

A Study of the Process of Commissioning New Music for the Concert Band

BY

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Abstract

This study examined the process of commissioning a new composition for the concert band. Composer Brian Balmages was commissioned to write a piece for concert band that had standard band instrumentation and was of Grade IV difficulty. *The Temple of the Murals* was given its world premiere performance on October 30, 2010 on the campus of Garden City Community College in Garden City, Kansas by an honor band ($N=41$) comprised of high school and college musicians from the Southwest Kansas region. The Ensemble Members Attitude Survey (EMAS) was given to the participants as a pre-survey at the beginning of the clinic sessions and again as a post-survey before the premiere performance. At the same time, a qualitative study was employed to examine the rationales that wind band conductors and composers may have for commissioning new music for the concert band. Participants in the qualitative study ($N=4$) were interviewed three separate times using similar interview questions. The researcher then transcribed the interviews and formulated themes from the data. An external reviewer was employed to review the transcripts of the interviews. Results largely indicated no significant differences between pre and post administrations of the survey. Post-administration outcomes demonstrated participants' positive orientation towards the commissioned work and the composer, specific musical concepts, and new music in general. Themes to emerge from the qualitative study included the notions of connectivity with students, a desire to improve and expand the repertoire of the wind band, and providing students with a unique musical experience. Connections were found between the survey and qualitative aspects of the study.

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Chapter One

Introduction

The commissioning of new works from composers dates back to before the Renaissance. Professional and amateur musicians alike have embarked on commissioning projects for reasons that range from the personal to the altruistic. While some musicians are interested in expanding the repertoire for their given instrument or for the ensemble in which they perform, others may be chiefly concerned with attaching their name to a project on which a well-known composer is working. Whatever the reason, there is a certain cachet attached to musicians who advocate for new music, and especially to those who are active commissioners of new music.

Nowhere is this practice more prevalent than in the wind band. For well over the past sixty years, wind band conductors have actively sought new music not to only expand their repertoire, but also to give greater credence to their artistic milieu (Battisti, 2002; Norcross, 1991). Often, these conductors show a devotion to more avant-garde composers whose works were shunned by orchestral conductors as being too esoteric (Halseth, 1997). This desire for new music is not only present in the professional/university wind band conductors on the cutting edge of the profession, but in secondary and middle school wind band conductors, who have often used commissioning projects to expand the repertoire for their own ensembles.

Indeed, the expansion of repertoire seems to be the sole concern of some conductor-educators, who engage in the process of commissioning a new work for the wind band only to see these works then sit on a shelf, never or rarely be performed again (Smithwick, 1999). Writers have suggested that some of these conductor-educators are seeking to commission music for the wind band to expand the artistic possibilities and acceptance of the medium in the world

of contemporary concert music (Battisti, 2002; Nicholls, 1980; Robinson, 1998). On the other hand, some conductor-educators advocate commissioning projects as a way to not only expand the repertoire, but also to provide the students who participate in the ensembles with a musical experience that cannot be duplicated elsewhere.

Some scholars see the commissioning project as a way for students to become more connected with creative aspects of music making in their ensembles (Sindberg, 2005). This notion extends to include specific musical learning as well as the concept of who a composer is and what he or she may do. Others seek an experience that provides greater connectivity and ownership between the students and their ensembles (Norcross, 1991). But while the repertoire of the wind band has expanded in the past sixty years, the educational benefits of these types of projects are not well documented. Indeed, it often seems as if the music education that the students involved in these projects receive is given second thought, and worse, what could be an engaging learning experience for students is missed by music educators who fail to see the curricular possibilities of such a project.

Conceptual Underpinnings

The culture and tradition of commissioning new music for the wind band can be traced back to the days of professional band leaders such as John Philip Sousa (1854-1932) and Edwin Franko Goldman (1878-1956). These conductors and many like them had professional wind bands that toured the United States and performed a variety of repertoire: orchestral transcriptions, popular and dance songs, and a small number of original compositions (Battisti, 2002). Unfortunately, the original compositions that were available to these wind bands were of poor to medium quality and were by no means on the artistic level of original compositions for

orchestras (Goldman, 1946). Both Sousa and Goldman were concerned with not only expanding the repertoire of the wind band in terms of the number of original works available to wind band conductors, but expanding the repertoire as an artistic medium, one that would attract attention from the leading composers of the day.

