perspective seek to connect students with the world around them, starting with the local community. “Perhaps it is not necessary to be 100-percent culturally authentic in our teaching. However, it is necessary to be 100-percent committed to enabling our students to understand new music. In this way, we acknowledge the people we are studying by honoring their music and making it possible for our students to make meaningful connections with it” (Blair, Kondo, 2008, p. 52).

### **Informal Music Practices**

Recent research with popular musicians compares formal and informal music education environments and practices. In this type of research, “formal” typically refers

to pedagogy, content, and values associated with Western classical music (Green, 2002). In informal music practices, “young musicians largely teach themselves or ‘pick up’ skills and knowledge...by watching and imitating musicians around them and by making reference to recordings or performances and other live events involving their chosen music” (Green, 2002, p. 5).

There is a strong disconnect between music in the classroom and music performed on the stage and played on the radio. “Despite its widespread provision in a large number of countries, and notwithstanding the recent entrance of popular music into the formal arena, music education has had relatively little to do with the development of the majority of those musicians who have produced the vast proportion of the music which the global population listens to, dances to, identifies with and enjoys” (Green, 2002, p. 5). Green and Sharon Davis (2005) focus on the music students engage with outside of the classroom and the application of practices from these informal settings to formal instruction in the attempt to create more engaging and motivating musical experiences within the classroom. By connecting students to the music of their culture, their formal music education ostensibly becomes more relevant and relatable.

Davis (2005) spent time studying teenage rock bands to identify methods that could transfer to the classroom setting. The study examined the musical processes of a three-member rock band, their roles within the group, and considered how they constructed musical meaning. In her research she found that the musicians “grew in their ability to invent ideas, modify them, fiddle with them in the safe environment they established, and work collaboratively and supportively until they achieved a complex product reflecting their intended meaning” (Davis, 2005, p. 11). The students had

complete artistic control and because they were all working together they were equally vulnerable in the creative process, providing a safe space. They were also able to take their time to produce their perfectly intended outcome rather than following a regimented timeline. If the direction of their project took a different course, they were free to follow and alter the end result. This idea of ownership and student-centered learning was at the core of their experience.

“Ideas brought to the group belonged to the whole group, and everyone had the opportunity to experiment with them...While they sometimes worked in smaller groups, the completion of the song entailed the commitment of the entire group. This commitment provided the support structure in the ensemble and was in direct parallel to the social structure of the group. Commitment to one another and the music was paramount” (Davis, 2005, p. 11).

Since the groups were selecting their own ideas and repertoire, they were completely invested in its success. The group size also contributed to a higher level of commitment and satisfaction with the finished product because students could divide into smaller like-minded factions.

Lucy Green’s research on informal musicians provides in-depth insight into students’ musical lives outside of school and what their music making generates. Green studied students whose primary music education came from their own home and the rock bands they formed with their friends. Her participants articulated significant disjunction between their informal pursuits and formal music classrooms.

“Seven out of the nine musicians in the sample who took classical instrumental lessons got little out of them, finding the lessons boring, the progress slow and the music difficult to relate to. Most of them had not made any links between those lessons and their informal popular music learning practices” (Green, 2002, p. 148).

The students seemed to view the music in the classroom as an entirely different subject than the music they participated in after school. Green found that their school and

teachers had not typically helped the students in their popular music pursuits or even shown awareness or interest in their enthusiasm for and commitment to those activities. (Green, 2002). She concluded that not only were the students learning vastly different music in the classroom, their alternative repertoire and methods were not being affirmed by the school, which further widened the gap between classroom and community.

Green was interested in the students' perceptions of formal music education and how their informal music making and training informed their experience in the classroom. Her student participants experienced both negative and positive elements. She found that participants felt alienated by musical content and practices "to which they could not relate and through which they felt unable to progress" (Green, 2002, p. 177). The students were forced to study music with which they had no experience or connection. They also did not sense that this was a track they could excel in. For the students there was no need to put effort into music that they would not engage with outside of the classroom. Conversely, students did benefit from learning skills related to technique, notation, and theoretical concepts. Building their musical vocabulary and technical knowledge was a great benefit for the students. They could instantly apply the knowledge outside of the classroom, making it relatable and relevant.

By studying what keeps students engaged, motivated, and progressing outside of school, teachers can learn ways to maximize fun and learning in formal classrooms. Julie Lyonn Lieberman supports the idea of accessibility and relevancy through a focus on alternative styles to engage and resonate with string students. She expresses concern that disconnects between formal instruction and students' musical interest may lead to a decline in both players and audience members (Lieberman, 2004). Fundamentally, if

students do not find the music they play interesting they will stop playing their instruments once they graduate and leave their formal music education.

It is important to consider that not all students may want to formally study the music they listen to or even play outside of their formal classrooms and outside of the classical realm. Depending on the needs and interests of the students, teachers may choose to adopt the practices of informal learning rather than the genres. If teachers have studios and classrooms where student interests are varied, how do they create a model for differentiated instruction that keeps students on a similar progress path but allows for both genre exploration and pure classical training? This is an area for further research.

### **Multistylism in String Pedagogy**

Throughout my research I found one study that addressed the divide between formal and informal music methods specifically relating to string pedagogy. In 2009, Thibeault asked the following questions relating to a student's interaction with formal and informal music environments. "What happens when the school's conception of the subject conflicts with the student's conception? What happens when a school tries to support or incorporate a vision of music not normally taught?" (Thibeault, 2009, p. 256) Thibeault's research focused on Eva, a student interacting with two genres on her violin; classical music at school and bluegrass outside of school. When she crosses the invisible line and begins to play bluegrass at school she receives mixed reactions.

"[Eva's] stories are dominated by tensions: between classical and bluegrass music, between written music and aural folk traditions, and between a guided curriculum and development through her own musical explorations. These tensions are rooted in particular dilemmas inherent in contemporary music education, but they also reflect deeper educational problems and dilemmas" (Thibeault, 2009, p. 255-256).



These deeper dilemmas arise when students participating in styles outside of the classroom are judged by those uneducated about the style with which the student is engaging. Thibeault interprets Eva's case as one of cultural assumptions and perceived intrinsic value. "Eva's words speak to the bias that exists in much music education, where styles and techniques outside the traditional classical are seen as lesser achievements. She evokes an imaginary interlocutor, a classically trained musician who views the bluegrass musician as uneducated and untrained" (Thibeault, 2009, p. 262). When classical stands at the apex of string education and represents the highest level of achievement, bluegrass must necessarily reside at a lower level and comprise a lesser alternative with respect to learning the violin.

Lieberman (2008) has written extensively on style flexibility within the string world since the 1970s. Her message always centers on the musician as a creative individual. While personal expressiveness and an individual style can be developed within existing classical repertoire, Liebermann argues that ultimate growth is achieved when music becomes personal and musicians create rather than strictly interpret another's compositions.

"Western European classical training and repertoire provides us with the ability to sample someone else's experiences. This privilege and honor enables us to enter the worlds of Bach, Beethoven, Ravel, Bartok, and all the other great composers who have left us their creative legacy-and to share this music with audiences throughout the world. But it is also important to provide a channel through which the performer's individuality can be expressed" (Lieberman, 2008, p. 67).

Lieberman is a strong advocate for alternative styles and yet maintains that classical repertoire has an active role in music history and should be experienced by students studying string instruments. She feels that a student's musical education is only complete when they create music themselves in addition to experiencing music created

by others. Perhaps the most immediately accessible mode of creation occurs through improvisation. Classical music does have a history of improvisation, yet this tradition is rarely included in classical training today. Improvisatory practices are fundamental to many alternative styles, but Lieberman acknowledges that quality alternative repertoire or methods must be available for students to express their creativity.

Fetter supports the idea of providing alternative modes of creativity in his research on students at a summer multistyle strings camp. In his study, Fetter concludes that “classical music has had limited appeal for some students in string music classrooms, and that incorporation of alternative styles is intended to invite broader participation in music making on stringed instruments” (Fetter, 2011, p. 6). He advocates for a conservative approach as not all students will resonate with alternative styles, and classical approaches still have much to offer. “Students may become more motivated to practice by performing folk, world, and popular musics, and teachers need not omit traditional string pedagogy as they incorporate alternative styles” (Fetter, 2011, p. 6). Teachers should not phase out classical repertoire. Fetter also discusses the fear that teachers experience when contemplating a shift in their teaching approach and structure.

“Curricular pressure in preparing concerts while fostering musical development that unlocks potential can be overwhelming for teachers. Adding something new and time intensive might only add to this feeling. Longer timelines could help teachers find room for these experiences... Whether as a part of an existing class in a school music program or as a stand-alone addition, implementing the model with open access rather than as a reward to high-level players would allow interested students to pursue diverse musical identities and perhaps find undiscovered musical paths” (Fetter, 2011, p. 124-125).

Fetter also presents alternative styles as a model of postmodern curriculum design because of its student-centered system of learning. Self-organization, as seen in the groups studied by Green and Davis, open-ended instruction, customized learning, and

reflection are postmodern elements of curricular design that Fetter found in multistyle environments. These components may help educators understand how to better update their classrooms to cater to their students' various interests and needs.

Because non-Classical styles often involve more open-ended approaches such as free improvisation or learning tunes by ear, teachers fear that disorder may erupt in the classroom if students are not focusing on sheet music. "The chaos that may happen from allowing open systems in the classroom can be seen as opportunities for unique learning moments to occur. Chaos involves openness, but has central attractors around ideas that are salient to the group" (Fetter, 2011, p. 125). Fetter believes that the benefits of multistylism extend far beyond the music classroom. "Some string pedagogues hope that students can become more tolerant of individual and cultural differences through learning to perform in an alternative style" (Fetter, 2011, p. 6).

### **Multistylism in Higher Education**

Violinist Mari Black investigated multistyle music experiences in higher education for her dissertation research. There are an increasing number of multistyle string musicians confronting Western society's expectations within college music programs. Black was interested in how higher education contributes to the non-Classical part of a student's musical path when pre-professional training in non-Classical styles has not traditionally included college education. Black interviewed students from university-based music programs (universities with an attached school of music), mono-style (classical-only) conservatories, and multi-style conservatories (where classical and non-classical styles-such as jazz-are given equal footing) to isolate the elements of

multistylists' success within undergraduate programs, including liberal arts programs and conservatories. Black identified distinct elements that multistylists need in various combinations during their higher education matriculation to prepare for a professional career, including tolerance and support, access to diverse performance communities, material that was relevant and applicable to their playing, and opportunities to develop creative skills such as improvisation and composition (Black, 2012).

Black found that students need flexibility within their program because each student's multistyle journey differs. They have individualized needs, and no single higher education path is perfectly tailored for a multistylist. Black pushes for more support from college teachers because the trends in elementary and secondary schools point to more and more multistylists entering college. Even if teachers are not interested in learning other styles, they must be aware of the shift in string education and face the reality and high probability of teaching a multistylist at some point. Teachers who perceive such musical flexibility as irrelevant need to examine the growing numbers of multistyle musicians on stage and in their very own classrooms and studios.

As the trend towards multistylism continues to rise in the music [education] world, it becomes increasingly likely that teachers in college-level music programs will have a student like these participants in their classes. Being aware of multistylists' self-reported needs could enable teachers to be more responsive and helpful to multistyle students, even if these teachers are not multistylists themselves (Black, 2012, p. 278).

There will always be string students who choose a classical-only track, but as the multistyle trend grows, so will the number of multistyle music majors. If schools are more aware of current trends, they can better help students select a school that fits their distinct needs as multistylists. For example, a mono-style conservatory-perfect for the student whose passion is exclusively classical-can steer a multistylist in a different

direction and avoid four to five years of frustration on both ends. Schools that already incorporate alternative styles into their classical-centered programs can explore additional ways to create a balanced curriculum that adequately prepares students for a career in both classical and alternative styles.

### **Summary**

The literature on multicultural music education makes a case for the inclusion of multicultural repertoire in formal music education at the elementary and secondary levels, although practices primarily focus on repertoire selection rather than inclusion of other culture's pedagogical practices. Likewise, Green states that while popular music is gaining acceptance within formal music education, informal learning practices or teaching strategies do not find the same acceptance. "The inclusion of popular, as well as jazz and other world musics in both instrumental tuition and school curricula represents the addition of new educational content, but has not necessarily been accompanied by any corresponding changes in teaching strategy" (Green, 2002 p. 184)

Green and Davis studied differences between formal and informal music environments and pedagogical practices. They focused on student-organized groups in informal settings outside of the classroom in order to see how these practices transfer to formal classroom environments. There were advantages to both environments but they found a disconnect that was keeping students from experiencing and forming a complete picture of music education, viewing their music making and learning outside of the classroom as a separate entity. Thibeault addresses informal and formal education, focusing specifically on strings. He presents instances when the informal and formal

experiences clash within the classroom. As a practitioner rather than as a researcher, Lieberman urges teachers to provide variety in teaching situations because it is impossible to predict what will resonate most with each student. It is the teacher's responsibility to provide exposure and show students what options are available to them. However, teachers should also provide opportunities for students share their music. This mutual sharing builds respect as both parties learn from each other.

Fetter explored experiences of students at summer multistyle strings camp and how these experiences align with postmodern curriculum design. He found substantial similarities and argues that multistylism provides postmodern curriculum options for the formal traditional classroom. Black examined multistylist's experiences in higher education to understand their needs and what changes must take place for their success.

Researchers and practitioners identify that multistylism is becoming a driving force within music education. They agree that teachers must provide alternative options in the formal classroom setting for students who may not connect with classical music. My research seeks to contribute to the existing literature by documenting personal experiences of classically trained string teachers of elementary and secondary students in both classroom and studio settings and the process of diversifying their curriculum. Therefore, this study will focus on multi-styles within American string pedagogy and provide evidence for why style flexibility is beneficial to the livelihood of the modern string student.

I will discuss the impact of additional styles in a classically based setting and explore what this diversification offers both students and teachers. Investigation of this

type potentially advances our understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of Western Classical methods and explores the process of building a framework for multistylism that will offer the greatest benefits of all styles involved.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

The purpose of this research was to examine the experiences of classically trained string teachers who expanded their curriculum to include alternative styles and answer the following research questions. (1) What factors inspire a classically trained string educator to begin teaching alternative styles to their students? (2) Why is it important to keep classical music in string pedagogy? (3) How have these teachers, their peers, students, and community reacted to multistylism?

I wanted to hear string teachers' personal accounts and stories to gain an in-depth understanding of how and why they embraced multistylism. Based on this preference, I chose a qualitative approach for this research with five representative practitioners. I interviewed the participants, transcribed, coded, and analyzed the interviews, and organized the data by common themes. The goal was to better understand why these classically trained teachers welcome a multistyle approach, document both the benefits and challenges, and analyze remaining areas of tension so that other string teachers can smoothly and skillfully implement these changes in their own studio or classroom.

