

University of Montana

ScholarWorks at University of Montana

Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, &
Professional Papers

Graduate School

1950

Montana high school dance bands| A survey of student dance bands in sixty-three high schools in Montana

Dean Lewis Vinal
The University of Montana

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd>

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Vinal, Dean Lewis, "Montana high school dance bands| A survey of student dance bands in sixty-three high schools in Montana" (1950). *Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers*. 3009. <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd/3009>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.

MONTANA HIGH SCHOOL DANCE BANDS

A Survey

of

Student Dance Bands

in

Sixty-Three High Schools in Montana

by

Dean L. Vinal

B.M., Montana State University, 1943

Presented in partial fulfillment of the
requirement for the degree of Master of Music in
Music Education.

Montana State University

1950

Approved:

Stanley M. Teel

Chairman of Board
of Examiners

W. P. Clark

Dean, Graduate School

UMI Number: EP35313

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



UMI EP35313

Published by ProQuest LLC (2012). Copyright in the Dissertation held by the Author.

Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

All rights reserved. This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code



ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 - 1346

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to thank the instrumental directors of Montana secondary schools who responded to the request for information regarding dance bands in their schools and who gave their time and energies in filling out the questionnaire. The author also wishes to express his sincere appreciation to Professor Stanley M. Teel at Montana State University to whom he is greatly indebted for his counsel and guidance.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

General background and importance of the study.

THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. Sub-problem. Delimitations.

Basic assumption. Definitions. Source of data.

PRESENT DANCE BANDS

INSTRUMENTATION, MUSIC, AND EQUIPMENT

Finance.

REHEARSALS

PERFORMANCES

Type of dance. Pay. Credit or awards. Music unions.

FACTORS IN DEVELOPMENT

Directors of the dance band. Experience of directors.

EFFECTS OF DANCE BAND TRAINING

Interest in classical music. Specific techniques.

COMMUNITY ATTITUDES TOWARD DANCE MUSIC

VALIDITY OF DANCE MUSIC IN MUSIC EDUCATION

OBSERVATIONS BASED ON COMMENTS

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

APPENDIXES

BIBLIOGRAPHY

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	PAGE
1. Existing Dance Bands	7
2. Director's Opinions Concerning Attitudes of the Community	25
3. Director's Opinions Concerning Validity of the Dance Band in the Music Education Program	27

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
I. Divisions of Schools Established As a Basis for Comparison	6
II. Average Instrumentation and Number of Student Dance Bands.	10
III. Dance Band Rehearsals	13
IV. Dance Band Performances	13
V. Number of Directors Taking Part in the Dance Band	19
VI. Director's Opinions Concerning the Effect of Dance Music on Interest in the Classics	22
VII. Director's Opinions Concerning the Effects of Dance Music on Specific Techniques	23

INTRODUCTION

There are many arguments by instrumental teachers concerning the problem of young musicians "experimenting" in the field of dance music. This is a problem of national importance in our educational program, and certainly needs the consideration of music educators and instrumental directors all over the country.

Too often, educators and directors shrug off discussions of dance music or jazz by saying that it is "low-brow" music and as such should not be considered in the educational program. This may, or may not, be true, but only because they make it so.

As stated in an article regarding the Ohio State University Jazz Forum, Alan Abell, forum director, said:¹

People are prejudiced against jazz. This happens because of the atmosphere under which jazz is usually played, because of a lack of understanding, because of the movie and radio stereotypes of jazz musicians as disreputable 'characters', and because of the antagonism of quiet-living people to the noisy devices used by modern orchestras.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the current practices in dance music in certain Montana secondary public schools, and to evaluate them in such a way as to

1. C. Mayne, "Jazz Wears, Becomingly, the Cap and Gown," The School Musician, XX, (December, 1948), 8-10.

show the existing feelings toward high school dance bands in the field of music education. It is sincerely hoped that the results of this survey will be of importance in determining the ultimate value of dance bands in the high schools of Montana.

THE PROBLEM

This study is an analysis of the present status of student dance bands in Montana public high schools. It was made to determine the attitude of instrumental directors toward student dance bands in order to help evaluate future work of this kind.

Data compiled from this survey is not intended to grade or analyze performance standards of existing student dance bands in Montana; nor does it attempt to prove any correlation between the attitude of the instrumental directors and their personal dance band experience.

It is to be assumed, for the purpose of this paper, that there is enough interest and participation in dance bands and jazz music by high school students to have an effect upon the music education program.

In order to clarify certain terms which will be used in this study, definitions are given below as they pertain to the subject matter:

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| High school dance band: | Any group of student musicians who provide music for modern ballroom dancing. |
| Large dance band: | Dance band of nine or more players. |
| Small dance band: | Dance band of eight or less players. |

Stock arrangements:	Dance band orchestrations, which can be procured through music stores and publishers, and are playable by either large or small dance bands.
Special arrangements:	Manuscript dance band orchestrations, written by instrumental director, student, or outsider for a specific dance band.
Dance band equipment:	Special music fronts peculiar to dance bands and special drum traps other than regular snare drum and bass drum, with foot pedal.

Data for this survey was obtained through questionnaires² received from fifty-seven public secondary schools, and includes county seat high schools and other secondary schools of 150 enrollment or over. These schools represent 32.2 per cent of all public secondary schools in Montana, and a 74.2 per cent of the total enrollment,³ with a 90.47 per cent return from sixty-three schools to which these questionnaires were sent.

For the purpose of this analysis, nine main divisions will be presented as follows:

2. See Appendix A for a copy of this questionnaire. Further reference in this paper to the questionnaire used in obtaining data indicates the one in the appendix.

3. Derived from Montana Educational Directory, issued by the State Department of Public Instruction, Helena, Montana, 1949-1950.