With the onset of the school band movement in the early and middle Twentieth Century, school wind band conductors often looked to the professional wind band conductor for guidance and inspiration for repertoire selection for their own ensembles (Goldman, 1946). With this type of cultural practice, it is easy to see why the wind band has such a long and storied history of commissioning projects for the ensemble. It is just as easy to see why the commissioning projects themselves tend to lean toward the goal of the professional wind band conductors who sought a contemporary repertoire for their ensemble, one that would bring parity with the orchestra. The pervasiveness of this culture among college and university wind band conductors seems to extend to their students, and in particular, the future music educators who perform in their ensembles. To understand this culture and how these conductor-educators engage in the practice of commissioning new music for their medium, this study was developed in order to examine the rationale behind the creation of these types of projects.

Along with the desire to expand and improve repertoire, an ancillary movement inside of the commissioning culture of the wind band can be seen. This movement involves music education as it relates to the commissioning project itself and seems to be centered on student learning and the changing of attitudes that takes place as students participate in the commissioning projects that their directors undertake. The majority of this student learning and attitude change seems to be centered on the precepts discussed by Garofolo (1983), who provided a schema for the building of successful secondary wind band programs at the middle

and high school levels. Curricular goals such as music history, music theory, and the connectivity of literature to the lives of the students are based on the goals of the comprehensive musicianship movement, which can be traced to the 1960s (Mark, 1996).

This conception of student learning and attitude change as it relates to composers and compositions is clearly a goal of the American Composers Forum BandQuest project, which involves the commissioning of contemporary composers such as Libby Larsen and Michael Daugherty to write works for school-level wind bands, with accompanying curricular guides and materials available to music educators on the BandQuest website (American Composers Forum, 2011). What is not clear from the overall literature is if the student learning and attitude change that music educators assume is taking place during these types of commissioning projects is present at all, and what form that learning takes. Therefore, this researcher embarked on a commissioning project of his own to examine the student learning of high school and college wind band students as it relates to implications presented by Garofolo (1983) and the American Composers Forum.

Statement of the Problem

Much has been written about the commissioning project as it relates to secondary wind band students (Everett, 1976; Kish, 2003; Norcross, 1991; Robinson, 1998; Sindberg, 2005). Authors have ranged from the philosophical to the pragmatic. While extolling the virtues of commissioning projects for students participating in school wind bands, authors have shed little light on what actual student learning and changing of attitudes that take place during such projects. For example, Sindberg (2005) came the closest to examining curricular goals and student learning in commissioning projects, but she provided no evidence to as to what actual

learning might have taken place. Another example of this seeming lack of focus on student learning can be found in Norcross (1991). He studied the Ithaca (NY) High School Band between 1955 and 1967, while the group was under the direction of conductor-educator Frank Battisti. Norcross found that while there was great connectivity and ownership of the ensemble to the commissioned work, there was no documented evidence of student learning during these projects.

Indeed, there has been no study that has documented the effects of a commissioning project on student learning or attitudes, or even what types of learning may have occurred during the experience. While the *advantages* of the commissioning project are touted throughout the literature, there is no hard evidence that students *learn* anything musical or otherwise by participation in a commissioning project. There has also been no study of the motivational factors of the students, conductors, and composers behind these various projects. Not enough is known about the culture of wind band commissioning in relationship to student learning and attitudes, especially when viewed through the notion that the majority of wind band conductors seek only to expand the repertoire of their medium. What attitudes do students hold toward a commissioning project? What do students learn by participating in a commissioning project? If there is student learning, what form does that learning take? What are the factors that compel the commissioning of new works for the wind band? How do composers approach the writing of music for secondary school wind bands? This study sought to answer those questions.

Purpose of the Study

This study's purpose was to examine what kinds of student learning take place during a commissioning project for wind band, what kinds of attitudes students hold for a commissioning

project, and what factors may have motivated the development of this project. To that end, the following research questions were developed.

Survey Phase

- 1) What are the attitudes of students towards the commissioned work after participation in a commissioning project?
- 2) What are the attitudes of wind band students towards new music in general as a result of participating in a commissioning project?
- 3) What are the attitudes of wind band students towards the commissioned work as a result of participating in a commissioning project?
- 4) Do wind band students who participate in commissioning projects have a greater understanding of composers and composition?
- 5) Are there disparities in responses to the survey items among selected demographics?
- 6) To what extent are students who participate in commissioning projects engaged with music making?
- 7) Do these attitudes and understandings change from the beginning to the end of the project?