#### **Research Approach**

For this qualitative study, I utilized a multi-site case study approach (Creswell, 2007) and Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss's (2008) format for coding and analysis. I chose a qualitative approach to allow for more open-ended exploration and more "hypothesis generating rather than testing" (Corbin, Strauss, 2008, p. 25) as this topic is



based on more recent developments in the string education field and requires current research to fill in gaps in literature and highlight areas for further research. I conducted a collective or multiple case study where the one issue or concern is selected, but the inquirer selects multiple case studies to illustrate the issue. (Creswell, 2007)

Before I began the interviews I submitted a Human Research Review Request to James Madison University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for both an initial pilot study and the remainder of the case study interviews. Participants all signed the Consent to Participate in Research form as provided by IRB. I chose to utilize pseudonyms in the transcriptions to maintain confidentiality and protect participants' privacy. Upon completion of the interviews and data collection I submitted a Research Project Close-Out Form to IRB.

Throughout the case study interviews I used guiding questions to organize and analyze the data and throughout the constant comparisons (Corbin, Strauss, 2008) to check for similarities and differences amongst the participants. After gathering the data I transcribed each interview (total 342 minutes), conducted a cross-case analysis, and examined ideas across cases to discern themes common to all cases (Creswell, 2007, p. 245). For the coding process, I first conducted open coding (Corbin, Strauss, 2008) to extract key words and concepts before analyzing the data for specific themes, aggregating information into large clusters of ideas and providing details that support the themes (Creswell, 2007, p. 244).

Once I had key themes and subthemes in place I began the process of integration or linking categories together to “construct a plausible explanatory framework about the

[participants'] experience” (Corbin, Strauss, 2008, p. 264). I looked for commonalities amongst the participants’ experiences with multistyle string education.

### **Pilot Study**

In June 2012, I conducted a pilot study with Alice as my interviewee to assess the viability of the topic for research. Alice and I were introduced through a mutual teaching colleague. I determined she was a qualified participant due to her solely classical training, her developed interest and study in at least one alternative style, and her current work as a private and group cello instructor. I interviewed her in person and audio recorded the interview for transcription purposes. The interview was successful in that she was able to address and fully elaborate on each original question and helped me determine the direction I wanted to go in my research. I then simplified the overarching research questions, modified the interview questions to select guiding questions (Corbin, Strauss, 2008), and sought four additional participants.

I limited the sample size to five participants based on Creswell’s recommendations. “Typically...the researcher chooses no more than four or five cases.” (Creswell, 2007, p. 76) I wanted to get a diverse range of perspective from multi-style teachers and still go in-depth with each participant. A larger sample size would have hindered the depth of the study.

### **Participants**

For this study, I selected participants that still value and incorporate classical music in their teaching even though they have integrated other styles because I am

interested in how Western Classical pedagogy can simultaneously coexist with other genres and their pedagogy and performance practices. This explores the idea that non-classical pedagogy and learning environments no longer have to be alternatives to a core curriculum. This also examines the concept of creating “multistyle” or “style-flexible” musicians as opposed to musicians who leave classical and “cross over” to an alternative style. In a time when options for string musicians are expanding, I wanted to see how classical music’s role in string pedagogy is changing.

For this research, I purposefully chose participants from diverse backgrounds and settings because I wanted to explore the experience of teachers on different instruments, using various alternative styles in various classically based teaching settings. Therefore I chose five teachers from both studio and classroom settings teaching both private lessons and large ensembles. I selected teachers with students of varying ages and skill level, including students at both elementary and secondary levels. I did not include teachers in higher education because I am interested in multistyle teaching and learning at earlier and more formative levels.

The candidates were either recommended through mutual music educator colleagues or people I met at a professional development conference. The teachers all have classical backgrounds and play various string instruments, although their primary instruments were violin (2), cello (2), and bass (1). They use classical music as a core part of their curriculum and incorporate one or more alternative styles in their teaching, including Celtic, bluegrass, folk, rock, jazz, R&B, and popular music. The following profiles provide a brief introduction to the interviewees.

Sophie is a violinist who plays and teaches classical, jazz, fiddle, and pop. She teaches private lessons, directs middle and high school orchestras, and has an undergraduate degree in music history and a graduate degree in music education. She had rigorous classical training on violin from an early age and entered numerous competitions throughout Europe. For Sophie, improvisation and creativity was reserved for the piano, the instrument she played for fun on the side. It did not occur to her to transfer these aspects to the violin.

I always took piano as a fun instrument...so I always just kind of fiddled with the piano but I felt it took so long for me to realize that I could fiddle with the violin, you know, because of the intense training. But until really what crystallized everything is in 2003 that's when the National ASTA conference...they started their Alternative Style [Festival] and I was very impressed with the fiddling from Saline, Michigan...And then I saw Julie Lyon Lieberman and I saw Martin Norgaard and I saw Mark Wood and I saw all those people. I said that's a great way to explore other things besides just doing classical training!

Kevin is a violinist who plays and teaches classical and bluegrass. He has a private string studio and also tours with a successful bluegrass band. Kevin has an undergraduate degree in violin performance and a graduate degree in violin pedagogy. He began violin lessons because he wanted to learn bluegrass fiddle, but his teacher started him with classical methods and repertoire.

[Bluegrass] was where I wanted to go with the music. I just ended up falling in love with classical music and going another direction...They kind of did a race for a while. One was well ahead of the other one, but then I started catching up in bluegrass terms. Now I think they coexist pretty peacefully.

Kevin joined string orchestra in middle school, which sparked his interest in classical music. This interest turned to obsession when he joined a full symphonic orchestra in high school. "I had known nothing about the orchestra really other than string orchestra...I couldn't imagine how big it sounded; the winds and masses of it...and

from that day forward I devoted my life to classical music.” But the more Kevin studied classical repertoire and technique, the more he realized the need for fiddle.

Unfortunately...I got further and further away from the fiddling style and became very stiff. I knew I could improvise but it was very square. I wasn't sounding at all like the fiddle players that I wanted to sound like or the fiddle players I'd grown up hearing...As I grew and was like 'wait a minute, I have this heritage' I started getting a little bit better at fiddle although I still had this pronounced classical accent at this point...I [also] took jazz improv, which really opened me up to a lot of opportunities.

Alice is a cellist who plays and teaches classical and Celtic styles. She teaches private and group lessons and is a certified Suzuki Method instructor. Alice has an undergraduate degree in music and a graduate degree in cello performance. Her early cello training was purely classical and she did not branch out until college.

Through social circles, [I] made contact with a folk singer who became my friend. We were both Quaker and through that connection decided to put together some programs to do in Quaker settings. She didn't read music so...with much trepidation [I] started doing things by ear and felt sort of at sea. And then...the person who then later became my husband, signed me up to have a lesson with an Indian sitar player who had come to give a concert at the college...I couldn't even improvise on my own idiom never mind Indian music...but the man gave me the most valuable lesson as he gave me a crash course in the entire world of Indian music. And he said, 'You won't be playing any wrong notes. Don't worry,' and that's what I needed to hear.

Damien is a cellist who plays and teaches classical, rock, and pop. He teaches private lessons, directs a high school chamber orchestra, and teaches a high school Music Technology course. He also leads and frequently performs with a successful rock cello ensemble. Damien has both undergraduate and graduate degrees in cello performance. Growing up, his cello instruction was strictly classical but at home he played along with rock and metal albums for fun. His perception changed after discovering Christopher O'Riley, concert pianist and host of "From the Top," National Public Radio's weekly show featuring young classical musicians from across the United States. "[O'Riley] was

also doing that crossover thing. He was playing Radiohead on the piano...it wasn't a big deal for him. He was already doing that kind of thing—playing the music that he listened to on the instrument that he played.” Thus began Damien’s serious journey into rock cello.

Paul is a bassist who plays classical and jazz, but teaches a wide variety of styles including blues, bluegrass, pop, and more. He teaches at a large high school and directs three orchestras. Paul has both undergraduate and graduate degrees in music education. He started bass in elementary school and studied classical all the way through college. “I auditioned for the jazz band [in high school] but I just didn’t have what it took to play in the jazz band.” It wasn’t until Paul went to college and studied jazz in music theory class that he began branching out. “I started a band with my friends and we were all classically trained but were trying to explore these new avenues and no one was shutting us down because we weren’t trained in it, we were just having fun.”

### **Limitations of the Study**

The limitations of this study include not observing the teachers in their studios and classrooms and watching them implement their methods. I was not able to speak with their students and hear personal accounts of how their teachers introduced them to styles outside of the classical realm. From this perspective I could have included direct quotes related to the students’ and parents’ reactions. For the students who initially resisted the alternative styles I could have isolated more specific reasons, shedding insight on multistyle implementation and methodology with elementary and secondary students.

### **Researcher Role**

My role for this paper was to collect, analyze, and present the data gathered during interviews. My own experiences with multistyle string education motivated me to conduct this study and gave me a unique insider view and helped me better relate with the subjects. Like the participants, I also come from a classical-only background and did not seriously seek a multistyle method (both as a teacher and performer) until later in my musical journey. This equipped me to answer more in-depth questions as we explored this topic. Corbin and Strauss encourage exploration of topics with which we are familiar. “We can use [our] experience...as a comparative case to stimulate thinking about various properties and dimensions of concepts” (Corbin, Strauss, 2008, p. 80). As my own experience with multistylism is a recent development and my knowledge base still limited, I was able to bracket my own experiences in the process of data analysis.

To further minimize research bias, I conducted constant comparisons: comparing different areas of data for similarities and differences (Corbin, Strauss, 2008) to maintain analysis within the text. I also used participant checks to verify the accuracy of the interview transcriptions. Constantly referring back to the literature and other research studies also assisted in maintaining well-supported arguments.

### **Data Collection**

I interviewed the remaining four participants between October 2012 and April 2013. We communicated via Skype video conferencing due to their distant locations. With the participants' permission, I audio recorded the interviews and transcribed them afterward. The interviews ranged from 45 minutes to 90 minutes in length for a total of

342 minutes of recorded interview time. Three interviews took one session while two interviews required follow-ups to finish discussing the questions. The individual transcriptions range in length from 10 to 25 pages, with a total of 89 pages. The participants each received a copy of the transcription for review and opportunity for feedback if they felt the need to clarify any of their answers.

### **Plan of Analysis**

Once the transcriptions were complete, I went through each interview and began the analysis. I conducted a cross-case analysis, examining themes across cases to discern themes common to all cases (Creswell, 2007, p. 245). For the coding process, I first conducted open coding (Corbin, Strauss, 2008) to extract key words and concepts before analyzing the data for specific themes, aggregating information into large clusters of ideas and providing details that support the themes (Creswell, 2007, p. 244). I chose key themes, topics, ideas, concepts, terms, phrases, keywords, repeated words, and phrases relating to research questions. I then looked at the larger sections where the keywords were first selected to see how these block quotes related to each other. Finally, I organized the quotes according to the emerging themes and how they fit into the research questions.

Once the quotes were organized by theme, I constructed a workable outline and linked the sections together to maintain clarity of the “progressive development of the theoretical story” (Corbin, Strauss, 2008, p. 279). From that point began the writing and process of integration or linking categories together to “construct a plausible explanatory framework about the experience” of the participants with multistyle string education



(Corbin, Strauss, 2008, p. 264). I then organized the supporting literature around the themes and subthemes to create two data and analysis chapters.

### **Summary**

The qualitative research, collective case study and open coding models allowed me to examine the various experiences of teachers integrating a style-flexible teaching curriculum and see what similarities and differences materialized. The cross-case analysis showed the emerging themes: benefits of multistylism, the relationship with classical music, and the reactions to multistyle integration. Even though the teachers taught in different parts of the country, in different educational settings, and on different instruments, results indicated many similarities in experiences.

## Chapter 4

### Multistyle Motivators

The purpose of this research was to understand the philosophy and motivation behind the multistyle movement, more specifically the driving force behind musical style flexibility in string education. The following questions guide this research: (1) What motivating factors inspire classically trained string educators to begin teaching alternative styles to their students? (2) Why is it important to keep classical music in string pedagogy? (3) How have these teachers, peers, students, and communities reacted to multistylism? These three questions elicited multiple stories of teachers' experiences as they navigated new territory on their instruments. From these stories emerged common ground that all teachers shared and from these commonalities emerged themes within each question.

The first theme of Multistyle Motivators addresses the first research question: What factors inspire a classically trained string educator to explore, learn, and teach alternative styles to their students? From this question emerged four subcategories: (1) Developing Creativity and Personal Expression, (2) Mistakes Redefined, (3) Student Enrollment and Retention, and (4) Employment Opportunities. All participants experienced at least two of the above subcategories.

#### **Developing Creativity & Personal Expression**

All study participants talked extensively on how exploring music outside the classical realm helped them become more creative and expressive musicians. By

cultivating a style-flexible music studio or classroom, teachers create an environment in which their students can explore and find music that resonates with them on a personal level. When students find a musical style or outlet that speaks to them they are more apt to develop expressiveness because they are passionate about their music and have had an active role in selecting what they play. Learning unfamiliar styles may also help students learn to listen differently and thus be aware of how they are expressing themselves on their instrument. This newfound comfort may lead to less anxiety when it comes to trying new things, such as unfamiliar repertoire and new techniques on their instrument, which is explored later in this chapter.

I asked Sophie why she considers style-flexibility a more creative experience than a single-style track. She explained how the inspiration came from putting herself in her students' shoes so they can see her challenged and growing alongside them. Relating to students in this way helps foster trust and builds a positive teacher-student relationship where creativity can flourish:

You put yourself in a student mode instead of a teacher mode and you start realizing that this is not easy. So you respect your students a little better. When I started having to try to solo it was a very, very hard experience...As a teacher, if you refuse to learn something new, you're not evolving; you're just going backwards..(laughs) You're not going to get a virus because "oh my gosh, I tried to play jazz!"

Damien began rock cello because he wanted to play the music to which he was listening. He went in search of resources, and when he didn't find any rock cello method books or repertoire he studied rock guitar and figured out how to transfer that information to cello. In his own way, Damien responded to the need for a voice outside of the classical realm by searching for any available resources and adapting them to the cello.

“What I did for my own education for teaching myself [rock] was, well, I was learning guitar anyway so that helped, but then I also went and got rock guitar scale books and figured out how they were teaching it to aspiring rock guitar players and then I transferred that to cello. So I actually did my own scale book.”

Alice talked extensively about the creative process. She finds new motivation every time she engages with alternative styles. This keeps her engaged as a teacher and helps her motivate her students with fresh material. Alice began her multistyle journey with Celtic music and free improvisation done in informal settings with fellow teachers at summer music camps.

“There’d usually be a small subset who wanted to improvise, just get together and jam. And I was a very shy member at first, but we would go and...sneak off late at night to some far beach and have a good time seeing what comes out. So, after doing that for years you start to be able to do something and then you figure out that that’s a fresh bell of inspiration that you can share with your students.”

This fresh bell of inspiration, as Alice calls it, benefits both teacher and student. When she experienced the turning point and began to create in a new way, it was easier to share this experience with the student. This levels the playing field and helps foster more understanding between teacher and student.

Alice elaborates by discussing this turning point, a student’s “musical awakening,” that moment where a student internalizes the music and their personal voice begins to show in their playing. They are no longer copying the style and sound of their teacher; they begin to present their own interpretation. Alice calls it “finding your voice” or your “unique musical energy.” This is the moment when the student plays, either in lesson or for a performance, and “the hair on the back of everybody’s neck goes up because something special is happening.”