1. Present Dance Bands
2. Instrumentation, Music, and Equipment
3. Rehearsals
4. Performances
5. Factors in Development
6. Effects of Dance Band Training
7. Community Attitudes Toward Dance Music
8. Validity of Dance Music in Music Education
9. Observations Based On Comments

After the presentation of data compiled from this survey, significant conclusions and recommendations will be drawn and stated.

As schools in Montana vary greatly in enrollment, four divisions of schools⁴ have been established to facilitate comparisons, and will be the basis of all statistical data compiled in this paper unless otherwise indicated. Criticisms based on this survey will not pertain to any specific individual or school.

Present Dance Bands

There is a large percentage of public schools in the state of Montana which have student dance bands, as can be seen in Figure 1 on page 7. There is a higher percentage in the larger schools, diminishing in proportion to the size of the school. This can be readily ascertained when the problems

4. See Table I, p. 6.

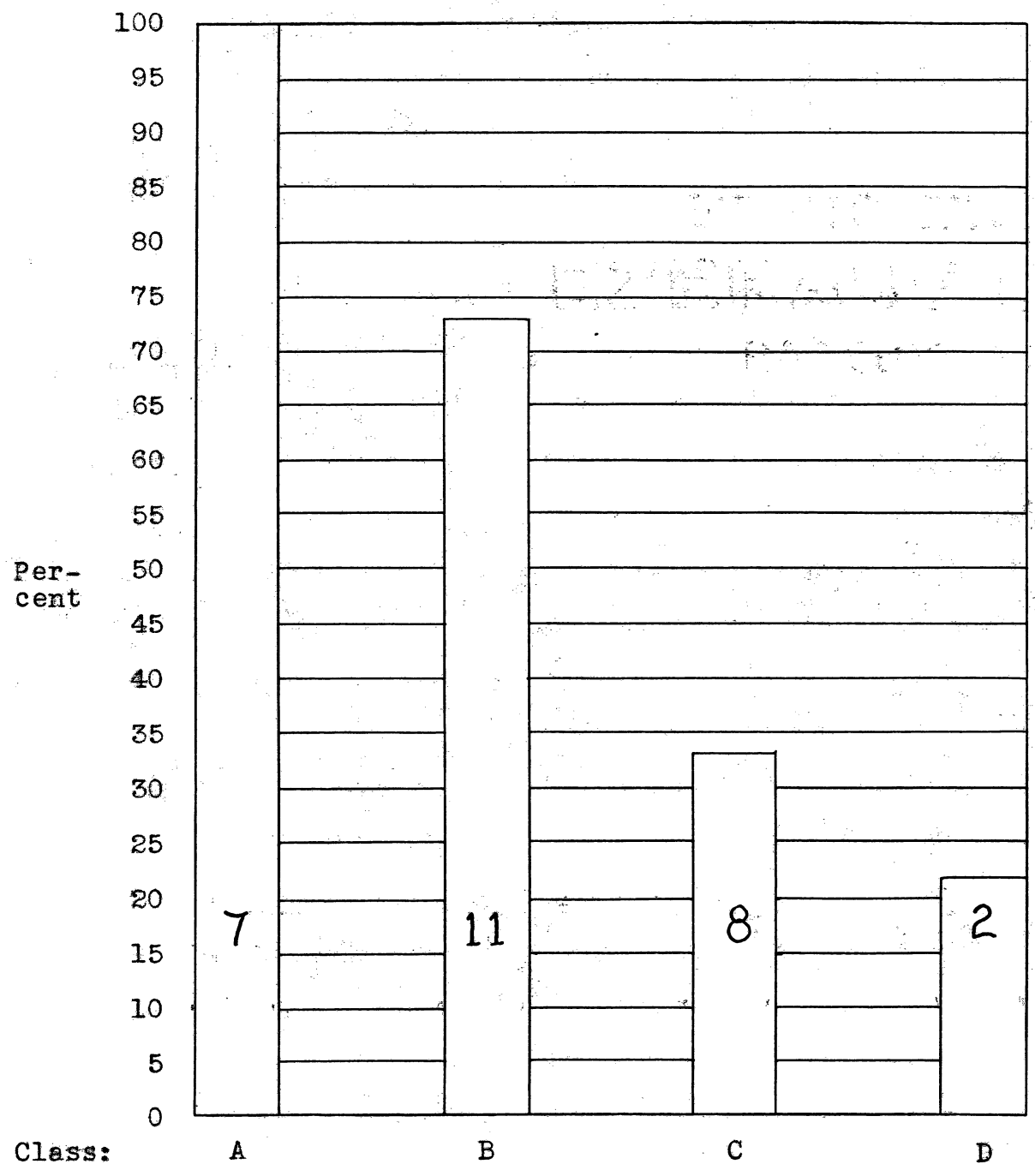
TABLE I

DIVISIONS OF SCHOOLS
ESTABLISHED AS A BASIS FOR COMPARISON

Classifications	A	B	C	D
Enrollment	501-1647	251-500	101-250	28-100
Number of schools	7	15	28	13
Number of returns	7	15	24	11

Figure 1

EXISTING DANCE BANDS *



* The number in the percentage bar indicates the total number of dance bands in that respective class.

of a smaller school regarding instrumentation, finance, and size of the instrumental department are considered. One of the Class D schools, for instance, replied there was no instrumental music of any kind in their system. It can also be noted from Figure 1, that of the fifty-seven schools represented in this study, twenty-eight have student dance bands, or a total of nearly 50 per cent.

One Class A and one Class C school each have a student dance band which is not sponsored by the music department. Another of the Class C schools has had one in the past and two others are planning to start student organizations in the future.