Qualitative Phase

- 8) What are the attitudes and motivating factors of *composers* who are involved with commissioning projects?
- 9) What are the attitudes and motivating factors of *wind band conductors* who are involved with commissioning projects?

10) Is there connectivity present between the rationale for the commissioning of new music for the wind band and the types of student learning evident after the participation in such a project?

Research questions one through seven were examined through a survey designed by the researcher in which the following null hypotheses were examined.

- 1) There is no difference in the attitudes of students on the subject of new music in general between the pre and post administrations of the survey.
- 2) There is no difference in observed versus expected outcomes on the subject of new music in general on the post administrations of the survey.
- 3) There is no difference in the attitudes of students on the subject of the commissioned work between the pre and post administrations of the survey.
- 4) There is no difference in the observed versus expected outcomes on the subject of the commissioned work on the post administrations of the survey.
- 5) There is no difference in the attitudes of students on the subject of composers and composition between the pre and post administrations of the survey.
- 6) There is no difference in the observed versus expected outcomes on the subject of composers and composition on the post administrations of the survey.
- 7) There is no difference in the attitudes of students on the subject of musical concepts between the pre and post administrations of the survey.
- 8) There is no difference in the observed versus expected outcomes on the subject of musical concepts on the post administrations of the survey.

Research questions eight and nine were examined through a qualitative study that examined the attitudes and rationales for these projects by interviewing prominent composers

and wind band conductors who are active participants in the commissioning of new music for the wind band. The tenth and final research question was examined by synthesizing the data from the survey phase of the study and the qualitative phase of the study. To that end, the format of the remaining chapters of the study is slightly different from a traditional study. Chapters Two and Three remain as the review of literature and method chapters respectively. Chapter Four provides the results and discussion for the survey phase of the study, and Chapter Five provides the results and discussion for the qualitative phase of the study. Chapter Six provides a synthesis for the study in its entirety.

Limitations, Assumptions, and Design Controls

In order to undertake the examination of a commissioning project, this researcher was an active participant in the process of commissioning a new work for the wind band. He took steps, however, to deal with his own biases. For example, he engaged in a consortium for the commissioning project rather than pursuing a project by himself. In addition to the financial advantages that participating in a consortium represents, the addition of other wind band conductors to the project allowed this researcher to focus on the study as contrasted with assuming full responsibility for the project. Furthermore, another member of the consortium handled the financial considerations of the project. That allowed this researcher to focus on the organization and logistics of the premiere clinic and concert, which took place at his college October 29-30, 2010. Finally, an independent auditor examined the transcripts of the interviews conducted by this researcher.

There were some limitations to the study. For example, during the survey phase of the study, one participating school did not emphasize the importance of students bringing signed

parental consent forms. Consequently these students did not participate in the survey phase, even though they were present for the clinic sessions and performed in the premiere of the piece. This decreased the number of participants. A wind band conductor withdrew from the qualitative phase of the study after the interview process had begun, claiming not enough time to participate in interviews. As a result, the data collected from this wind band conductor was not used in the study. Her withdrawal had the effect of extending the interview process for the qualitative phase of the study, as this researcher had to search for a qualified participant to replace her.

There were also several assumptions made for this study. First, this researcher assumed that students who participated in the survey phase of the study would come to the first clinic session with their parts learned, and that they had been introduced to musical concepts such as form and harmony before the pre administration of the survey was given. The researcher also assumed that all students participating in the premiere clinic/concert would be willing and enthusiastic participants. This proved not entirely to be the case, as the researcher had to dismiss two percussionists from the honor band and replace them with two new percussionists during the course of the first day of the clinic. As a result, the data from these two percussionists were discarded and were not replaced, because the clinic had already begun, and the two new percussionists did not take the pre survey.

Summary

Commissioning music from composers is a practice that can be traced back for centuries. Often, the commissioning party is attempting to expand the repertoire for its instrument or medium and to encourage music from promising or interesting composers. The wind band has a storied tradition of commissioning new music not only to expand repertoire but to assert its

artistic presence in the world of contemporary music. Whatever the rationale, the practice of commissioning new music has a certain cachet for the parties involved in such projects.

In addition to the practice of commissioning new music to expand repertoire, an ancillary rationale seems to be centered on music education. Some writers tout the benefits for students who participate in commissioning projects as providing greater connectivity between students, composers, and the creative process. However, there seems to be a gap in the literature dealing with whether student learning indeed takes place, and if it does, what shape that learning may take.