For Alice, this is a moment that must come for her students if they are to play their instrument long term. It is what helps them internalize and find meaning in their

playing. It is just as important as having good technique and tone quality. Instead of playing and labeling the sound you produce as good or bad, students become active listeners and form a concept of the sound they want and the expression they are trying to convey. “You cultivate your personal taste in sound and even when you’re tuning you are working to create that sound.”

Alice also discussed the antithesis to creativity and personal expression Technical drudgery: when musicians focus so much on technical accuracy that they become lost in the details and fail to emphasize the emotion, expression, and any other elements not on paper. This antecedent also levels the playing field by giving young inexperienced musicians the chance to express emotion at the beginning of their musical training rather than wait until they have mastered core technical skills.

My feeling is that you shouldn’t have to be old and advanced in order to experience [musical expression], but part of that is just setting up the framework. So, if there can be motion in the body, song in the voice, and a pleasure in making sounds from the beginning that you get to put together yourself, I think that’s a good way to step into the idea that it’s not just all technical drudgery for the next sixteen years and then you can play.

A core value in Alice’s studio is improvisation because this is the gateway to developing musical creativity and eliminating technical drudgery. Alice incorporates some form of improvisation at every private and group lesson. She shared her various methods for introducing improvisation to students of different skill levels. For younger students she uses props or a storyline to help them visualize and decide how the object or the plots will sound on their cello. For more advanced students, they start by improvising over a drone and studying music theory to give them more tools for improvising in various keys. She describes the benefits of improvisation.

[The students] are free... They're claiming their own instrument... [and] own voice on the instrument and that's what I want because I'm sick and tired of hearing, and also helping to produce, yet another person who just kind of dryly plays through something after a lot of hard work and investment with no pleasure to himself or anybody else really. So I'm not going to be in that business and improv is one of those ways I've found to bring a lot of pleasure and freedom to it.

Kevin also uses improvisation as a creative outlet although mainly with classical music as opposed to any other alternative styles. This stays true to the roots of classical music where improvisation was a regular part of performance. Kevin shared the story of his audition for graduate school when he announced that he would be improvising the cadenza in Mozart's Violin Concerto No. 3.

"I don't have anything set. I didn't memorize the cadenza. I'm going to change it every time I play it. It's... improv within the parameters of what would be expected of a late-18<sup>th</sup> century player or something that Mozart would have done or not done but would have doubtless approved. Mozart did improvise. Their eyebrows raised, like 'oh, really?' I'm like 'yeah!'"

Paul realized that alternative styles provided a creative outlet where his students do not have to focus so much on their perfect technique or playing everything exactly as it is spelled out on paper. While some students are fortunate enough to have private lessons from an early age and extensive performance experience, others do not have the same advantages. Add the different situations Paul's students face at home, from academic struggles to domestic violence, and there is even more reason to give students additional music support and a new potential. Paul says, "I think [multistylism] kind of helped me reach the non-high skill level players more but it's also firmed up my beliefs on the importance of programming for every student in your program at some point, to have something." By programming music that reaches every student, Paul is providing differentiated instruction and allowing the music making to become personal.

Kevin likes alternative styles because they often connect students to the music of their ancestors; they can develop a voice on their instrument that reflects their personal heritage. He likes giving students the option of playing music of their past as opposed to classical music from Europe that their ancestors didn't necessarily engage in.

“Some people dig...the history behind American music...If you hear an Irish fiddle tune and your blood is strongly Irish and it moves you, there's a connection there and you know...you have people that used to play the fiddle, that brought their fiddles over from Ireland when they immigrated here.” This gives students ownership over a family tradition and lets them keep that aspect of their family history alive. For those without certainty of family heritage, they are introduced to a new genre they might possibly connect with.

### **Developing Creativity & Personal Expression: Discussion**

All five participants agreed that a major part of their style-flexible pedagogy centers on developing creativity and helping students find their personal voice as a means of making their musical expression more meaningful. For them, a complete education requires this type of approach. Music education has historically focused on technical development rather than expressive or creative development. On one end, music education can be viewed as focusing upon the musical work as an object in a written fixed form and its performance; on the other, it focuses on the musician, the act of *making* music, and the quality of those experiences for students (Thibeault, 2009, p. 257).

The tradition of training focused on technique and notes on the page was not always the norm. In the Baroque and Classical eras, creativity was an integral part of musicianship and musical training. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this historic emphasis on the development of a musician's ability to improvise and add one's own ideas and thoughts to a composition slowly decreased as teachers and musicians within the classical tradition became more focused on re-creating music, rather than creating music. (ASTA, 2011) Improvisation remained a driving force in other genres. Hungarian and Romanian gypsies, American fiddlers, and Indian classical violinists all improvise to some extent as well as jazz violinists (Glaser, 1981, p. 8)

Yehudi Menuhin, classical concert violinist, recorded several collaborative albums with jazz violinist Stephane Grappelli. Menuhin continued these collaborations because he recognized the importance of developing creative musicianship. "If we're going to turn out automatons who can only repeat what they've read, and not even, having understood what they've read, then we're very poor people. We've got to have original minds who can improvise" (Glaser, 1981, p. 11).

The music of past great composers is important but rather than teach endless repetition of the same scales and exercises and overreliance on past composers and their works, we need to allow new thought and creativity to push the art form forward. Eugene Friesen, multistyle cellist and professor at Berklee College of Music, concurs. He enjoys classical as well as jazz, rock, and other styles and feels that classical music's major flaw is the disconnect between composers and performers. If we can unite these two areas of music making, these two roles, Friesen believes we can restore our creative potential. "While there is plenty of creativity that goes into either of these roles, it's the composers



who have the exclusive ability to create and alter forms, shape notes into expression and inspiration, and sequence harmonies and melodies to dramatic effect. (Friesen, 2012, p. vi-vii)

By removing this divide, musicians can gain additional dimensions of knowledge and apply this to their own practice and performance. Volk believes that as students develop their own musical style and find meaning that is personal, their music training becomes more relevant.

“Just as participants experience musical layers of meaning from cultural (what the entire musical event means to the cultural group) to intrinsically musical (what the musical sounds, e.g., instrument choices, vocal timbres, pitch levels or dynamics, mean in that culture) to personal (what the music means to particular performers, listeners, or composers), so students can find new meanings in their own creativity through a range of activities, from inventing simple call-and-response patterns to improvisation to composition.” (Volk, 2002, p. 23)

Volk speaks in favor of programming a variety of styles, which supports Paul’s view of multistylism as a means of differentiated instruction. “By providing many musical choices, students could succeed in finding their own musical voices—anything from an eclectic blend of many cultural styles to a specific ethnic expression.” (Volk, 2002, p. 23) The side effect of giving student a variety of music choices may be the creation of new styles or may be a continuation of current styles. Either way, the students give direction and own their musical choices. The social, cooperative nature of these new experiences also breeds meaning.

“Playing music of one’s own choice, with which one identifies personally, operating both as a performer and a composer with like-minded friends, and having fun doing it must be high priorities in the quest for increasing numbers of young people to benefit from a music education which makes music not merely available, but meaningful, worthwhile and participatory.” (Green, 2002, p. 216)

Meaning gives way to creativity and expression. If teachers focus on these areas in their classroom or studio they “can direct students toward interpersonal performance goals to create joyful, expressive, performances and motivated, meaningful rehearsals” (Roesler, 2004, p. 43).

### **Mistakes Redefined**

Despite the improvisatory practices synonymous with Baroque and Classical music, contemporary Classical training does not ostensibly reflect this tradition. Alice stated that “the lesson that there is no such thing as a mistake [is] ... antithetical to the classical music setting, as we often talk about.” Classical music promotes a perhaps implicit stereotype that musicians must play every note perfectly accurate at all times or face criticism from fellow classical musicians. Some musicians embrace this aspect of the classical tradition because musical expectations are concrete and defined. For others, the expectation of perfection in Classical music creates negativity and tension. If a teacher gives concrete guidelines and expectations and does not allow mistakes, a student can develop a fear of anything other than what they see on the printed page.

The Western Classical stereotype of perfection in performance has influenced multistyle teachers; study participants commented on the freedom and forgiveness they found outside of the classical music culture. They felt they were finally allowed to make a mistake without facing judgment from their peers. This margin of error was critical to helping them relax and open up as musicians. This idea of being allowed to make mistakes as part of the process of musical exploration is an important component of creativity and exploration. Other styles, such as jazz, have boundaries but musicians are

given much more freedom to create and experiment. A key component of jazz is improvisation. While there are still set boundaries even within improvisation there is much room for interpretation and creative melodic decisions by the performer. Jazz musicians study improvisation and how to create their own unique arrangements. In classical music the musical decisions revolve around the already notated music on the page.

Sophie discussed her process of liberation from fear and how she learned to change her view of mistakes through jazz study with renowned string pedagogue Martin Norgaard. “Jazz is very hard, but you can manipulate the notes...sometimes I would mess [my jazz playing] up and Martin [Norgaard] would think that I did it on purpose!” Having this experience in a safe and nurturing environment made Sophie contemplate the nature of mistakes in classical environments.

“In classical music that’s it. You make a mistake. So there’s a little bit more freedom in [jazz]...because [of this experience with Martin] I started teaching it on top of everything else we do because I think it’s a lot of fun for the kids. It teaches them more about ear training, their rhythm gets better, and they still enjoy doing it. That’s the major reason why I switched or expanded.”

The idea of expansion points to a philosophy where the positive elements of various styles are united to form a whole new way of viewing string education. We are building upon our current repertoire rather than replacing it and starting from scratch.

Kevin’s perspective on mistakes was not influenced by any one genre. He did not discuss the effects of one style of music or teaching on his concept of mistakes but rather how one teacher helped him put mistakes in perspective. He communicates with his own students that mistakes are a natural part of the process of musical development.

“Practice makes perfect but then no one’s perfect...I tell my students it’s okay to make a mistake. I’m not a machine, I make mistakes too, so don’t worry about

making mistakes so much. I learned that from my last teacher. I would make a mistake and early on I'd stop and she's like go "no, go on." She didn't draw any attention to it...she very seldom would stop me."

Alice brought this issue to the forefront of her philosophy for a multistyle approach. She began with her first experience with improvisation and the impression her teacher left upon her. While in college, a friend signed her up to have a lesson in improvisation with an Indian sitar player who was coming to give a concert. Although unable to improvise in her own idiom, much less in the unfamiliar territory of Indian music, the teacher provided permission to explore without fear. "He said, 'You won't be playing any wrong notes. Don't worry.' and that's what I needed to hear." As a result of this experience, Alice has tried to approach Classical music with a different mindset:

"I try to take that same [fearless] atmosphere back to my classical settings and to cross-fertilize in that way and let people become much more comfortable and flexible with their classical music."

Alice appreciates both the classical and alternative traditions and actively seeks ways to transfer elements in a way that gives students more options. Taking the flexible aspects of alternative styles and breeding them with classical music can result in more relaxed and positive interactions with classical music.

While Damien enjoys classical music, he began rock as an alternative to the classical stereotypes. "I didn't start doing [rock] out of a dislike of classical music per say. I knew that, yeah, there are the regular frustrations: everyone's a little more uptight in classical music and it has to be perfect. So that was nice to get away from that mentality for a while." Damien focused on rock for a time but eventually did return to classical repertoire.

Paul experienced more resistance to multistylishm from advanced students while more acceptance came from beginning and intermediate students. He observes that his advanced students are used to receiving lots of recognition for their classical accomplishments i.e. performances and competitions. Trying alternative styles means stepping out of their comfort zone and struggling with something new, which means they might not be playing at their standard advanced level. There is a shift in the musical student hierarchy as students who struggle with classical repertoire are suddenly tackling solos and taking the spotlight away from the more advanced classically trained students.

“Some of them just struggle with the idea of letting go of the spotlight and giving the folks who don’t have all the experiences they’ve had the time to shine. Yeah, I’ll put somebody on stage, improvising a solo on a blues tune, who struggles with shifting and might play out of tune. But they’re smiling and they’re having the time of their life. But they struggle to be on stage with that [and] feel an element of embarrassment because they don’t see it the way I see it.”

Paul acknowledges that this might be an uncomfortable struggle for his advanced students but maintains they should try anyway. This may be the only time they have to work on something other than their classical repertoire and some may actually resonate with the alternative repertoire and how else will they know?

“If you are going [on] to conservatory where all you do is work on the Paganini caprices this might be the last time you ever have a chance to try something [alternative] because your teachers will say ‘Absolutely not. That’s a waste of your time.’ So why not make the most of it?”

Giving permission to experiment and make mistakes, whether in the private studio or classroom, opens up a realm of possibilities for both the experienced and inexperienced student. Even though experienced students have to retrain themselves, they gain a new skill set. Inexperienced players are allowed space to create, grow, and have fun and will not have to experience retraining later.

### **Mistakes Redefined: Discussion**

A key element in creativity and personal expression is redefining musical mistakes. All participants sought solace from negative criticism and found freedom to experiment and learn from their mistakes through alternative styles and improvisation. They point to the mental shift that must take place and allow mistakes in order to develop creativity and confidence.

Julie Lyonn Lieberman points to childhood as the optimal time to learn how to use failure as a learning experience. The concept of trial and error is how children learn and create and yet society often tries to curtail this process as children grow and mature. Yet play and failure help fuel the creative spark.

Young children at play are in a constant state of improvisation; there are no consequences to fear until the adult world-via parenting and schooling-surrounds each child with warnings, rules, boundaries, rewards and punishments. Then we hand that child an instrument and show them the ‘correct’ way to sit and stand with it, how to hold it, how to read and how to play. The word ‘play’ loses its original meaning in a Western pedagogical jungle of standards and conventions. While we can all intelligently explain why we teach what we teach, can we justify the absence of ‘play’ when playing an instrument? (Lieberman, 2008, p. 66)

Nachmanovitch supports this idea of improvisation in multiple facets of life and encourages a shift by redefining the way we look at mistakes in general.

“In school, in the workplace, in learning an art or sport, we are taught to fear, hide, or avoid mistakes. But mistakes are of incalculable value to us. There is first the value of mistakes as the raw material of learning. If we don’t make mistakes, we are unlikely to make anything at all” (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 88).

When it comes to musical training, mistakes are great sources of discovery. Improvisation within musical training provides ample opportunities for free exploration. “...when a mistake occurs we can treat it either as an invaluable piece of data about our technique or as a grain of sand around which we can make a pearl” (Nachmanovitch,

1990, p. 89). He also recommends that teachers put specific guidelines in place as this provides some students additional opportunities for experimentation. “If certain values are constrained within narrow limits, others are free to vary more strongly” (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 85).

In her interview, Sophie shared how she was embarrassed when she made an alleged mistake while playing violin for Martin Norgaard only to discover he thought she played the passage that way on purpose. Nachmanovitch’s mindset when practicing violin responds to this situation. “I can adopt the traditional attitude, treating what I have done as a mistake: don’t do it again, hope it doesn’t happen again, and in the meantime, feel guilty. Or I can repeat it, amplify it, develop it further until it becomes a new pattern” (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 90).