Some student dance band members play professionally in bands other than their high school groups. There might tend to be conflicts when such a situation arises but this report will not deal with this phase in which there is only a minority group involved. A few replies to the questionnaire indicated that some directors will not allow the members of the high school group to play in outside dance bands. Schools with student dance bands, in which students participate in other than school groups are: Class A, three; Class B, four; Class C, six; and Class D, two. There are two Class C schools without school dance bands which have a few students playing professionally.

Instrumentation, Music, and Equipment

The instrumentation of the modern dance band is

usually divided into various combinations according to the discretion of the leader and depending on the size of the group. The standard dance band, for which stock arrangements are generally written, has the following divisions: (1) saxophones: 2 altos, 2 tenors, 1 baritone; (2) brass: 3 trumpets, 3 trombones; and (3) rhythm: 1 piano, 1 string bass, 1 drum and traps, and 1 guitar. In most stock arrangements violin parts, A, B, and C, are also included for dance bands using strings, along with a vocal trio score. Strings and vocal parts are usually optional to be fitted as desired, by the group using them.

Small dance bands of standard instrumentation consist of two or three rhythm instruments, one to four saxophones, and one to three brass instruments, which may be arranged in nearly any combination or size from three to eight pieces. Large standard bands of nine or more musicians, may run as high as twenty pieces or more depending on the string complement. Vocalists, of course, are in addition to, or may be members of the band.

The average size of dance bands in Montana schools is between nine and ten pieces. Further classifications may be observed in Table II, on page 10, which shows the number of small or large dance bands. Only two schools in the survey use strings; one Class A school which uses four, and one Class C school with one violin.

All of the large dance bands use stock arrangements

TABLE II

AVERAGE INSTRUMENTATION AND NUMBER
OF STUDENT DANCE BANDS *

Class	A	B	C	D	Totals
Average instrumentation	9.2	9.9	7.7	10.5	9.4(av.)
No. of large dance bands	3	5	3	2	13
No. of small dance bands	3	6	5	0	14
Size not indicated	1	0	0	0	1

*This table deals only with schools having dance bands.

as the main source of their music, with about half of them supplementing their library with special arrangements. Nine of the small bands use stock arrangements, five use only specials, and one uses only sheet music. A small dance band usually sounds more satisfactory if it uses special arrangements as they are written for that particular group to use to the best advantage.

Dance band equipment is not too important except for appearance and effect. Actually the most important equipment is the dance band drum set which includes a high-hat,⁵ tom-toms, cymbals, snare drum, bass drum with foot pedal, snare brushes and sticks, and tom-tom mallets. As the dance band usually plays from an elevated position to enable greater carrying range on crowded floors, low stands built especially for the dance band are better than the standard type used by concert bands. High racks tend to block the desired frontal thrust of tone, as well as to mar the vision, and appearance of the dance band.

Twenty-one of the twenty-eight dance bands have this equipment as this survey shows. Approximately 50 per cent of the equipment is owned by the schools with the balance of ownership being nearly equally divided between individuals

5. A high-hat consists of a matched pair of small lightweight cymbals which face loosely together on an upright stand to be operated by the foot. The cymbals close or open as the foot depresses the pedal or lets it rise.

and the dance band, as a self-supporting organization. Eighty per cent of the equipment was paid for by the dance band fund and individuals and only 20 per cent was financed by the school budget.⁶

Rehearsals

Rehearsals of student dance bands are quite important. The nature of the dance band requires much precision as a unit due to the intricate rhythms and harmony. Blend is also important and can be acquired only with much tedious drill. In this respect, dance bands in Montana schools fall down with only an average of one and one-half rehearsals a week (see Table III, page 13) with some schools rehearsing only before a dance job or program. The average length of time spent in rehearsal is only 1.8 hours as noted also in Table III.

Students taking active part in a full music program, with dance band as an extra, are pressed for time. Most rehearsals are held outside of school time with the school building providing the rehearsal place in the majority of cases.⁷ Two of the Class A schools rehearse both during school hours and after, a fact not noted in Table III, but included in the tabulation (see note on page 13).

6. The discrepancy of the figures in the foregoing paragraph, is due largely to purchases being made by the dance band organization and then turned over to school custodianship so it is protected by school insurance.

7. See Table III, p. 13.

TABLE III

DANCE BAND REHEARSALS *

Class	A	B	C	D	Av.
Average: Frequency (weekly)	1.67	1.5	1.8	1	1.5
Average: Length (hours)	1.9	2	1.3	2	1.8
Place: In school	5	10	6	1	
Place: Other	2	2	3	1	
Time: In School	2	1	1	0	
Time: Other	6	10	7	2	

TABLE IV

DANCE BAND PERFORMANCES *

Class	A	B	C	D
School dances	6	10	8	2
Public dances	0	4	5	1
Private dances	2	2	1	1

* Pertains only to existing dance bands. There is some duplication in the Table which is included in the tabulation but not indicated as a separate tabulation, thereby causing some discrepancy in the totals.

Performances

High school dance bands, besides playing for dances may provide music for many functions, including dinner music for school banquets, a part of the regular concerts, basketball games, and musical or variety shows, to list the most important. This survey will pertain only to their use for dances; although it might be pointed out that one school lacked instrumentation both in quality and quantity for a pep or concert band, and converted available students into a dance organization. Regular rehearsals are held and credit given for band in this situation.

As indicated in Table IV, page 13, most of the dances for which school dance bands play are limited mainly to school affairs. In some smaller localities where dance bands are hard to procure and facilities are lacking for community dances outside the school, high school dances are open to the public. In six cases shown in Table IV, student groups also play for private dances.

The question of whether student musicians should get pay for playing dances is one of some controversy, and depends largely on the policies set up in each individual school or music department. The present practices as they are found in this survey will be discussed by school classification.