In order to study this issue, this researcher undertook a mixed-method study in which he participated in the commissioning a new work for wind band, surveyed student attitudes towards the work, and conducted a qualitative study to examine the processes behind the commissioning of these projects with wind band conductors and composers. He initiated a consortium to commission a well-known composer of wind band music for a new work for a high school level band, and conducted a world premiere concert and clinic for that work.

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

The commissioning culture inside of the wind band has several goals, among them the development of quality repertoire for the ensemble. One of the ancillary goals of these projects seems to be centered on the education that may occur while students are involved in the premiere of a new work, especially when students have the opportunity to work with the commissioned composer during the course of the project. This study sought to examine student attitudes inside of commissioning projects for wind band, as well as the beliefs that wind band conductors and composers may have when they initiate these projects.

In reviewing the relevant literature to the topic, this researcher found no studies that address student learning and attitudes directly as it may or may not occur inside of these types of projects. However, there was much literature that examined commissioning projects--their various perceived benefits, the rationale behind such projects, as well as a great deal about the historical relevance of commissioned music for the wind band. To that end, this researcher has divided his review into three general sections: commissioning projects as they relate to disciplines outside of the wind band, a historical review of commissioning projects undertaken by wind band conductors, and pedagogical studies that are ancillary to commissioning projects.

Commissioning Projects Outside of the Wind Band

The practice of commissioning new music for instruments and ensembles other than the wind band is rich and varied, and it seems that most performers and ensembles are interested in seeing their own repertoire for their instrument or performance medium expanded. Frigo (2005) wrote extensively about commissioning music for the saxophone, citing three main types of

commissioning projects-- “Admiration” commissions, “Exchange of Service” commissions, and “Paid” commissions. Citing the importance of fostering the composer/commissioner relationship, she wrote about how to find composers to commission, how to work with student composers, and how to fund such commissioning projects. Interestingly, one of her main rationales for commissioning works for the saxophone ran parallel to rationale cited by many wind band conductors (Battisti, 2002; Goldman, 1946), namely, expanding the repertoire through quality commissioning.

Frigo’s is a common experience for other instrumental performers as well. Snedeker (1999) related the commissioning of composer Mark Schultz’s piece *Dragons in the Sky* and the composer’s prolific nature in writing music for the French horn. In addition to reviewing the composer’s works for horn, Snedeker related the importance of fostering relationships with composers, especially those who are inclined to write for the instrument or medium that they are trying to promote.

Zeltsman (1999) wrote about commissioning new music for the marimba, corroborating the work of Frigo and Snedeker in regard to the importance of the composer/commissioner relationship. The experience of collaborating with a living composer was an important factor of the commissioning project that she engaged in, especially when it came to understanding the mindset of the composer. She asserted that a greater understanding of this mindset and the creative process enabled her to give more nuanced performances to other works by different composers.

Moersch (1999) agreed with Zeltsman about the importance of commissioning music for the marimba, but also included the importance of finding funding for such commissioning

projects as well as highlighting such commissions at national and international conferences such as the Percussive Arts Society International Conference. Moersch asserted that these conferences provided the commissioned work a better venue for the premiere performance and subsequent performances of the piece.

Corroborating many of the points made by Zeltsman, Wooden (2005) wrote about commissioning music from the perspective of a consortium. Describing the concept of a consortium as a collection of individuals or groups that share the financial responsibility for any given project, Wooden related the commissioning of a new bassoon sonata by composer Bill Douglas.

Finally, Vaudreuit (2000) reported the experience of commissioning a piece from a female jazz composer, and how it may have helped to foster the connection between performers in the ensemble who were female and the music of female composers. The benefits of this type of connectivity between composer and performer are manifold through the literature as providing the performer with the concept of who a composer is and what he or she may do.

It is clear from the literature that individual performers who commission music are mainly seeking to expand their own repertoire, and it is interesting to note that while performers on less-established instruments such as the marimba and saxophone are seeking to expand their repertoire because of the lack of original compositions for their instruments, the practice is not ignored by performers of instruments such as the horn, which has an established repertoire. These commissions are mainly driven by the expansion of repertoire. There is no evidence of the student learning and changes in student attitudes that may or may not occur except for Vaudreuit's mention of performer/composer connectivity.