While some participants chose specific alternative styles for their corresponding laid back mindset, some chose improvisation, whether general free improvisation activities or jazz, as their outlet for creative exploration. Improvisation can be used to dispel the emotions and reactions that accompany fear. “Neither self-censorship nor hesitation is beneficial for improvisation. Instead those qualities create barriers to students’ self-expression, personal experimentation, and self-discovery” (Healy, 2014, p. 69). This ties in with the previous theme of developing creativity and personal expression. Approaching music and mistakes with a new mindset shifts the focus to expression and away from perfection. Roesler, a middle school strings teacher, shares her experience performing at a music clinic.

“Our original goal, though never explicitly stated, was to “not mess up”-to not embarrass ourselves, to look good in front of others and secure their valued opinions. We sought to avoid failure. This goal had nothing to do with the purpose of the music we were making; it inhibited expression and dampened

enjoyment...had we occupied our attention with that [purpose], our performance could have been more expressive and joyful, rather than withdrawn and careful” (Roesler, 2014, p. 40-41).

While most formal education has neglected to foster this approach to mistakes and play in its students, informal education provides a haven where collaboration and creativity still occur. Sharon Davis researched the culture of student-led rock bands outside of the high school music classroom and found that a big part of the students’ path was making mistakes in a small and safe environment. The students allowed themselves to experiment and learn without judgment or fear. Davis emphasizes the collaborative nature of the groups, their grounding in friendship, and their mutual commitment to making music together (Davis, 2015). Together, they provide the foundation to work together as a group, offering further evidence of the role of experimentation and failure as vital to creativity.

As creative ideas materialized throughout the course of a rehearsal, group decisions were made regarding what would be included in the song. Trial and error, experimentation, practice and reflection, ensued before committing to a newfound musical phrase. Each player learned from the others through listening and watching, and then rehearsing. (Davis, 2005, p. 9)

In an interview with CNN, Yo-Yo Ma was asked if it was difficult to relax the rules of classical music while working on *The Silk Road Project*, a collaborative venture between Ma and musicians from the Middle East and Asia. His response reflects a process of confronting fear and building competence in an unfamiliar idiom.

It was scary. And I think the idea of transcending fear and transcending technique or understanding different frames is part of the adventure. Something’s scary until you make it familiar and comfortable. I feel so much more a member of the planet community after doing this work for ten years, because I feel like you can drop



me most places and I'll be OK. I'll find out what's going on and find a way to participate.<sup>5</sup>

In the case of Ma's experience, being allowed to make mistakes helped him become more adaptable and become a successful style flexible musician. This also connects to the third theme because Ma found more performance and employment opportunities the more he stepped out of his comfort zone.

Alternative styles offer students the permission to try and fail on their way to success. Even the concept of "fail" is subjective as guidelines in improvisation offer room for imagination and originality. Healy reminds us that redefining mistakes opens up possibilities for all students and recommends that teachers give equal weight to technique and expression in their pedagogy. "As music teachers, it is critical that we acknowledge that *all* students have the potential to improvise and that, along with focusing on scales, arpeggios, or patterns, we need to focus on teaching techniques that specifically help allay the improvisation anxiety experienced by far too many of our young musicians" (Healy, 2014, p. 68).

### **Student Enrollment & Retention**

Participants saw higher student enrollment and retention when they diversified the curriculum. In a time of financial strain, when a fine arts program in each school is not guaranteed, enrollment and retention are crucial. Sophie explains, "I give them a choice. They can pick and choose...so it connects with what they listen to every day." This

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<sup>5</sup> Cook, Shannen. "Every Day is a Holiday for Yo-Yo Ma." *CNN Entertainment*, November 12, 2008, <http://www.cnn.com/2008/SHOWBIZ/Music/11/12/yoyo.ma>.

choice gives students an active role in their own education and increases the speed at which they learn the music because it is music they are passionate about.

[My students] had a choice to choose between Old Joe Clark and Off She Goes and they decided they wanted to learn Off She Goes. I tried to teach them so they can get rid of the music. They might like to have the music, but then they can just play without the music. I found that if we introduce fiddling, even like with fifth grade, they speed up. They learn to play faster.

Sophie covers a variety of styles with her students but she likes to give them a choice within the genres she picks. Giving the students control over the repertoire keeps them engaged and in the case of the fiddle music, hastens their progress.

Other study participants have used a variety of genres to attract and retain students. For Kevin, the logic is simple. He keeps students in his studio by teaching them styles they enjoy. If they are interested and happy with their progress they stay. If not, the responsibility to assess and adapt falls on him as the teacher. For him, retention of students over long periods of time ensures a good reputation and customer loyalty.

At his first teaching job, Paul similarly used jazz as a way to attract middle school students, making their experience with music enjoyable, therefore keeping them involved and coming back. He chose to integrate a Duke Ellington piece and saw results almost immediately. "I taught them the melody by ear, just a little chunk of it. It turned out they really enjoyed it and they were smiling and happy." It was important to Paul that the students experienced different styles from the beginning of their instruction. "For their first experience on their instrument, they were exploring new music. And the next year I started to see the benefits of that. Some of the students were not quitting like they usually do after their first year."

Soon Paul's school district followed suit and began introducing jazz in their beginner instrumental curriculum. Paul was only at that job for two years but he has stayed in touch with his colleagues who affirmed the continued influence of his choice to bring Ellington music into the curriculum. "When I talk with my old colleagues they say, 'from the year we put that Duke Ellington thing in place, it's been much easier to put diverse music in front of these students in general, once they started that way.'"

Another factor that influenced Paul's decision to continue programming alternative styles was ensemble demographics. Paul was the only teacher who brought up racial diversity and how multistylism increased both the enrollment and diversity in his program. This idea of multistylism influencing racial diversity in music departments can have a huge impact on student ensembles, particularly those in urban areas with a more diverse student population.

The demographics shifted after bringing in a well-known pop and hip-hop violinist who soloed with the orchestras on his electric violin. "After I did the [guest violinist] concert, the diversity of my program was huge. The diversity basically tripled. Students who were African American tripled the following year." With Western-classical music coming from a European and predominantly white culture, programming music that resonates with other ethnicities and cultural backgrounds opens up a whole new realm of possibilities for these students who might have written off formal music instruction.

### Student Enrollment & Retention: Discussion

A variety of factors influence enrollment numbers: parental and peer pressure, school fine arts requirements, ensemble options within the music department, student/teacher interactions, quality teaching, and strategic planning based on student input. However, the success of a music program (private studio or classroom) ultimately depends on the student's continued interest and growing rate of success (Darling, 2014). Recruitment and retention have received little attention in the music education literature compared to performance and instructional topics, such as intonation, use of vibrato and music selection (Ammerman, Wuttke, 2014).

Lieberman argues that retention rates correlate with connections between generations, which Classical music pedagogies often lack.

“In folk music, children’s role models might be their uncles, cousins, neighbors, or a stranger at the town dance—all of whom play for the love of it. It would be interesting to do a study on the numbers. We might predict that more fiddlers introduced to the violin during childhood play for life than classically trained kids in formal programs” (Lieberman, 2004, p. 15).

Mark O’Connor stresses the same idea: the need to connect students with the music of their roots. This gives them a personal connection, ownership, and also connects them with the grassroots music scene. Here again, we see informal music making come into play.

“Our music grew out of the cross-pollination, one might say, of peoples from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds. This cross-pollination gave rise to the blues, spirituals, jazz, bluegrass, and rock and roll – all styles that feature improvisation and interaction prominently. Students thrive in music they feel that they own, and they are far less likely to quit.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> O’Connor, Mark, “How traditional string education is letting down students and stifling creativity,” *Parting Shots: From a Musician’s Perspective*, May 31, 2013, [http://markoconnorblog.blogspot.com/2013\\_05\\_01\\_archive.html](http://markoconnorblog.blogspot.com/2013_05_01_archive.html).

The idea of giving students ownership is supported in a study by Ammerman and Wuttke on Recruitment and Retention in string orchestra programs.

“Part of fostering brand loyalty entails maintaining relationships with your current consumers (students). Students are constantly presented with choices for other activities, and they need to be reminded of why orchestra is the in-group. Gradually giving students more responsibility and more ownership in the program is a great way to encourage personal growth, social identity, and retention” (Ammerman, Wuttke, 2014, p. 25).

Paul experienced an increase in racial diversity after programming alternative styles with his high school students. This is significant due to recent studies on national demographics in high school music ensembles. Elpus and Abril found “race and ethnicity were found to be significantly associated with high school music participation. Specifically, white students were found to be a significantly overrepresented group in school music ensembles” (Abril, Elpus, 2014, p. 141). In an ever-increasing diverse culture in the United States, it is important to acknowledge and respond to demographic statistics in music classrooms and studios.

### **Employment Opportunities**

Choosing a multi-style approach also increases potential employment opportunities by creating musicians who are not only proficient in their chosen styles but style-flexible and therefore more marketable. Kevin is a living testament to multi-style marketability. He maintains his private studio, is an adjunct violin professor, teaching classical and bluegrass styles, and plays with various symphony orchestras while simultaneously touring with a successful bluegrass band where he plays lead fiddle. Damien returned to graduate school because he could not find a job as a classical musician and he knew he had to polish his technique and diversify his repertoire to be

successful in the work force. “[Style flexibility] helps a lot. Everybody’s doing it almost at this point. It’s...almost normal now.”

Even though the performance circuit is increasing its demand for style flexible musicians, formal education has not responded to this demand. Even Damien’s college professors could not offer direction after graduation. Damien went to graduate school out of tradition and because he could not find a job.

“I asked my professors: What do you think I can do? Play in an orchestra? Play in a quartet? And my main teacher...said, “I don’t know.” (laughs) That wasn’t helpful. So I just stayed in school until I realized that a lot of musicians have really good jobs teaching [and] eventually I switched to [an] education degree. I finished [my masters in] performance but I switched teachers...and switched away from the classical stuff because it seemed like there was more interest there....more opportunity.”

Damien wanted more career guidance and development, which he felt his classical training lacked. He did not feel prepared for the life outside of school and thought that going on to graduate school was the only option that would give him the advantage he needed. “I just went [to graduate school] because it seemed like everybody was doing that [and I] needed to do that.” Damien assumed that more practice was the answer.

Damien and his classmates struggled with their place in the music field. They had diverse interests but were not sure which of those interests would land them a steady job. They were also observing their friends who were graduating with master’s degrees and still not finding jobs in the classical community. Rather, many were entering arts management and teaching while playing on the side. Damien ultimately realized that a lack of performance jobs rather than a lack of practice was the barrier to a career. Unlike his friends in the classical community, he saw potential for multistylists. Eventually

Damien found his niche and now enjoys a career where he gets to teach and perform both classical and alternative styles.

Whenever Paul's students resist other styles he is quick to bring up their professional futures. A combination of respect for and proficiency at various styles will create more opportunities and professional connections. The reality is that students will most likely have colleagues who are multistylists and students who are comfortable engaging this philosophy will undoubtedly widen their network. "If you get labeled as the person that won't perform something after 1900, your performing career is going to be very short." Not only does style flexibility yield more job opportunities, but it also provides occasions to teach and practice in class specific life skills that give students an advantage in any social situation, such as humility and professionalism.

### **Employment Opportunities: Discussion**

All participants agreed that opportunities for string players are changing. In most cases it is no longer enough to play just classical music. To make a living, musicians must be competent in at least two styles, and preferably more. Lucy Green's research of popular musicians brought her to the following conclusion regarding the skill set required for musicians in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

"Freelance and session musicians must ideally be able to produce songs in any key required by the bandleader, play back melodies, riffs, chord sequences on rhythms immediately by ear and remember them, improvise over familiar and unfamiliar chord progressions, and contribute original ideas to new songs, also in a variety of musical styles, performance or recording contexts, sometimes with very little or no rehearsal. Much of this again requires basic familiarity with style. It also requires high levels of flexibility and adaptability" (Green, 2002, p. 40).

Researchers and performers still support this concept ten years later. Garvyn

researched the crossover movement and found it to be a key component of successful performing musicians, especially given the increase in technology and media.

“While people may enjoy a variety of classical music or opera, those who make their living performing live must now compete with these modern mediums, such as television and easy access to music on the Internet. Therefore, many marketing teams for symphony orchestras have turned to crossover concerts, also referred to as Pops programming, to reach an ever-fickle public and boost ticket sales. Named Collaborative Crossover in this research, it has been used by orchestras throughout the decades. For example, Frank Zappa recorded his music with the London Symphony Orchestra for release on two separate albums in 1983 and 1987” (Garvyn, 2012, p. 37).

The career of Joe Deninzon, a noted electric violinist, composer, and clinician from New York City, reflects this trend. Deninzon asserts from his experience as a professional musician that versatility is still a requirement because the outlook has changed and will continue to evolve as the amount of multistylists increases.

“The skill set you need to have in order to survive and thrive [as a professional violinist] is wider than it’s ever been. It is no longer enough to simply have a great classical foundation and reading ability. Having great stage presence, being able to improvise in many different styles, being familiar with electric violins and extended range instruments, being able to use effects and play with DJ’s and rock bands, being able to work with songwriters and arrange string sections for bands are just a few of the skills that can help you be successful” (Deninzon, 2012, p. 5).

In a broader sense, opportunities increase as the number of styles and genres with which a musician can interact increases. Students can even go global with their music, crossing cultural divides because of their style flexible skills and mindset. John Fetter runs a summer camp for string players called *String Jam* that focuses on new alternative styles each year. This structured interaction with new teachers and new styles gives students the exposure, skill sets, and experience necessary for a successful music career.

“Playing by ear...and learning by rote...are skill sets essential to many musical cultures. Inclusion of activities where students and teacher reproduce what they hear provides an environment where students can learn to pursue whatever they hear without assistance. Developing these aural and performance skills in students



provides bridges to other musics that students can begin to cross simply through listening. Skills such as these...are often non-existent in traditional instrumental ensembles and classrooms.” (Fetter, 2011, p. 123)

Evidence confirms that musicians who make their living as performers have a higher chance of maintaining employment if they are proficient at more than one style. It is important for educators to properly prepare students for the realities of the workforce so they are successful should they choose to pursue a career in music performance. Some classical conservatories are taking note of the changing landscape. Schools are increasingly emphasizing to students that top-notch playing alone won't sustain a career and so are promoting practical knowledge and skills to run nonprofits, teach in the classroom or studio, and book and manage performance projects (Lee, 2013). While much of this new training involves entrepreneurship, some is meant to help performance majors be prepared to teach since a full time performance career is not guaranteed.

In March 2014, the San Francisco Conservatory of Music announced an ambitious plan to change the way classical musicians are trained in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, including high-profile chamber-music residencies; the construction of a technology lab; and the creation of a new jazz, improvisation, and roots-music course (Cahill, 2014). This addition of alternative styles courses in a traditional classical conservatory setting confirms the growing changes in the job market and the need for a diverse shift in string education.