In the Class A bracket, three schools pay their dance band members individually with prices ranging from

three to ten dollars each. Two groups are paid by a lump sum of ten dollars and thirty-five dollars respectively. No answer was given by one school.

An average of five dollars was attained by four Class B schools while eight groups are paid from fifteen to seventy dollars per dance. The seventy dollar group stands alone with the next highest being paid thirty-five dollars.

In Class C schools indications are that four school dance bands are paid individually with only one answer as to price, ten dollars a person. Four groups are paid by lump sums with only two prices being listed. One school pays five dollars an hour and the other one-hundred dollars a dance for the group and both of these are small dance bands.

The Class D group with its two representative dance bands get paid at the rate of \$12.50 each person per dance. These are the highest paid dance bands in the high schools of Montana.

Due to incomplete answers of one section of the questionnaire⁸ a conclusive answer cannot be given as to whether the dance band has exclusive use of the money earned or whether it is used by the entire music department. In analyzing the lump and individual pay rates the indication seems to be in favor of exclusive use by the dance bands and individuals. Only two schools indicated that the entire

8. Sec. IV, part 4-6, page 36.

music department made use of the money. The general tendency seems to be to pay the dance band purchases of music and equipment and to pay the members with the balance. In one school the student council receives ten dollars per dance to buy music and equipment for the dance band with none of the members receiving payment.

Credit and awards are not generally given to Montana school dance bands. Only two Class A schools recognize their dance bands with awards, while one B school gives points toward membership in a music club. Credit is given one Class C group, mentioned previously in this paper as having only a dance band through improper instrumentation for concert work.

Some music unions in Montana, in cases with which this author is personally acquainted, have interfered with high schools in the past regarding high school dance bands. Of late, there has been no outward trouble with unions as long as high school dance bands do not overstep certain bounds in a policy set up by the American Federation of Musicians. This policy, which concerns only localities having music unions or under the jurisdiction of some local, respects generally the right of high school dance bands to play for high school functions which are not open to the general public with an admission charge.

According to the opinions of six directors, there

are music union locals which are unfavorable to high school dance bands (refer to Figure 2, page 25). In one specific case with which the author is acquainted, some members of the local union are definitely antagonistic toward the recently formed high school dance band. This is largely because they are losing high school dance jobs. However, the general union policy at the present time is highly favorable in this case. They consider the high school dance band as a training group for the dance band profession in that locality.

Due to the small size of most Montana cities and towns and the spread-out geography of the state there are only thirteen locals of the A.F. of M. in this state. Seven of these are located in the Class A districts and the other six in Class B. In two of these Class B districts, music unions require the membership of high school musicians, in which cases the dance band plays for both public and school dances.

Factors in Development

There are many factors in the development of the dance band, but two of the most tangible and important deal with the dance band director and the experience of the director.

The dance band director, whether the instrumental director of the school or a student director under super-

vision, must have belief and convictions regarding the dance band to handle it well. This applies to the director of any musical organization whether it be the band, orchestra, or chorus. The musical output of a group many times reflects the director of that group in its performances. In this respect the part of the director is quite important in relationship to the dance band.

In Table V on page 19, can be seen the number of directors who direct the dance band. Also shown are the number of student directors, most of whom are under supervision of the instrumental director. In some cases shown in the Table, both director and student co-direct the dance group while in two cases persons outside the school handle it.

Table V also indicates the directors who take active part in the dance ensemble either by playing or directing at dances. Some instrumental directors are inactive in this respect letting students handle it entirely, while a few others act in advisory capacity only.

The experience of directors also is quite important to dance band development in much the same way that a good choral director must have choral experience, etc. This survey will speak only of the dance band experience of instrumental directors and not of student directors.

Directors in Class A schools all indicated experience in dance work ranging from four to fifty years with an average

TABLE V

NUMBER OF DIRECTORS TAKING PART
IN THE DANCE BAND *

Class	A	B	C	D
Directed by music director	4	9	4	2
Directed by student	4	5	2	0
Directed by both	1	3	1	0
Directed by outsider	0	0	2	0
Active part by director	2	6	3	2
Inactive part by director	3	1	6	0
Advisory part by director	2	4	3	0

*The returns not answered are not included in this Table as they are considered unessential. In cases in which the dance band is directed by both the director and a student there are double tabulations. Numbers will not add up to any specific totals because of these duplications and omission of unanswered returns.

of nineteen years. In Class B, no answer was indicated in one case, no experience shown for one other, and the rest ranged from one to thirty years and averaged nearly fourteen years experience. Four directors did not answer in the Class C group, four have no experience, and the rest average 7 years experience with limits of one to twenty-two years. There were no answers given for three of the Class D group with the rest ranging from one to fifteen years and averaging nearly eight years experience.

It can be noted from the above that only five of those who answered have no dance band experience with quite a high average for the directors in the rest of the schools. Directors in two schools having dance bands indicated no previous dance band experience. One of these directs the dance band in an active capacity, while in the other case the dance band is a student enterprise with no part being taken by the director. Only one return from a school having a dance band did not indicate the experience or part of the director in the dance band. Thus, it would not be out of the realm of possibility for schools not having dance bands to develop them, if experience of the director is a factor.

Effects of Dance Band Training

The two most interesting results of dance band training lie in the effects of interest in the classics, and on technical problems prevalent in every music director's daily routine.

The first part of this section dealing with interest in the classics may not be entirely valid to this report because it is based entirely on the opinions of the director without a tangible means of measurement. This topic in itself would be extremely interesting to develop in a separate study as this author believes that a dance band in the high school, properly handled, could greatly motivate interest in classical music.