### **Multistyle Motivators: Summary**

All participants experienced positive change when they integrated alternative styles with their Western-classical-based teaching. The four main benefits include developing creativity and personal expression, redefining the idea of mistakes in music,

increased student enrollment and retention rates, and supplementary employment opportunities. These benefits for both the student and teacher are substantial and build a case for style flexible studios and classrooms. If teachers wish to stay current and provide optimum opportunities in school and in the workforce there must be some dabbling in alternative styles.

Participants and researchers agree that creativity and chances to develop personal expression on one's instrument must be given more priority. While technical training is important, too much emphasis has been placed on copying and repeating what other composers and performers have done instead of looking to current generations for fresh interpretations. All wish to approach mistakes as creative learning opportunities instead of focusing on an end result of perfection. There is much to be gained if students are able to stop and analyze their mistake or even within improvisation, question if it was really a mistake at all. This process gives students an active role in their learning and alleviates anxiety often associated with a perfectionist environment.

Teachers had great success with enrollment and retention within their classrooms and studios when they integrated alternative styles. Research supports this growth and also points to shifts in demographic ratios when more styles are included. Programming alternative styles also creates style-flexible musicians who are much more marketable and likely to find employment in the music performance spectrum.

## Chapter 5

### Exploring Relationships with Classical Music

Despite the benefits alternative styles offer, all participants agreed that classical pedagogies must remain a core part of string education. They discussed the relationship between multistylish and classical pedagogy and how these styles compliment each other. Out of this dialogue, two sub-themes arose to create a case for classical music: (1) Classical as a Core Component and (2) Transferable Technique. The participants' commitment to keeping classical music in their teaching and personal repertoire was an important factor in this study. This chapter explores how classical and alternative styles coexist in practice despite the inherent tensions between styles and approaches.

#### **Classical as a Core Component**

Western-Classical music contributed to the evolution of string instruments into today's modern instruments and highly influenced other emerging genres. The numerous collections of classical repertoire and technical studies form the core of string music technique. All participants felt that while non-classical styles are vital to a well-rounded string education, classical music must remain a core component of a student's musical upbringing.

Sophie perceived that classical music's influence on the inception and development of other styles give it a valid place within education. "If we didn't have Western style music we wouldn't have rock [or] jazz. We would not have all the other styles because...it started somewhere. Historically it's part of our culture and I think that

we can't ignore 500 years of music." She finds that students in her classrooms often do not even label genres so much as identify what they like and do not like, which she uses to her advantage in introducing pieces and genres. She wants her students to value classical music but not view it as separate from everything else so she avoids using labels. For her it is all simply music, disallowing the idea of a musical hierarchy. This view helps students learn to enjoy classical music without preconceived opinions.

Kevin is committed to keeping classical music in his life but feels that fiddle or bluegrass music is more accessible to the general public and provides a stepping stone into classical music, should a student decide to proceed down that path.

You can listen to a violin and have fun but [classical] is a different kind of fun. I think it's more the enjoyment of the culture and the history, the neatness that classical music offers. How cool it is and how artistic and structured...there's a lot of things that classical music has to offer, however you don't have to be a music aficionado to take music theory and music history and all the other courses. You do not have to be a music major to listen to fiddle music and know that it sounds like fun. Fiddle music is very accessible. It's very easy harmonically. The melodies are instantly catchy. People will leave [with] a fiddle tune in their head and they might whistle it or hum it after a concert. And where it gives me an advantage is if a student says, "You know, violin is just not my thing but I do like fiddle music."

Alice expresses that string players should learn through the system for which the instruments were originally intended, as modern string instruments are a product of the Baroque and Classical periods.

The foundation of my technique, my approach to the instrument, is certainly through the classical and I think that that's the place where the structures of learning technique have been created. And while we can go reinvent the wheel (and maybe we should or something for some reason) for me that's the place to start understanding the physical approach to the instrument.

Yet she wants her student to have options. Some students really resonate with classical music, and it should be an available option for them. But other styles resonate as well and

must be accessible. “I do not in any way want to replace the classical repertoire with other stuff. I think that we...our souls are all spoken to in different ways and we need that. So, that’s what I’m doing.”

Damien agreed that classical music should be used to teach fundamentals to beginning string players. In his view, cello is fundamentally a classical instrument, and responsible teachers should start students in that tradition before expanding to alternative styles. He was quick to clarify that he feels classical should stay in a musician’s repertoire even after moving into other styles and encourages his peers to keep both doors open.

All of the people in my [rock cello] group are classical musicians primarily...I didn’t start doing this out of a dislike of classical music per se. I knew that there were] the regular frustrations: everyone’s a little more uptight in classical music and it has to be perfect. So that was nice to get away from that mentality for a while. But it’s also good to have a very high standard. In classical music, there definitely is a high standard. It keeps your technique going. And I think we’re just...in my band, the people in my group, we want to play it all!

When I asked Paul about his reasons for keeping classical music, he hesitated, saying this question almost scared him. The thought of eliminating classical music from his curriculum had never crossed his mind. Like Alice, Paul agrees that we must maintain the repertoire for which modern string instruments were designed. “The eclectic music is still a new and developing situation within our orchestra art form, but the classical realm is so tried and true for so many years. It was built for [orchestra] specifically.” He balances repertoire selection, trying to appeal to diverse audiences as well as shaping future audiences. Paul wants audience members to feel free to experience the same rush of excitement over hearing a Shostakovich symphony as they do at a Radiohead rock concert.

I think classical music is so awesome and so incredibly important but the eclectic music side of things is also very important because it helps create rounded musicians, but more importantly if those folks who are into that music get into a classical music concert and they hear something for everybody, hopefully your audiences in the future are going to be more diverse and you're going to keep protecting your classical music as well...I hope everybody [keeps classical] in regards to demonstrating appreciation because if they're not, they're just as bad as the other folks.

Students come to classrooms and studios from all different backgrounds and it is unrealistic to think that such a diverse group should relate to or connect with one type of music. By showing that classical music can coexist with other styles, it is possible that students will be more tolerant of classical music, even enjoying it.

Participants strongly agree that classical music is a vital component of string pedagogy and practice and should remain as a core element due to its emphasis on technique, impact on other styles, and wealth of influential repertoire. However, participants also agree that it is not enough to study one tradition and that alternative styles should be programmed to enhance the classical training.

### **Classical as a Core Component: Discussion**

Mark Wood is a classically trained violinist and violist who studied at Julliard before quitting formal Western-classical education to explore alternative styles. Wood is now a noted electric violinist and educator who specializes in rock music, particularly rock arrangements of popular classical pieces which he teaches to middle, high school, and college students all across the United States. Even though his passion is rock he acknowledges the importance of classical music in a student's repertoire. Wood stresses the importance of the musician's role as creator and not relying strictly on composers to create for them.

“At long last, pedagogues are seeing that ‘alternative’ styles can be important elements in the teaching of string technique...while the strong technical foundation that classical training provides is essential for a lifetime of confident playing, the classical art form, as it is practiced today, can be limiting in that its focus is on interpretation and respecting the wishes of the composer.” (Wood, 2012, p. 9)

Wood wishes to set the bar higher for both classical and multi-style musicians. He challenges them to learn from each other and discover transferable techniques that take both camps to higher levels of musicianship. “Violinists should never compromise or discard the study and artistry of the classical idiom—its techniques are truly the strongest foundation we have as string players. (Wood, 2012, p. 7)”

Yet Wood perceives that an exclusive focus on classical technique limits students. He talks of meeting string virtuosos in schools throughout the United States who only play what is on the sheet music in front of them and cannot play music when the music is physically removed. “These musicians are great athletes on their instruments. Certainly, the joy of being able to play a Dvorak string quartet or sight-read a Mozart sonata is the gift of a well-trained talent, but in this day and age we need to have broader educational methods at our disposal. (Wood, 2012, p. 7)” Rationalizations exist for starting students on solely classical music and gradually integrating alternative styles while others argue you can teach students both styles right away.

Other musicians go further, arguing that alternative styles offer just as much technical foundation as classical. Mark O’Connor believes that classical as a foundational pedagogy actually hinders a student’s musical development, particularly students who begin at an early age, such as three or four.

“For years, all that these young students hear is their own playing. Even when they participate in group classes, these young string musicians usually only hear others playing the same parts they play. Resultantly, they do not develop an

understanding of harmony and counterpoint. They do not develop the capacity to listen to, and comprehend, other musical parts that complement their own. It's no wonder then that so few classically trained violinists become expert composers, arrangers, improvisers, and bandleaders."<sup>7</sup>

### **Transferable Techniques**

A major argument for a style-flexible approach is the concept of transferable technique; the idea that techniques we use in certain genres are easily transferable to others. For example the trills, grace notes, and other ornaments used in Baroque music are also style-specific ornaments of Irish and Scottish tunes. Likewise, our ability to play string crossings in fiddle tunes equips musicians to play faster and more accurate string crossings in Bach and Vivaldi concertos.

Sophie experienced areas of transfer when she began studying jazz. While she found her classical technique helping her learn jazz faster, she noticed more reverse benefits in the ways in which jazz helped her become a better classical musician. "To me the hardest of all is to teach jazz....you really need to start thinking in terms of vertical instead of horizontal." With the focus on improvisation and chord structure, Sophie found herself listening more closely to classical music. "Even in orchestra now I just hear better. I hear better what's going on in the other parts."

In her view, a combination of genres and their respective techniques is crucial in building a complete and well-rounded musician. "The [classical] purists...think that they're going to screw up their technique if they do jazz but to me it's the reverse. You're

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<sup>7</sup> O'Connor, Mark, "How traditional string education is letting down students and stifling creativity," *Parting Shots: From a Musician's Perspective*, May 31, 2013, [http://markoconnorblog.blogspot.com/2013\\_05\\_01\\_archive.html](http://markoconnorblog.blogspot.com/2013_05_01_archive.html).



going to improve no matter what you play. You're going to improve because if you like it, it's going to be a plus. Life is too short!"

While Sophie values classical music, she uses other styles to teach techniques in the same way, again challenging the idea that string players require a *purely* classical foundation before venturing into other styles. "Well, it's an option for the student. It's just one more option that a student has. They're not really learning a different instrument. They're learning the same techniques that I would teach a classical violinist, but they would learn music that might be more appealing to them. "

Kevin views transferable techniques as the skills that are used in many genres as opposed to belonging to one genre and being borrowed for another. He focuses on techniques rather than the style of repertoire at hand.

Some people want to learn fiddle because they think it's going to be easier than doing violin. The music isn't necessarily easier...it might be and some songs are a little easier than others. But you still need the technique to play them and to master the technique...It doesn't matter if you're playing Old Joe Clark or Minuet 3 from the Suzuki book. I don't care. You use technique to play. That's the one pedagogy aspect I can definitely say is a definitive thing: I don't care what music you're playing, I don't care what it is on that [music] stand. My focus is on what you are doing; how you are holding the instrument...the way you're playing so that music is no longer an issue.

When Kevin went back to graduate school, his professor was very interested in his bluegrass playing and Kevin taught her the idea of transferable technique in relation to bow arm and bow stroke. "I showed her a couple of tricks and I showed her how to kick off a song. [*Sings: Do do dum dum bam!*] And I was the one who could translate, I was like, 'It's collé stroke...it's all in the wrist and fingers.'" Collé is a bow stroke technique from classical pedagogy that is a core element of classical technique training.

For Alice, the basis of her cello technique came from her classical training. As she was introduced to other styles such as Indian classical, folk, and general improvisation, she was able to transfer her classical playing techniques and use them to her advantage when engaging with new and unfamiliar styles. With respect to her teaching, she shared how her students began demonstrating techniques during improvisation that they had not yet mastered in their classical studies.

“One of the things that you find again and again in improv is that you will find [students] freely using techniques, really well often, that they haven’t yet learned in their pieces. Or you’ll see techniques that you’ve been building up, like I start thumb position really early at the same time we’re learning Suzuki Book One. So there they are improvising...at a time when in the regular repertoire they’re nowhere near yet playing pieces that actually call for it. And this is great!”

Damien and I discussed the relationship between classical techniques and rock techniques. He explained how his rock band borrows from classical and rock styles, putting together their own unique set of techniques. Some such as the use of distortion, fifths, doublings, and octaves were taken from electric guitar and rock practices. They created and adapted other techniques, such as standing while playing and head banging. Not only are Damien and his band mates developing rock technique but they are creating new techniques for the rock cello genre.

“We’ll hold the cello standing up sideways like this and that requires us to practice a different left hand position. We employ all kinds of unconventional stuff you wouldn’t see in classical music... We practice head banging. It’s fun, but you have to practice it. It’s hard to play when you’re swinging your head around because you’re throwing your center of balance off.”

Paul encountered the idea of transferable technique while in college when he and some close friends started having regular jam sessions, which prompted them to form a band. The more they explored other styles the more they experimented with applying their familiar techniques to unfamiliar territory.

We were all classically trained but were trying to explore these new avenues and no one was shutting us down because we weren't trained in it, we were just having fun...we'd go to school in the day and be in classical ensembles and do all that stuff but then at night we would again, try to figure out what was going on. This jazz thing was kind of interesting. This funk thing was interesting. We liked rock and roll but how does it work? And so suddenly we're taking all this classical training and we're applying it to these other genres.

Paul tries to create a similar opportunities for his students to practice technique.

He has an annual guest clinician come to the high school, where he teaches as a way to challenge and diversify his students with style-flexibility. Several years ago he brought in a well-known electric violinist to work with his students and prepare some arrangements of pop and hip-hop songs. During one passage, they stopped and discussed what kind of bow stroke should be used since the clinician had not specified what he wanted. Paul and his students had a chance to demonstrate different bow strokes and let the clinician decide which stroke he liked best. "And that was my way to teach all string players exactly the art of a brush stroke, a spicatto stroke, and kind of a metallic horizontal brush, like a little rougher brush. Yeah, that kind of opened a lot of eyes there, so that was pretty cool." Because of this experience, Paul's students learned that the techniques they learned from classical training were not necessarily classical-only techniques but rather string techniques that apply to all styles of music.

Paul also appreciates the music theory side of other genres, particularly jazz. He expressed how students are "not used to the crunchy nature of a root and a sharp seven playing right next to each other" and the way this can open ears and minds. Often, students become more receptive to the more advanced chromatic harmonies found in classical music.

This area of the study generated unanimous agreement from the participants. All felt classical should remain a foundational component of formal string education. All experienced the benefits of learning techniques from different styles and how these techniques transferred between styles. For example, Kevin explained how learning string crossings in Baroque music helped him with string crossings in bluegrass music. Vice versa, Sophie discussed how learning jazz tunes and theory helped her listen more acutely to other parts in chamber and orchestra music. Ultimately classical music and alternative styles need each other to create a technically competent and balanced musician; one that understands the various style and technical elements that make up their instrument.

### **Transferable Techniques: Discussion**

While classical music helps develop techniques that inform other styles, supporting evidence argues that students can learn techniques in other styles that transfer *back* to classical. Terese Volk argues that string instruments, specifically violin, have advantages over other Western instruments when teaching world musics (Volk, 1995). The flexible tuning of string instruments allows it to adapt to other styles' unique tuning and scale systems. "Because the violin is fretless and can be retuned, it can be played in any intonational system" (Volk, 1995, p. 65). More specifically, Volk presents the transfer of classical training to traditional Chinese music.

"In the American school string program, traditional Chinese folk music presents opportunities to teach the pentatonic scale, shifting to third position or beyond, portamento, and ornaments. In addition, it fosters creativity or individual expression through the personal selection of ornamentation and provides the students with a chance to experience heterophony as variously ornamented forms of the melody are performed simultaneously in the traditional Chinese matter" (Volk, 1995, p. 66).

Bob Phillips, ASTA president from 2012-2014, is a vocal proponent of multistylism, specifically focusing on the integration of fiddle and bluegrass in classroom music. He founded the Saline Fiddlers, a touring string ensemble comprised of high school students who wanted an alternative to the classical music they were studying in the music classes. Here Phillips makes the case for fiddle music as a way to teach transferable techniques.

“Fiddling is...great for developing their sound, and independence of the right and left hands because of the bowing patterns, and it’s a great way to teach scale and arpeggio patterns because so many of the tunes are scale or arpeggio-based. It’s great for ear training, and because the structures and chord patterns are simpler than in some classical music, it’s not so complicated that kids can’t start learning about form and harmonic progressions quickly. In the fiddle band, you play melody, you play harmony, you do it all, and you do it mostly by ear. It’s an easy way to create a complete player and musician” (Reel, 2004, p. 49).

While a strong advocate for fiddle, Phillips points out that fiddling is not the entire curriculum but rather should be included along with other styles to cover all music education national standards (Reel, 2004). This supports the idea that students need different options to help them grasp different musical concepts and is important for multistylism because it argues that no single style provides a complete education.

Julie Lyonn Lieberman discusses the use of specific techniques in various styles, specifically vibrato and the slide. While vibrato is a core technical element of western Classical music, it is viewed as an ornament in other styles. Jazz vibrato ranges from slow and wide to a medium classical sound to a fast wide hysterical rock sound (Lieberman, 2006). Learning to elaborate on the standard medium-speed classical vibrato style gives string players an advantage when learning other styles. In turn, learning to vary the speed and width of vibrato helps the string player make more creative musical decisions and have more options when playing classical music.

The slide is used in many styles including classical, blues, fiddle/bluegrass, Gypsy, Klezmer, and East Indian. Practicing slide technique helps a classical string player improve their ability to play alternative styles but it also has transferable benefits within classical technique. Correct slide technique in any style relies on the ability to modify finger pressure on the fingerboard. Practicing shifting heightens control over finger pressure and impacts agility for speed and freedom of motion for vibrato (Lieberman, 2006).

While some classical techniques used by string players increase a player's mastery of alternative styles, the reverse effect is true as well. Some alternative styles' techniques increase proficiency in classical playing. These mutual benefits further the cause for multistyle programming in classrooms and studios and support the earlier theme of increased employment opportunities. The more style-flexible a string player is with both repertoire and technique, the more immediate performance opportunities.

### **Reactions to Multistylism**

Major curriculum change inevitably elicits both positive and negative reactions from those involved. Study participants discussed the various responses they received from their students and the community. I was interested in the nature of the reactions and whether those that reacted negatively changed their viewpoint. From this data, I sought to answer the third research question. How have these teachers, their peers, students, and community reacted to multistylism?

All five teachers experienced reactions from those ensconced in the classical idiom, whether from professional peers, job supervisors, professors/teachers, students,

students' parents, and the surrounding community. Some received positive reactions to the broadening of the curriculum while others faced serious resistance. The stories of positive reactions reinforce the need for style-flexible teaching. The accounts of negativity and resistance highlight the areas that need further dialogue and research. The reasons given for why they feel they avoided resistance gives insight for teachers who have experienced opposition from the same groups: students and parents.

I assumed that all students, particularly high school students, would be excited to explore styles other than classical. Sophie and Paul shared that this is not always the case because some students find learning to play without focusing on sheet music a very daunting task, especially more advanced students who have had years of score-focused Western-classical training.

Sophie's students reacted positively to the idea of new styles but balked at letting go of sheet music. "Very, very positive [reactions]...[but] a couple of kids that are taking private lessons have been more resistant, especially when it comes to doing a solo. They just kind of completely freeze up." The improvisatory nature of the styles pulled some students out of their comfort zones, as was discussed earlier in the "Mistakes Redefined" theme. The more advanced the students were in their classical study, the less agreeable they were to try something new.

When Paul started working as orchestra director at a large Midwest high school well known for its music department, the resistance to a broadened repertoire was more pronounced at this school due to a very strong tradition of classical programming. Paul wanted to integrate other styles right away but he did not want to cause controversy too soon into his first year. So he used the traditional classical repertoire but added one extra

fiddle song at their spring concert that the entire orchestra program performed together. “It was] all 180 of us on stage at the same time playing this fiddle tune and the audience was kind of like ‘What? Seriously?’ And you know I took some heat for that and then I also had people that were like ‘That was fun! That was great!’”

The heat came from traditionalists—both students and audience members—who felt that the classical repertoire is tried and true and is all that is needed to build a solid musical foundation. Paul understands this mindset because he remembers how he used to share the same ideals, but his teaching experience has shown him that classical music simply does not reach every student or audience member, and if one of the points of music education and performance is to share the joy of music, then various types of music are crucial. He describes that first concert and what affirmed his new mindset.

...you see people smiling on stage that have never smiled at a concert before. Suddenly you see your students who are in the middle and the lower group wanting to work harder. They’re like, ‘wow, not only am I playing something fun that’s kind of different, but I’m with my Symphony Orchestra members on stage.’ That was something new also, to combine all the orchestras together and it started there with that piece.

In maintaining this attitude and cultivating a multistyle culture, Paul has seen a significant shift in the general attitude and says the controversy died down by his third year at the school. But even still he encounters students who balk at his pedagogy. These students thrive on comfort, rules, guidelines, and being told what and how to play.

Even this year’s senior class is still part of the old regiment of, “What you’re doing is okay, but it’s not catering to my advanced skills”...It’s kind of a thing where they go to their private lessons, they sit in orchestras, they hear all the time “You phrase this this way, this is exactly how it should be phrased, frog to tip of your bow” and the idea of stepping on stage not knowing what your solo is going to sound like scares and intimidates the heck out of them.



Fear of the unknown drives the resistance and fuels students' concept of a musical hierarchy with improvisation as a lower art form. They cannot prepare for solos in the same way they prepare the written music. Paul works to change their concepts of preparation and believes that such work ultimately yields benefits for classical playing as well. Paul's advanced students were deeply invested in classical repertoire and resisted the change while his beginning/intermediate students were anxious to try something new.

The non-audition group and the concert orchestra group which are the [least advanced players make] up of seventy percent of this orchestra program and they're very positive about new things. They're excited about it and they enjoy the idea of creating new things and stepping outside of the typical classical realm...My top orchestra, you know, once they play Mahler, once they play Beethoven, they want to do more of it. I get it. So they're probably the most conservative and the least forward-thinking of my orchestras and once again it's usually the top five percent of talent that struggle with it the most.

When I asked Damien if he has faced any resistance from students or parents, he laughed and said definitely not. When I asked why not, he explained that while his instruction with his ensembles is strongly classical, many of the students are not coming from a classical background or take private lessons out side of school. In his music technology class, the students are even less likely to have classical exposure. The extent of their musical influence is the music they hear on the radio and Damien's instruction in class. He shared the following example of multistyle programming and the positive reactions it elicited.

There [are] a lot of kids that come in [to my music technology class] and they think that music is rap. That's it. They don't know anything else. So I took those students and I combined them with the instrumental class and I arranged a hip-hop song by Kanye West for the band and orchestra to play and then the rappers rapped...So it was that whole crossover collaboration with the whole orchestra behind them and everything and I had the lighting and the fog machine going."

The advantage to this situation was that “they didn’t think ‘we can’t do this,’ they were just like ‘okay, this is music. This is the music we hear everyday so why wouldn’t we play this.’” The key here is that the students are playing what they already listen to, know, and like. This changes the students’ viewpoint of music in general so they are less likely to establish a musical hierarchy in which classical is seen boring and irrelevant.

Throughout this discussion on the various reactions to style-flexible string education, I was curious as to whether the students’ parents gave teachers any opposition. None of the participants shared any such experiences. Kevin actually gave his students’ parents credit for putting enjoyment as their child’s best interest. He explained why he thinks he has not experienced resistance from parents; in his program, musical genres serve as routes to participation rather than destinations.

If somebody wants violin, they want violin. I don’t think that parents or kids in these years are quite as close-minded. They want their kids to experience a lot of things; they want exposure to a lot of different things, which includes different styles of music. While parents might not adore bluegrass...I see it like, if it’s a way that a child will be interested in learning and if they have fun playing fiddle music, much more so than they do classical violin, I think a parent would just want them exposed to playing an instrument, not necessarily caring too much about the style so long as they’re having fun and they’re learning something and getting something out of it.

Kevin stresses to the parent that the main objective is to get students inspired by music and have fun. Once parents accept that the strategy to achieve this goal may be different than their previous conception, the process becomes much smoother.

As I listened to each participant’s back story and how they became a music teacher I was curious how their private lesson teachers helped shape their style-flexible view and if they supported or opposed their students’ diverse interests. Four participants started out as classical musicians and then discovered other styles in high school or

college. Kevin was the only participant who was interested in or aware of style-flexibility from the beginning of his musical training. His initial interest was in bluegrass but he turned to classical to set up his violin training because he assumed this was how violin was supposed to be studied.

I started [violin] and of course I knew it would be classical music that we would be studying. I didn't have a problem with that. I had grown up with bluegrass and...it might have been the bluegrass that got me started...more so than the thought of playing classical music. I didn't really have any definite feelings about classical music. I was kind of ambivalent about it.

Based on this perception of violin study, Kevin knew he needed the classical foundation before he could seriously study bluegrass so he and his mother went in search of a classical violin teacher. So around the age of thirteen, he began classical training, but his first teacher reacted negatively to the idea of learning both classical and bluegrass. "To me it was the same 12 notes that they used in bluegrass music that they use in classical music. Just a different arrangement, a different feel, a different vibe." Even at his young age, Kevin felt convicted that it was all music and wondered why someone would tell him he could not play something on the violin.

She said I could never make it doing both styles of music or even attempting both styles of music...you know Nickel Creek hadn't come around and people knew who Bela Fleck was but they didn't realize he was going to put out a classical banjo album. A lot of the thought process behind the mixing of different styles of music...wasn't there. You played classical. You played fiddle. You didn't do both. And that was according to her. And I thought well that's awful limiting.

Kevin's second teacher was still strictly classically trained; however, her feelings about bluegrass were neutral so she permitted him to explore other styles even if they were not in her scope of expertise. "She was the person who I felt like I gained a lot of discipline from and that's what I needed the most...She said it would be alright if I

diversified myself and played other styles of music just as long as I kept [up with my classical] studies.”

Whereas Kevin found a teacher who was open to an alternative style but could not offer any direct instruction, Damien found a teacher who was skilled in a different style and could offer him actual guidance and expertise. He was devoted to classical studies in his formal training through high school, and he was content to practice Rock on his own time. But there came a point when he was ready to take his rock cello to the next level and he became aware of the tension between teachers.

At the university...there were two camps of teachers there. There's the traditional teacher and then there were the ones who were open to what I was doing. So, I think at the beginning people appreciated what I was doing but the didn't want it to be all I was doing. My teacher wanted me to just be a classical musician, I think because she didn't like rock music. She had mixed feelings about that. So I switched teachers. (laughs) I went back to one of my teachers...and he had played with Metallica so it wasn't an issue for him.

Damien also mentioned resistance from his superiors when he began teaching private lessons at a music school after completing his master's degree. “I sent them a photograph of me playing in my rock band because I thought that's unique and maybe will attract some students...and would be a contrast to the other teachers. But they told me that they just wanted a very straightforward [look]...have a tie and be clean.”

When Paul was in graduate school he met people from both schools of thought. Some “are just very opinionated and kind of negative to work with or there are people that just want to play and have a good time. I found a lot of like-minded people who just liked to explore all sorts of music and just try to make it as great as you possibly can.”

Paul received some questions when he started his multistyle practices at his current job. He has seen some change in his teaching peers over his career. Many

approach him with skepticism but are willing to hear his side and try to understand his teaching philosophy.

As the old guard retires, it's been an easier sell...My fellow teachers are all very open-minded in the string world, which is really nice, in regards to my fellow public school educators. I have some private teachers that, you know, are not-it's not really their job to say my curriculum but they might casually question what I'm up to. I should be doing more Brandenburg Concertos or something like that. But, I know who those folks are and they're not being disrespectful, they're just asking.

Another important area Paul discussed relates to the authenticity of the alternative styles he integrated into his curriculum. Paul received complaints from non-Classical or alternative musicians who say the arrangements he gives his orchestras aren't "legitimate" enough. This directly relates to the problem of authenticity when introducing students to unfamiliar styles. There is an initial and inevitable "watering down" that occurs until students grasp the basic concepts of the given style. Because of the reactions from non-Classical musicians, Paul is very careful to give his students high quality arrangements. "I've had numerous conversations with folks who are in that [alternative] art form...that are like 'Listen, your orchestra is not the venue for this, you know. Stop trying.' But it's very rare because they do know that we're just trying to educate in a larger sense." This brings up authenticity and questions of what kinds of original tunes and arrangements teachers should bring to their students.

I try really hard to look for the best stuff that is arranged by tried and true jazz musicians or blues musicians or whatever there are. And often when you look at those artists, they send you an arrangement and maybe their Finale is all funky or they had some weird rhythmic thing written and it may not look perfect on paper but it's so much more in the style than something that a company would publish that would look squeaky clean.

Even though facing initial skepticism, the diversity and quality of Paul's program, along with the enrollment and retention rates speak for themselves and outweigh the questions and doubts of the community.

### **Reactions to Multistylism: Discussion**

When a teacher makes the decision to explore other styles, there will be reactions of some kind. The resistance to style flexibility comes from all fronts. Opposition from students came from their comfort with the structure of classical music; hence they did not want to step out of their comfort zone and try something new and unfamiliar. Some teachers had negative experiences with private teachers who wanted them to continue on a classical-only tract. This ultimately resulted in them finding new teachers who would support their creative endeavors. There is often skepticism from parents and the surrounding community when style flexibility enters a classroom.

David Littrell, president of ASTA at the inception of the Eclectic Strings Festival, admits that he was once in the resistance camp.

“At one time I was one of the snooty people who looked down on this, but what a fool I was. All you have to do is go to a workshop to have your eyes opened to how difficult this music can be to do well. The kids still have to know how to play in tune, how to hold the bow correctly. It's just a different language, a different accent” (Reel, 2003).

Damien discussed programming repertoire that is familiar to the students; music they listen to outside of school. This bridges the gap between formal and informal music situation and connects students with new learning experiences. “The further removed the cultural context of the music from the cultural experience of the learners, the more difficult it is for them to make meaningful connections to the new experience” (Blair,

Kondo, 2008, p. 50). By presenting music related to students' current interests and even their cultural heritage, music educators create opportunities for bridging the gap between students and between teachers and students.