It can be seen in reference to Table VI on page 22 that directors believe dance music increases interest in the classics more than it decreases interest at a ratio of 3 to 1; while it has no effect either way against decreasing or increasing interest in their opinions by a ratio of 17 to 20. (Sec. VII, part 1, page 36).

The other interesting phase of this section is the effect of dance music on specific techniques:⁹

Intonation
Tone
Volume Control
Rhythm
Sight Reading
Technique
Endurance
Self-confidence

9. See Table VII, p. 23.

TABLE VI

DIRECTOR'S OPINIONS CONCERNING
THE EFFECT OF DANCE MUSIC
ON INTEREST IN THE CLASSICS *

Class	A	B	C	D	Total
Increases	3	6	5	1	15
Decreases	1	0	3	1	5
No effect	3	6	7	1	17
No answer	0	4	10	8	22

* One Class B school indicated effects under both Increases and No effect, and one Class C school indicated both Increases and Decreases, which are included in the tabulation as individual tallies.

TABLE VII

DIRECTOR'S OPINIONS CONCERNING THE EFFECTS
OF DANCE MUSIC ON SPECIFIC TECHNIQUES*

	Class									
	A		B		C		D		Total av.	
	I	H	I	H	I	H	I	H	I	H
Intonation	86%	14%	67%	13%	54%	17%	45%	9%	60%	14%
Tone	57	29	60	13	46	25	36	27	49	23
Volume control	71	29	80	0	58	8	45	9	63	9
Rhythm	71	0	73	7	67	1	64	0	68	4
Sight reading	71	14	73	0	58	13	64	0	65	7
Technique	43	29	60	13	42	29	36	27	46	25
Endurance	71	0	67	7	67	0	45	9	63	4
Self confidence	57	0	73	0	75	4	45	0	67	2

Key: I - Improves
 H - Harmful

*Percentages do not equal 100 per cent because of the schools which did not answer. This Table is based on the total returns and percentage is figured to the nearest per cent. Five schools indicated answers under both improve and harm which are tabulated individually. Schools not answering make up the remaining percentage not shown. Total percentages are unequal because of varying and incomplete answers in some of the returns.

In the questionnaire¹⁰ directors were asked whether they believed playing dance music harmed or improved the music student in the techniques listed above. These results are more tangible than effects on interest alone mainly because the opinions tabulated in Table VII, are opinions based on observation and experience of the director, therefore they are a more valid part of this report. This section alone is worthy of close scrutiny in this respect in cases where justification of the dance band in the music educational program is desired.

Community Attitudes Toward Dance Music

Attitudes of the community and the school administration can do much in shaping the policies toward a dance band in the school. If there is any opposition to the dance band in the educational program, it is nearly impossible to develop this type of program until such opposition is removed.

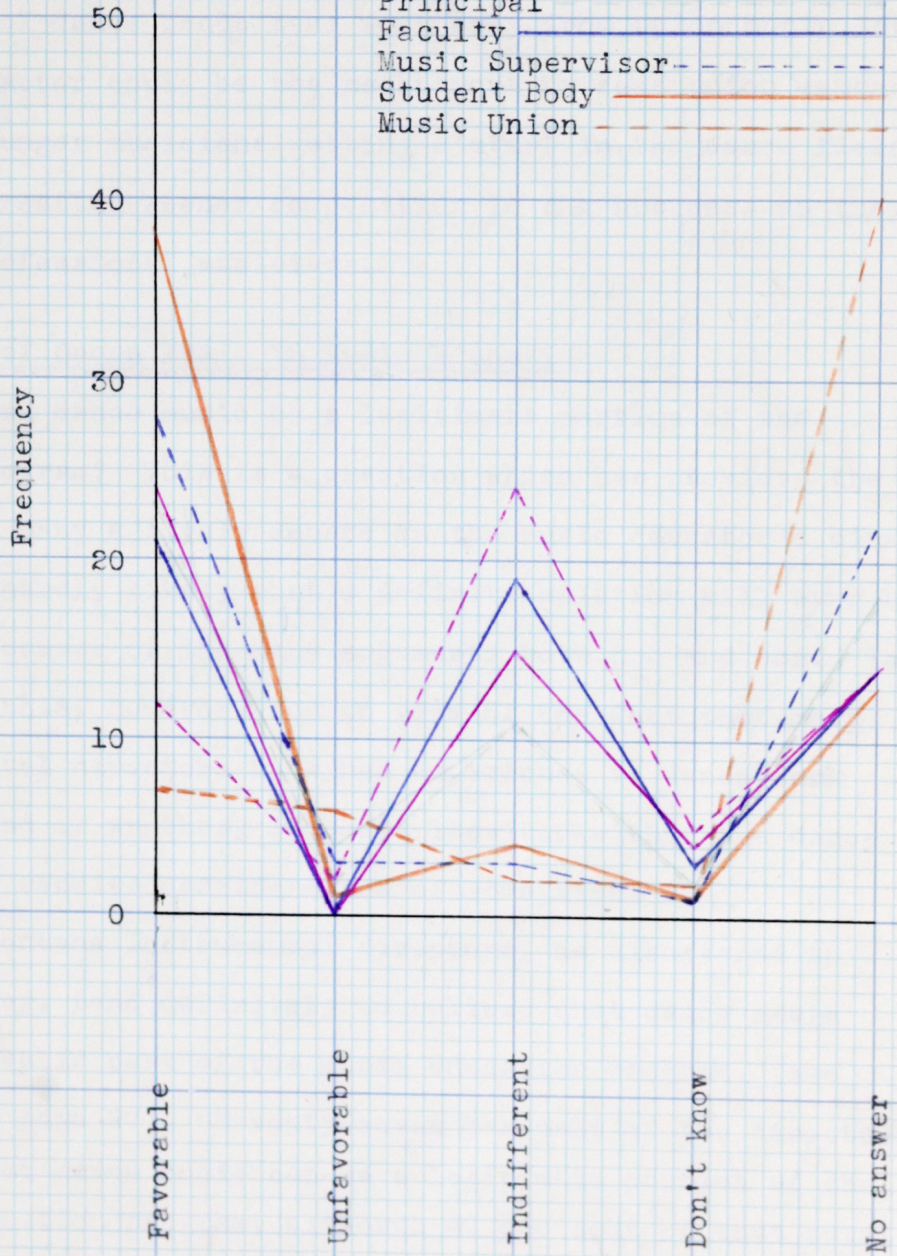
The general attitude in the majority of factions may be classed as favorable or indifferent to the dance band in the high school as can be seen in Figure 2 on page 25. Because of the intangible nature of this particular phase of the survey dealing with attitudes, many of the returns were incomplete or the directors did not know the general attitudes. These facts have been noted in Figure 2 to help

10. Sec. VIII, part 2, page 37.

Figure 2

DIRECTOR'S OPINIONS CONCERNING
ATTITUDES OF THE COMMUNITY

Key: Community ———
School Board - - - -
Superintendent
Principal
Faculty ———
Music Supervisor - - - -
Student Body ———
Music Union - - - -



formulate a more accurate picture of existing conditions.

It can be noted in Figure 2 that music unions rank highest in unfavorable attitudes toward the high school dance band. In the author's own experience with music unions some of this attitude might be explained in the simple fact that high school dance bands take work away from union musicians. Another factor could be the resentment by some union members toward younger musicians getting a start in the dance field, thereby creating keener competition in the business as they become professional musicians.

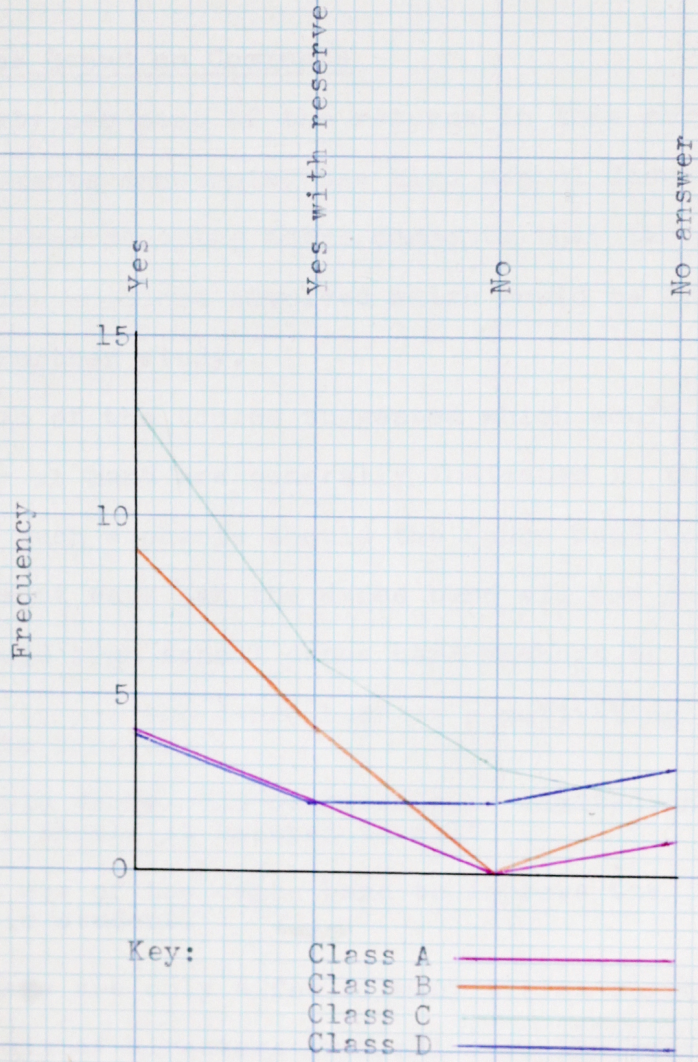
Validity of Dance Music in Music Education

Can dance music be a legitimate portion of the school program? This is a question which has provided the source of many a lively debate in the music educator's circle. It seems hardly likely that a definite solution will ever be reached because of the many arguments both pro and con. In spite of this, however, and in view of the fact that many instrumental directors have had experience in dance work of one kind or another, it seems inevitable that the dance band must receive consideration of some kind.

Montana instrumental directors, as discovered in this survey, tend definitely to believe that dance music can be a valid part of the music education program, (see Figure 3, page 27). Seventy-seven per cent of the directors stated that dance music can be a legitimate portion of the music education program, although 47 per cent of that total

Figure 3

DIRECTOR'S OPINIONS CONCERNING
VALIDITY OF THE DANCE BAND
IN THE MUSIC EDUCATION PROGRAM



hold some reservations to it being subordinate to the major part of the program and that it be carefully handled. There was no answer from 14 per cent of the schools and only 8 per cent felt it has no place in the program. This in itself should indicate the tendency of the high school dance bands position.

Observations Based on Comments

Sixty per cent of the returns in this survey included various comments concerning the high school dance band. It is obvious from studying these comments that there are many phases of the problems involved which would be greatly enhanced by further study.

Some of the topics suggested which would greatly aid the problem at hand are generally indicated in the following:

1. How much emphasis should the dance band receive?
2. In what ways can the dance band aid the music program?
3. Should high school dance band members be paid?
4. How to use the dance band as a motivating influence in the music program.
5. Should dance band membership be limited only to good students or should it be open to all?
6. The use of the dance band to improve the techniques of the music student.