In our desire to so highly regard the culture of the music we are studying, we may be inadvertently disregarding the culture of our own students and the musical knowings that they bring into the classroom. These musical knowings are the link that bridges the gap between musics of diverse peoples-what we share and know about music (Blair, Kondo, 2008, p. 52).

Paul described the resistance he faced in the form of questions related to authenticity of repertoire. Most string teachers who [are] trained in the traditions of Western European art music, [are] a carrier of that culture” (Bergonzi, 2008, p. 9). But what happens when these teachers began bringing other cultures and styles into their teaching, styles for which they were not primarily trained? Or maybe not even trained at all. Students end up with teachers “who themselves do not know much about the historical origins or have experience with the social contexts of the musics they are teaching their students to perform” (Goble, 2010, p. 10) “To teach from a multicultural perspective means to consider the authenticity not only of materials and actions, but of the pedagogy” (Bergonzi, 2008, p. 17)

Historically, the authenticity and validity of folk dances, folk songs, African American spirituals, and Latin American folk music faded during their incorporation into the formal music education profession via professional associations or commercial book and audio recording series” (Bergonzi, 2008, p. 14) While the amount of multicultural resources continues to increase, authenticity still comes into question when students are receiving alternative repertoire taught to them by their classically trained teacher. “The conventional downplaying of our inattention to the context-particular meanings of

different musics in music education has led to situations in K-12 classrooms where the musics of different cultural traditions are included, but they are misrepresented, and where cultural misunderstandings and ironies are commonplace” (Goble, 2010, p. 9). For example, many culture’s music is taught aurally (by ear) without any written notation and yet is often taught in schools using notated sheet music. While this is sometimes the fastest way to teach a large group of students a new style of music, it is not staying authentic to the traditional method of teaching. Certain pieces of music are used for specific cultural events such as war preparations, wedding celebration, or religious/spiritual services. Some cultures may be offended if a piece used only in sacred services is suddenly presented to a group of uneducated musicians. Care must be given to understand the background and context of a culture’s music and be respectful to the given culture of study.

“Owing to their unique roles as agents of socialization, educators in the arts and humanities in K-12 schools are likely the best-positioned, socially speaking, to foster such intercultural understanding among students from disparate cultural communities” (Goble, 2010, p. 10). Teachers are the bridge between their students and the music they teach. If the music they teach is representative of a culture outside the students’ knowledge base, the teacher becomes the student’s *only* connection to that culture, hence the responsibility and sensitivity that must be acknowledged.

### **Summary**

In exploring the relationship between classical music with alternative styles, we see the meshing and clashing of pedagogical approaches and personal preferences. There



is division on the subject from students, their parents, the teacher's peers, and non-classical musicians.

All participants agree that Western classical music must remain a core part of string pedagogy, whether because of its foundational role in the development of our modern string instruments, its contribution of the symphonic orchestra, its expansive history and influence on the development of non-classical styles, or its thorough development of string technique. This generated dialogue of whether students should start with a solely classical training with eventual integration of alternative styles or if alternative styles can be woven into a students' training from day one. This is an area that could benefit from both quantitative research to show numbers of teachers in both studios and classrooms using the various approaches and more case studies to delve deeper into the strategies and results related to each approach.

The discussion that emerged in the Transferable Technique section showcased a debate between which styles are better taught through classical pedagogy or alternative pedagogies. It can be argued that some techniques are sufficiently taught through alternative styles and are even better grasped by the student if starting these techniques on an alternative style before being introduced in classical repertoire. For example, teaching scale and arpeggio patterns through fiddle music and slides through blues, Gypsy, and Klezmer. However, some techniques can be viewed as best taught through classical pedagogy first, such as vibrato. Perhaps this debate creates an even stronger case for multistylism, proving that not one single track provides the most well rounded education for a string student. By opening themselves up to at least two styles, students (and teachers) are able to learn how to transfer and adjust techniques. This creates more

flexible musicians and ties in with the previous topic of increased employment opportunities.

While exploring the topic of reactions to multistylism, it is clear that this is still a movement in the works. While many have embraced multistylism, there is still resistance on several fronts. The negative reactions relate to students' discomfort playing by ear and without notated music as their guide. I have experienced this within my own teaching. I have advanced students playing Bach and Vivaldi violin concertos who balk at improvising or learning alternative styles because suddenly they are a beginner again. For them it feels like a digression and they do not want to start over when they have come so far in the classical idiom.

Authenticity is a hot topic on all fronts (from studio to classroom). Teachers should take care in the choosing of alternative repertoire that they are able to communicate the core components of the chosen style and culture while making the new style accessible to classically-trained students. By careful research of repertoire and pedagogy and even collaborations with an expert on the chosen genre, authenticity can be maintained at an acceptable level, given that the style is being taught outside of its community of origin.

The resistance seems more prevalent in the classroom than private studio, more specifically the orchestra classroom as opposed to the general music classroom or band ensembles. Any change to long-standing traditions will spark controversy, and, as several of the participants found, often it is merely a matter of effective presentation, education, and the passing of time to quell the criticism.

The question arises: Is there a more effective way to present multistylism to students and the general public to generate positive feedback? Or is it simply a matter of passing time and a gradual cultural shift? Either way, these are discussions that must be had because many of the multistylists coming out of elementary and secondary musical training will continue their musical training at higher level institutions and their chosen colleges, universities, and conservatories must be equipped to deal with this cultural shift.

## Chapter 6

### Conclusion

The aim of this research was to examine the experiences of classically trained string teachers who now include alternative styles in their teaching and note any connections among their thoughts and experiences. The research questions guiding this study were (1) What motivating factors inspire a classically trained string educator to begin teaching alternative styles to their students? (2) Why is it important to keep classical music in string pedagogy? (3) How have these teachers, their peers, students, and community reacted to multistylism? The research and data from this study suggest that including alternative styles in a classical string curriculum, whatever the style may be, can increase professional & personal potential for both teacher and student.

I used a multi-site case study approach (Creswell, 2007) so I could focus on the one issue of multistyle string education and interview multiple participants to explore the topic further and in various settings. I interviewed five string musicians who actively teach alternative styles in both private studios and formal classrooms at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels. The styles included were Irish/Celtic, jazz, fiddle/bluegrass, pop, and rock. After completing the interviews, I transcribed them and conducted a cross-case analysis, examining themes across cases to discern themes common to all cases (Creswell, 2007, p. 245). I then organized the results into subcategories within major emerging themes.

My goal was to uncover the specific philosophy behind multistyle string education and determine the current state of affairs between classical music pedagogy

and multistylism. In examining this relationship, I hoped to gain a better understanding of how classically based teachers can effectively integrate alternative styles, including both alternative repertoire and pedagogy, into their studios and classrooms.

### **Research Findings**

Returning to the research questions, here is a final summary of the findings.

(1) What factors inspire a classically trained string educator to begin teaching alternative styles to their students? Motivators for shifting to a multi-style approach in the music studio and classroom begin with more opportunities to develop creativity and find a personal voice on one's given instrument. When students focus on improvisation it forces them to rely on their ear and creativity rather than pre-written notes on a page. Learning other styles, particularly when they choose the style, gives them ownership over their instrument and repertoire, which keeps them interested and engaged.

Lieberman supports this by pointing out the multifaceted benefits of style flexibility, particularly improvisation, and how this contributes to motivation and self-pride. "As you and your students become more comfortable with improvisation through repeated exposure, you can anticipate improved listening skills, heightened ensemble interaction, budding leadership skills, a rich exchange of ideas, and the gratification associated with craftsmanship." (Lieberman, 2008, p. 69) Ammerman and Wuttke found that "gradually giving students more responsibility and more ownership in the program is a great way to encourage personal growth, social identity, and retention" (Ammerman, Wuttke, 2014, p.25).

This relates to the theme of increased student enrollment and retention rates. Although further research is required to procure actual numbers, all participants agree that numbers in their studios and classrooms are either steady or climbing. The success of a music program (private studio or classroom) ultimately depends on the student's continued interest and growing rate of success (Darling, 2014). Akkerman and Wuttke further support this idea. "Part of fostering brand loyalty entails maintaining relationships with your current consumers (students)" (Ammerman, Wuttke, 2014, p.25). A major aspect of brand loyalty is being in touch with your students' interests and staying open to helping them pursue their unique personal musical taste. As educators we must acknowledge the high probability that our students' interests either lie outside the standard classical repertoire we present or require additional styles for them to receive what they perceive as a beneficial experience.

The other subtheme was redefining the concept of making mistakes. Within the classical model, mastery is based upon repetition of notated music and achieving perfect accuracy, expression, and execution. Mistakes are avoided and this high bar of perfection creates negativity and tension for many students. Participants strive for a learning environment where students see mistakes as learning opportunities and a normal part of the creative process. Improvisation was the most popular model for helping students become comfortable with experimentation and redefining mistakes in general.

This idea goes back to research conducted by Davis, which was discussed in the Review of Literature. Students thrive under a safe environment where they can explore their musicality and use mistakes as a learning tool rather than a measuring stick. In Davis' research of teenage rock bands, she found that students "grew in their ability to

invent ideas, modify them, fiddle with them in the safe environment they established, and work collaboratively and supportively until they achieved a complex product reflecting their intended meaning” (Davis, 2005, p. 11). This safe environment is key to unlocking the potential in our string students, particularly when we do not have as extensive of a history with improvisation as other instrument groups.

Participants experienced the joy of finding freedom when they were given permission to make mistakes without fear of criticism. Nachmanovitch writes on the rethinking of mistakes both in music and any type of creative endeavor. “I can adopt the traditional attitude, treating what I have done as a mistake: don’t do it again, hope it doesn’t happen again, and in the meantime, feel guilty. Or I can repeat it, amplify it, develop it further until it becomes a new pattern” (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 90). This dialogue goes even beyond the realm of music education but in general life practice, showcasing its critical importance in the lives of both teachers and students.

(2) Why is it important to keep classical music in string pedagogy? This question sparked a discussion on the relationship between Western Classical music and alternative styles or genres appearing throughout string education.

Participants agreed that Western Classical training and repertoire should be included as a core component of string education. A major reason is the thorough training for specific techniques, which are also transferable to various other styles and genres. The classical tradition represents 500 years of music history from which other styles evolved, and it is important to make these connections when studying these other musical styles to obtain a complete picture. However, classical should only be one of the core components. The participants and supporting evidence show that at least one alternative style is needed

to give a complete education and receive the additional benefits as mentioned in the previous paragraph.

Volks, Phillips, and Lieberman discuss techniques used on string instruments and how these are transferable from one style to another. Some techniques taught in classical transfer to other styles but there are core techniques of other styles that strengthen approaches to classical music as well. Styles mentioned were Chinese folk music, American fiddle, and Jewish Klezmer.

In exploring these relationships, there appears to be a disconnect between what professional performers are doing on the stage and what music students are doing in studios and classrooms. Research points to a growing unrest in how we view string education and the discourse between what we listen to and what we play, the informal and formal, the creative and the rigid, the traditional and the progressive. Outside of the classroom the trend is alive on the stage.

“If Yo-Yo Ma, one of the most sought after classical musicians in the world—multiple Grammy Winner, Kennedy Center Honoree, and perhaps arguably the most famous classical musician alive today—understands that bringing classical music together with a popular song, or “crossing over” from one genre in to another, is a significant tool in helping people appreciate music (and in this case, stimulating a love for learning across many subjects), why should there be any dispute in the matter whatsoever?” (Garvin, 2012, p. 3)

Classical musicians such as Yo-Yo Ma are crossing over with great success. More recently 2Cellos, both classically trained, owe their fame to their crossing over to pop and rock styles. Says the duo “Both of us had a lot of creative energy and didn’t want to limit ourselves to classical music. We also wanted to attract wider audience, and especially make younger people interested in cello” (Knowles, 2014, p. 34).



The music industry points to this progressive trend with top professional musicians leading the charge, which therefore begs the question: why are we as educators not following suit? We are training our students for the future and yet our curriculum design points to the past. Green distinguishes between welcoming alternative styles and repertoire and actually adopting alternative pedagogy within the classroom.

Whilst formal music education has welcomed popular *music* into its ranks, this is by no means the same thing as welcoming or even recognizing *informal learning practices* related to the acquisition of the relevant musical skills and knowledge. Rather, the inclusion of popular, as well as jazz and other world musics in both instrumental tuition and school curricula represents the addition of new educational content, but has not necessarily been accompanied by any corresponding changes in teaching strategy. (Green, 2002, p. 184)

The reality is that as society evolves and the use of media increases, our students will become even *more* influenced by current musical trends, which means we need to adapt our teaching methods to recognize these popular influences. This does not necessarily mean losing tradition but in order to effectively reach students, there must be both aspects present.

(3) How have teachers, students, parents, & peers reacted to the transition from classical-only to multi-style approach? There were various reactions, both positive and negative. The most positive reactions came from students because not all students connect with classical music, so providing additional musical outlets was critical for helping them engage and stay involved with their study. They welcomed variety and options. Any resistance from students was a result of their discomfort with learning tunes by ear and improvising because their training was purely from notated music. Further resistance came from fellow teachers and musicians with a purist approach to classical

music. They value tradition and are fearful of classical music losing its place as a core tradition amongst strings.

Yo-Yo Ma continually challenges this purist approach through his numerous projects both within and outside the classical world. Ma described the struggle to belong within each culture and community whose music influenced him as a child. "...I came to understand what made each one unique. At that point, I realized that I didn't need to choose one culture to the exclusion of another, but instead I could choose from all [of them]" (Ma, 2014). Excluding cultures and their music goes back to the earlier discussion of a musical hierarchy, with the danger of putting classical music at the top and placing alternative styles underneath to be seen as lesser art forms.

From a broader perspective, Ma shares that music is a wonderful way to learn tolerance, both of other types of music and of the cultures that generated these various styles. His statements also tie in with the previous discussion of using alternative styles as a vehicle for further developing creative expression and a personal voice.

"The paths and experiences that guide [people, music, and cultures] are unpredictable. Shaped by our families, neighborhoods, cultures, and countries, each of us ultimately goes through this process of incorporating what we learn with who we are and who we seek to become. As we struggle to find our individual voices. I believe we must look beyond the voice we've been assigned and find our place among the tones and timbre of human expression" (Ma, 2014, p. 154).

Ma values the additional lessons that come from multistylishness that exceed musical knowledge. In the process of finding their unique voice on their instrument, students explore various other cultures and aspects of the world and begin to see how their music- and in turn they themselves-fit within society.

### **Areas for Further Study**

This study revealed a variety of issues, which could benefit from further research. Based on comments by the participants it would be interesting to compare enrollment and retention rates of classical-only and multi-style string programs. Are numbers the same or higher with multistylism in place? Taking this a step further, one could study whether shifting a classical-only program into a multistyle program yielded positive or negative reactions and how this affected enrollment rates. One could survey a larger sample of multistyle string teachers from various regions in the United States. This would reveal if multistyle approaches are active in certain parts of the country and what contributes to their success.