These are only a few of many titles suggested by the many comments of directors from all over the state.

One of the most frequent comments resulting from

this survey is that only through careful control or supervision can the dance band aid the music program. Some directors think too much emphasis is placed on dance music, and others even feel that it hinders the regular music program. Along this same line is stated that the dance band should remain subordinate to the basic classical program.

A few directors think the dance band should be limited to only the good students as poor music students will not benefit from it; while others believe in offering it to everyone for the taking as a help to music and rhythmic reading.

Most directors in favor of the dance band believe in a thorough grounding in the classics, which in the author's experience and observation is one of the most important steps to good dance band performance.

Before the conclusions are stated it should be pointed out that one of the weaknesses of this survey might lie in the fact that opinions concerning the effects of dance band participation have come from men with dance band experience almost exclusively. Only five answering the survey had no experience. A more objective view might be reached if another study were made in such a manner that it would eliminate biased attitudes of 1) directors with dance band experience, who might be inclined to favor the effects of dance band training; or 2) directors without this back-

ground, who might be of the opinion that dance band training has no values. However, one of the purposes of this paper was to find out the attitudes of Montana directors, and this has been achieved even though the above weaknesses may affect the statistical values of this survey.

Other observations concern the value of dance band to students learning to arrange, and as an outlet to popular music; but one of the greatest values brought out in the comments, and one greatly overlooked and underestimated, concerns training the music student for a vocation in music in much the same way students receive other vocational training. Jazz is a part of the American vocabulary and many music students want to take part in it. It is all around us in daily life and affords a good living for those able to play it; why not teach it to the student in the right way that he may benefit from his training in a large and profitable field?

The answers to these problems lie in the hands of the music educators and administrators in the state of Montana. The present status of the dance band has been presented in perhaps, an incomplete, but certainly a representative picture; the future status remains to be seen.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The results of this survey indicate that the high school dance band is rated highly in the minds of the instrumental directors of the state. It is possible that the popular music background of the majority of these directors has an influence on this, but no attempt is made to substantiate this interesting factor.

The dance band need not be limited to the larger school systems a fact indicated by the smaller schools represented in the returns. The small size of the school may limit the quality of music somewhat but need not limit the size of the dance band. This has been shown by two of the smaller schools represented in this survey as each having bands of ten and eleven pieces respectively.

Most of the dance bands have special equipment of one kind or another which helps mainly in the appearance of a band. Drum equipment, having more to do with dance band rhythm is the most essential item. The dance band as a unit and the individuals help pay the cost of the equipment with very little being paid by the school.

Rehearsals are generally held outside of school hours due to the extra-curricular nature of the dance band. Credit is given in only one case in which the dance band

serves in place of the concert organization.

School dances prove to be the main function of the dance band at present, with the members of the dance band generally receiving varying remuneration. They are indicated to be generally self-supporting as to purchase of music and supplies.

In spite of some undercurrents of resentment by union musicians, a majority of music union locals endorse the high school dance band program.

The many directors who have dance band experience and who take either an interested inactive part or an active part in the dance band are certainly the major factor in its development. The actual experience of the director is possibly the biggest item behind this development; directors with no dance music training are hesitant in trying to develop such groups because of their lack of experience and understanding.

Dance band training, in the opinions of most directors, either increases or has no effect on interest in the classics. There is strong indication of its value as a motivating factor but the evidence is not conclusive due to its intangible nature. Many music directors do believe that great motivation can be given to the entire music department if properly handled.

Most directors believe that benefits are derived from playing dance music in intonation, tone, volume control,

rhythm, sight reading, technique, endurance, and self-confidence. This is indicated by a 60 to 11 ratio in the answered returns.

Community attitudes are highly favorable to the dance band as well they should be, for the dance band is capable of playing quite a valuable role in smaller isolated communities regarding dances and other social entertainment.

In reference to Figure 3 on page 27 it can be stated that dance music can indeed be a valid part of the music education program in the opinions of the large majority of instrumental directors. To what extent is a topic for another study.

The many and varied comments received in the returns of this survey show a true interest in the problems of the high school dance band. This author feels certain, from the response, that the place of the dance band in education will be more clearly ascertained in the future and that it will gradually come to receive all due respect for its true worth.

Recommendations

On the basis of the material presented in this survey and the conclusions drawn from it, the following recommendations are made:

1. Dance band activities should become a part of the regular music program without over-emphasis.
2. Dance band members should be well-trained in the classics before starting dance band training.

3. The dance band should be firmly supervised for best results in aiding the music program.

4. Major items of equipment for the dance band should be purchased by the school.

5. The dance band should serve for other functions besides dancing, with credit being earned for such other functions in much the same way as regular music department members earn credit for extra work. This credit can be in the form of either recognition or point credit as school policy dictates.

6. High school musicians, playing for school functions only, should not be required to join a musicians union.

7. In localities having music unions or under union jurisdiction, a better code of ethics or understanding should be strived for by the school, the union, and individuals.

APPENDIX A

A SURVEY OF MONTANA HIGH SCHOOL DANCE BANDS

Directions: Please place either a check or brief answer in the spaces provided.

I

1. Do you have a student dance band in your high school?
Yes ___ No ___.
2. Do high school students play for dances in other than school dance bands? Yes ___ No ___.

II

1. What is the instrumentation of your highschool dance band? Give number of each. Alto saxes ___ Tenor Saxes ___ Baritone Saxes ___ Piano ___ Accordion ___ Guitar ___ Drums ___ Sousaphone ___ String Bass ___ Trumpets ___ Trombones ___ Strings ___ Others _____
2. Do you use: Stock orchestrations ___ Special Arrangements ___ Who writes the special arrangements? _____.
3. Do you have special dance band equipment such as music fronts and drum sets? Yes ___ No ___.
4. Is this equipment owned by the school as part of the music department? Yes ___ No ___ By individual band members? Yes ___ No ___.
- By an outsider? Yes ___ No ___.
7. Is the dance band equipment and music purchased with school funds? Yes ___ No ___.
- By individul dance band members? Yes ___ No ___.
- By the band as a self-supporting organization? Yes ___ No ___.

III

1. How often are rehearsals held? _____.
2. Approximately how long is each rehearsal? _____.
3. Where are rehearsals held? _____.
4. Are rehearsals held: During school hours ___ After school hours ___.

IV

1. Do students receive school credit for dance band? Yes ___ No ___.
- Awards such as letters or pins? Yes ___ No ___.

②

IV cont.

2. What type of dances does the band play for? School dances _____
Public dances ___ Private dances other than school ___. 3. Are
Members paid as individuals for dances? Yes ___ No ___. At what rate?
_____.
4. Is the band given a lump sum as a group? Yes ___ No ___. How much per
dance? _____. 5. Is this lump sum placed in a fund for exclu-
sive use of the dance band? Yes ___ No ___. 6. Is the money earned by
the dance band placed in the regular music fund for the use of the
entire department? Yes ___ No ___.

V

1. Is there a local of the Musicians Union having jurisdiction over your
community? Yes ___ No ___.
2. Are members of the student dance band required to belong to this local?
Yes ___ No ___. 3. Who directs the dance band? School music director
___ Student ___ Outsider ___.
4. Do you as music director take an active part in the dance band? Explain
briefly _____

VI

1. What dance band experience have you had? _____

VII

1. How does dance music affect the music student's interest in classical
music? Decreases ___ Increases ___ No noticeable effect ___.
2. Do you believe that playing dance music harms or improves the music
student in the following:

	Harms	Improves
Intonation	_____	_____
Tone	_____	_____
Volume control	_____	_____

③

VII cont.

	Harms	Improves
Rhythm	_____	_____
Sight reading	_____	_____
Technique	_____	_____
Endurance	_____	_____
Self-confidence	_____	_____
Additional comments:	_____	

VIII

What is the general attitude of the following toward high school dance bands in your locality:

	Favorable	Unfavorable	Indifferent
Community	_____	_____	_____
School Board	_____	_____	_____
Superintendent	_____	_____	_____
Principal	_____	_____	_____
Faculty	_____	_____	_____
Music Supervisor	_____	_____	_____
Student body	_____	_____	_____
Local Music Union	_____	_____	_____

2. Do you believe that dance music can be a legitimate portion of the music education program? _____

Remarks: (write on back if necessary)

APPENDIX B

405 Dixon
Deer Lodge, Montana

May 13, 1950

Do you know how many schools in Montana have student dance bands?

I am making s survey of high school dance bands in the state of Montana. The results of this survey are to be written up in a professional paper as a partial requirement for my Master of Music Degree.

What is the status of student dance bands in Montana? Is there any educational value to participation in dance band work? I believe that these are questions which the music education of Montana should consider. With your cooperation, and the other 62 schools which I have chosen, I hope to collect enough information to be able to draw some important conclusions that will be helpful to us all.

This is a statistical study and no names or places will be used in the body of the report. Please fill in as much of the questionnaire as you can, whether you have a dance band or not. However, please feel free to omit any portion of the questionnaire that you may not wish to answer. If you have any remarks you may wish to add, do so in the indicated space on page 3, and on the back of the questionnaire.

Your attention to this matter would be greatly appreciated as I should have a one hundred per cent return to make a valid report.

If you wish a condensation of this survey please fill in the blanks at the bottom of this page and return with the questionnaire.

Sincerely yours,

Dean Vinal

Name

School

City

APPENDIX C

405 Dixon
Deer Lodge, Montana
May 22, 1950

Dear

About two weeks ago I sent you a questionnaire concerning the status of your high school dance band. Perhaps you have temporarily mislaid it in the rush of the closing school year.

As this material is to become part of a thesis towards my Masters Degree this summer, it is very important for me to have it as soon as possible.

To facilitate your reply, I have enclosed another blank and self-addressed envelope. Please assist me by completing and returning the questionnaire at your earliest convenience. You are the only one who can help me in this matter.

If you wish a condensation of this survey please fill in the blanks at the bottom of this page and return with the questionnaire.

Sincerely,

Dean Vinal

Name

School

City.....

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Dykema, Peter W., and Gehrrens, Karl W., The Teaching and Administration of High School Music. Boston: C.C. Birchard and Company, 1941, p. 201-212.
- Garland, Dr.C.R., and Hill, Charles Lee. "Is Swing the Thing?" The School Musician, XIX, (May, 1948), 8-9.
- Groff, Frank H. "Popular Music in High School," Music Educator's Journal, XXXVI, (June-July, 1950) 31, 33, 44.
- Handlon, James E. "You May Not Like Jazz, But Your Audience Does," The School Musician, XX, (September, 1948), 12-13.
- Mayne, Calvin. "Jazz Wears, Becomingly, the Cap and Gown," The School Musician, XX, (December, 1948), 8-11.
- Schenks, Forrest. "Our Dance Band Sparks Our Entire Music Program," The School Musician, XXI, (June, 1950), 6-8.
- Shepherd, Robert L., Editor. "School Dance Bands," The School Musician, XIII, (November, 1941), 30.
- Snyder, Roy C. "The Swing Band. Its Place in Today's School Music Program," The School Musician, XXI, (April, 1950), 8-9, 25.
- Weldon, Richard E. "The Dance Orchestra in the High School," The Instrumentalist, III, (November-December, 1948), 20-22.