Future researchers could examine experiences of multi-style students at the elementary and secondary levels. I only interviewed teachers in this case study and did not interview any of their students. It would be interesting to hear the students' stories of how the participants introduced them to alternative styles in order to isolate specific initiative strategies. It would also be interesting to compare students' stories based on gender. John Patrick Fetter's dissertation on the multi-style experience included interviews with two female students and it would be interesting to obtain the perspective of male students and compare points of motivation specifically influenced by gender.

Based on Paul's comment regarding racial diversity in his orchestra program and how changing his curriculum altered the proportions, it would be interesting to study demographics and whether a multistyle approach influences demographic diversity. A researcher might conduct a quantitative survey of music programs in both urban and rural

areas to compare demographics and how or whether the percentages shifted when these programs began implementing multi-style approaches.

Sophie shared her thoughts on how a multi-style approach could be a useful model for differentiated instruction. “The book [we use] is available in a way that even the less skilled students find something out of it because we never get the same level. So I think, you know, for the magic word, “differentiated instruction,” that’s the buzzword in education, that’s a very good book to use.” This new generation of string teachers are creating and recreating their curriculums based on student interest. The multistyle curriculum is customizable, flexible, and can be modified based on the student’s skill level. This is especially useful in a group setting. Teachers often teach students of varying degrees of experience in the same class and must meet the challenge of keeping all students actively engaged. With multi-style repertoire, students can play basic solos and back-up parts or create complex improvised solos. It would be useful to further study formal models of differentiated instruction with informal models string teachers are currently implementing.

Many string educators are making the case for American music (fiddle, folk, jazz, blues, ragtime, etc.) as a core part of any music education curriculum. Mark O’Connor continues to push for this and created his own string method. However, at this point his efforts appear to lack a solid plan for keeping classical music as an equal partner. Studies of curriculum design and development may be useful in shaping a well-balanced string curriculum that will give equal weight to western classical and alternative styles.

The question of classical as a core component requires longitudinal studies that can document both tracks: starting with just classical, then adding alternative or

beginning classical and alternative styles simultaneously. The participants in my study started with just classical music as their focus; the slight exception being Kevin, who started classical with the intent of playing bluegrass and integrated bluegrass very early on.

Discussions of non-Western music in the music classroom eventually lead to a discussion of authenticity and this study was no exception. The issue is whether world music or even American music (fiddle, folk, jazz, blues, fiddle, Native American music, etc.) can be effectively taught in a classroom or studio setting by teachers with limited training. Some teachers prefer to present a sampling of many styles, leading to a watered down version of each. These teachers argue that at least there is exposure in the first place as opposed to none at all.

Other teachers prefer an in-depth look at a few styles because they are more likely to achieve authenticity. In most cases, the teacher serves as a bridge between student and the new style. Rarely does an expert come into the classroom and give students an extensive, in-depth tutorial on their culture's music, theory, history, performance practices, or socio and political significance. Researchers have addressed this topic in regards to multicultural education in the general music classroom, but little research exists that specifically addresses string education.

Paul briefly mentioned the importance of giving his students an authentic introduction to alternative styles and the care that goes into selecting repertoire.

“...you have to sift through the quality of this relatively new genre of jazz arrangements and fiddle tunes. You have to look at it very carefully because...there's just a lot of arrangements that just aren't good. They don't teach much because they water down the idea of blues so much and every note is written out, note for note, on the entire blues chart and there's not even an improvised section or a sample solo, which I understand the value of those. But

you see orchestras performing these blues in front with music in front of them just staring at the music in a regular music setting and it's just not the point of the whole thing!"

Damien addressed an additional point related to authenticity. He feels that many musical artists today are sensationalizing what has already been done rather than creating new material. He sees tension between musicians fabricating a publicity stunt and musicians trying to create art. For example, a musician may play Michael Jackson songs on their string instrument to gain instant recognition and popularity rather than write their own music and create new sounds on their instrument.

"I feel that [crossover] can be perceived as a novelty or a gimmick but I...don't think about it that way...At the time, when I was listening to Apocolyptica play heavy metal on the cello, I thought that it just sounded really good! So I think that's what differentiates it...I wouldn't have pursued [rock cello] for this long if there wasn't a lot of personal satisfaction in it...Not that it was just cool to play rock music for an audience but that I really felt like the cello made it artistically satisfying as well."

Damien suggests that musicians simply recording covers are "less rooted in an artistic statement." I asked Damien to elaborate on the differences between crossover as gimmick and crossover as art. I then asked him what the necessary steps are to take the gimmick to the next level. For example, what could Two Cellos do to be taken more seriously as musicians and artists?

"If you can go beyond [covers] as an artist and do something that's original like your own music then I think it's more than a gimmick. This is a statement. So if Two Cellos were to release an original album or an album where they worked with a composer or an album where they worked even with a big pop star and did something that had...a new song...then I would look at them completely differently. But for right now I feel like, yes, they're inspiring. Yeah, your students will come in and be like 'That's so cool' but it's different."

Garvin touched briefly on this in her research of crossover artists. She references Yo-Yo Ma's crossover projects and explains, "While some view such acts as selling out

or making a mockery of the elite classical genre, others believe that anything that draws attention to classical music's ever shrinking audience is a valuable marketing strategy" (Garvin, 2012, p. 3).

Analyzing how we view and construct criticisms of multistylists can offer insight into the best way to introduce our student to a wider realm of musical possibilities. If students can study music in a classroom (and out) with less preconceived notions on how certain styles must coexist (both collaboratively and separately) we can begin to eliminate any hierarchies that are standing in a student's way and keeping them from reaching their full musical potential.

### **Local & Large-Scale Implications**

Given the research and the testimonies, a case exists for multistylism's place within string education. What does this mean at the local level? Teachers should be aware of the diverse interests and needs of their students and be able to recognize when they have potential multistylist in their studio or classroom. This simple change in philosophy and programming holds the power to maintain the number of students in their studios and classrooms and at best, increase those numbers. Kevin put it simply. "You will diversify your studio." Teachers can not only expand their student base, but also gain valuable insight into the musical possibilities for their students and themselves.

Alice elaborated on the transformation in herself and her students from expanding their musical worldview with a multistyle approach.

"It has changed me because it has made me realize that there is an endless possibility for getting better at [music], for one thing, and broader at it; more capable at including the whole spectrum of our musical selves as human beings. I can't provide it all but if I present them with a big enough vision of the musical

world and the possibilities for them and their capability on the instrument and expose them to enough of those possibilities they'll find their own path.”

Paul believes it is important to introduce students to other styles early on in their musical training. This helps them understand the workplace situations they might encounter after graduation and also give them the chance to experiment before they commit to one area of study.

“Those top students who just want to play Mozart and Beethoven, they're going to have gigs that play just Mozart and Beethoven but you're not going to make a decent living. (laughs) You know, have a little appreciation for other things. So I would say that, once again, I understand all sides of that but when the top students have all these skills, these skills can easily be transferred into any realm of music and it's kind of foolish to at least not explore it and where's a more safe environment than your high school orchestra program for a pops concert? There's no safer place.”

This is a powerful proclamation and speaks to the multi-faceted benefits of a multi-style approach, particularly before a student enters higher education. Mark Wood affirms Paul's viewpoint and takes a step back to show implications from a larger scale. “Music education programs provide safe environments where we can bring people of all cultures together to learn about one another, regardless of language and other differences.” (Wood, 2008, p. 94)

Multistylism gives us as educators the opportunity to completely redefine string education at elementary, secondary, and higher level institutions. This requires changing philosophies and curriculums, which will require more materials for teachers. Support systems currently exist in the form of many “how-to” books and initiatives by ASTA but there are still more needed. Some teachers may feel initially uncomfortable with the idea of branching out from Western classical repertoire and pedagogy, which is why further



education and advocacy are required to effectively train teachers to efficiently make this transition.

From a large-scale perspective, we must acknowledge and anticipate the resistance often faced when new formats are put into place. We must take care to not assume that *every* string student we encounter wants to make the switch to multistylism and this is okay. Students have the right to stick with what speaks to them. What is not acceptable is for classical purists to discredit the benefits of multistylism (therefore quelling students' passion) and keep their students from opportunities that would otherwise strengthen and continue their involvement with music.

Style flexibility has been shown to increase marketability in the classroom and on the stage. There is evidence that it helps boost enrolment in studios and classrooms. A national shift to multistyle string education will help popularize string programs, which could help them become a standard component of secondary music departments and not something that is added on after band and choral programs are already well established.

In Paul's interview, he shared his formal mission statement summarizing his philosophy that he shares when he gives lectures or is asked to justify his curriculum.

“The experiences that we provide our students define their understanding of our class, and in turn their understanding of the extensiveness and potential of our art form. With the repertoire we choose as music educators, we expose our student to different styles, cultures, and techniques. A memorable performance may introduce our students to new ways of interacting with music, allowing them to find a more personal connection to the art form. The future of the Symphonic Orchestra is entirely dependant on engaged audiences. The end result of a diversified focus on music appreciation in orchestra music education is the development of future music enthusiasts, capable of enjoying and sharing the positive messages and powerful emotions that are created through orchestral performance.”

Multistylism is alive within the music industry as performers are taking the stage with progressive musical projects and collaborations. As teachers, we have a responsibility to prepare students for the workplace and real-life scenarios. In that case we need to at least expose our students to what string musicians are doing so that they are aware of the opportunities at their disposal.

What does this research mean for the strings world? This study provides evidence from the field so other music professionals can observe how a multistyle approach has been implemented in other studios and classrooms. This provides them with strategies and justification for making similar changes in their own teaching environment.

By contributing more research to the academic world, a multistyle approach can gain formal footing in music education, particularly within secondary education and higher education music programs. Style-flexible musicians are becoming the new expectation in both performance venues and classrooms and this must be addressed in higher teacher education. Notably, owing to their unique roles as agents of socialization, educators in the arts and humanities in K-12 schools are likely the best positioned, socially speaking, to foster such intercultural understanding among students from disparate cultural communities. (Goble, 2010)

If teachers can merge formal and informal learning environments and experiences, students will begin to take ownership of their learning and become more interested and engaged.

Formal music education certainly has much to learn from the ways that young people make and learn music informally outside the walls of the classrooms. We need to find ways to bring into formal music learning the ownership, agency, relevance, and means of personal expression that will enable our students to begin to feel as passionate about school music experiences as they do about non-school music experiences. (Davis, 2005, p. 11)

The merging of classical with alternative and formal with informal is recent within string education so while there are numerous publications on multistylism at the individual or private studio level there are not significant amounts of materials related to curriculum and implementation in the classroom. So how might the merging be accomplished? What does it look like?

The participants found small ways to start. Paul began by programming one non-classical piece into his semester-end concert and then taught the students one new skill or how to transfer a classical technique they already know into this new style. Transfer of skills is important to relay because it reaffirms the techniques they are learning in their classical training and lays a foundation for increased style flexibility. Damien discovered transfer in his personal rock study and for his own students he chose to incorporate pop music that they already listened to. Sophie and Alice turned to improvisation games as a supplement to their regular class repertoire as a way to help students begin thinking differently about how they approach the possibilities on their instrument. Kevin discovered for himself the skills that easily transferred from classical to bluegrass and was able to share this with not only students but also his graduate school professors.

I strongly recommend that string teachers open themselves up to new opportunities by giving multistylism a try, whether through initial personal study or diving in with their students and presenting it as a collaborative teacher-student learning project. Maybe (and most likely) not every student will be open to new styles but those that are will experience additional musical growth and may find new reasons to remain a musician.

Based on this study, my vision for string education has expanded beyond the traditional classical first with occasional alternative styles sprinkled in as supplement. I am committed to keeping classical in my private studio and orchestra classroom but I am also committed to giving alternative styles a much more prominent role. Thanks to this research, I now welcome strings in my school's jazz band, I work with string students who want to play "back-up" in the school's rock band, and have an increasing number of students asking to learn how to play by ear and improvise in casual jam sessions. Some of those students take this further by playing up front in church and at school events.

### **The New Normal**

I immensely enjoyed hearing the personal accounts of these teachers and took comfort that we all share similar struggles. Their stories show that that journey to cultivate highly creative and proficient style-flexible musicians is slowly but surely becoming the new normal.

I have significantly reshaped my approach to teaching strings thanks to this study. I was already including alternative styles in my Western classical based private lesson studio and orchestra program but I am no longer hesitant to give equal weight to several styles. I also believe it is beneficial to introduce more than one style to beginning students. They no longer have to become "good enough" before being "allowed" to branch off into other styles. Other styles lend their own specific technique training that compliment and expand upon the classical technique and repertoire.

From an international perspective, I would like to close with a final thought my Yo-Yo Ma. His Chinese heritage, Parisian birth, and American upbringing are only the

start to what has become a myriad of multicultural musical experiences. "...Rather than settling on any one of the cultures in which I grew up, I now choose to explore many more cultures and find elements to love in each. Every day I make an effort to go toward what I don't understand. This wandering leads to the accidental learning that continually shapes my life" (Ma, 2008, p. 153).

Ma continues, "Along the way, I have met musicians who share a belief in the creative power that exists at the interaction of cultures. These musicians have generously become my guides to their traditions. Thanks to them and their music I have found new meaning in my own music making" (Ma, 2008, p. 153). There the benefits come full circle: from the practice room to the studio and classroom to the stages across the world and back to the practice room. Multistylism impacts musicians (both students and teachers) by helping them understand both themselves as creative musical human beings and the incredibly diverse and enriching world at their disposal, a world which they may not have been aware of otherwise. This awareness and interest can even exceed the category of music.

I hope this study will also encourage other string educators to make the multistyle approach part of their musical journey-both in performance and pedagogy. I also sincerely desire that the Western Classical world and the "alternative" world can learn to coexist without stereotypes and animosity, that music can be seen as a universally enjoyed activity under the same umbrella instead existing within a hierarchy, and that a style-flexible skill set will be the new high standard of musicianship in the studio and on the stage.

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## APPENDIX A

## Interview Questions

- (1) Briefly share your background as a musician.
  - When and how did you start your instrument?
  - What method(s) did your private teacher(s) use?
  - Was it strictly classical?
  - Were you in any ensembles?
  - What was your general music class experience like?
  
- (2) Describe your teaching experience & current situation.
  - What degrees do you have?
  - If master's, why did you get a master's degree?
  - How long have you been teaching?
  - In what setting do you teach? Private? Group? Classroom?
  - What is the age range of your students?
  
- (3) How were you introduced to alternative styles and how/when did you start incorporating them into your own teaching?
  - What style do students come to you for?
  - Do you require them to play more than one style?
  - Do you do any improvisation with your students?
  
- (4) What has been the response to your multi-style approach?
  - How have your students/their parents responded?
  - How have peers responded?
  - Have you had resistance from classical musicians?
  - Other style musicians?
  
- (5) What are the benefits of a multi-style approach?
  - How has this benefited you as a teacher?
  - How has it benefited your students?
  - Do the styles compliment each other? How?
  
- (6) Why have you chosen to keep classical music in your teaching curriculum?
  
- (7) What is your vision for string education concerning a multi-style approach?
  - Why should other classical teachers include alternative styles?
  - What future plans do you have to continue including other styles?