In addition to individuals commissioning new music, several musical organizations have made the practice a priority as well. In particular, The Music Teacher's National Association (MTNA) has been a leader in the field of organizations commissioning new music, devoting several articles in its journal to the practice as well as an entire program for composer commissioning. Witherspoon (2005) asserted that is the duty of every musical organization to support new music through the commissioning of works, especially when students are involved. Citing the benefits of connecting students with creativity, she stated that even if students do not go on to be performers, teachers are helping to develop the next generation of arts patrons for musical organizations. While this connection with creativity is laudable, no practical suggestions are given as to how to achieve this type of music education.

Plude (2000a) wrote about the importance of commissioning new music to sustain contemporary composers, reminding us that "new music is often not as accessible as Beethoven or even Stravinsky. Though it is helpful to remember that their music was once new as well—even to the point of being scandalous" (p. 88). Lauding the benefits of participation in the creative process by commissioning new music, she touted the benefits of the practice for students without giving any evidence that students learned anything or evidenced a change in attitude through participation in a commissioning project.

Not content to merely point out the importance of commissioning new music, the MTNA journal has many articles that give members advice on how to contact composers and commission works on their own. Ediger (2003) answered the frequently asked questions that MTNA members have about the commissioning process and gave specific details about the upcoming MTNA Composer Commissioning Program. The topic of how to find composers to commission and foster the composer/commissioner relationship was found in Plude (2000b),

where she related the problems of funding commissioning projects and how members can find creative ways to meet those challenges. Finally, Walker (2003) wrote about the importance of seeking out commissions from young composers to help foster their compositional careers. All of this literature from the MTNA shows the commitment of the organization to commissioning new music from composers, but tends to be product-oriented rather than process-oriented. As a result, there has been little discussion about students' changing attitudes inside of commissioning projects except for Plude (2000a), who gave a cursory discussion of the topic.

Like their wind band colleagues, choral directors are concerned with the commissioning of new music for vocal ensembles. Organizations such as the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) and Chorus America (CA) routinely devote scholarship about commissioning music for their ensembles in their respective journals. Thomasson (2006) conveyed the need for commissioning music for children's choirs and asserted that commissioning music is one of the most stimulating gifts that can be given to both students and society. While she touted the benefits of commissioning music for students, however, Thomasson did not give any details about specific musical learning or attitude changes that may occur in such projects.

Writing about the collaboration between ensembles, composers, and patrons of the arts in Minneapolis, Waleson (2002) cited the importance of all interested parties working together to commission new music. The consortium as described by Waleson goes a long way to reduce the financial obligations of the parties involved in commissioning projects, but again she described the process from a logistical point of view rather than from a music education perspective.

Perry (2007) agreed with the concept of collaborative commissioning, and gave several ways in which groups can discover resources that will enable them to find common ground on commissioning projects. In addition to these logistical concerns, she discussed the growing trend among choral groups to commission new music for their ensembles, but again avoided discussing student learning and attitude changes inside of commissioning projects.

Not content to cite only altruistic reasons for commissioning music, Mabry (2003) wrote about individual singers commissioning works, not only to further repertoire and network with composers, but to “. . . promote one’s performance activities. After all, self-promotion is a necessary element of every singer’s career” (p. 433). This article lends some insight into the rationale behind the commissioning of new music for some performers who are seeking to make a name for themselves by commissioning composers. This seemingly self-serving aspect of commissioning music is an important factor in many musicians’ professional careers, often giving performers the professional cachet that comes with being seen as a proponent of new music.

Several groups have used the commissioning of new music as a promotional tool. For example, Owen (1997) citing the Kronos Quartet as an example of an ensemble that has used commissioning new works to their advantage when generating publicity about themselves, and then suggested that commissioning music may be one way that young artists can make themselves “stand out from the crowd” (p. 1212). She also suggested that this is not a new practice in concert music. Citing the demand made by Serge Koussevitsky that soloists who wished to perform with the Boston Symphony Orchestra must first find a composer who would write them a concerto, Owen made the case for this type of self-promotion. It would seem that while many musicians have a great deal of interest in commissioning music, their rationale for

doing so is not always to further repertoire, but to lend themselves prestige and notoriety. It is also apparent that the practice of commissioning new music is not always driven by a desire to further repertoire and promote new composers, but sometimes to provide the performer or conductor of an ensemble with a means of self-promotion and marketing. While this rationale for commissioning music is not inherently undesirable, it is clear from the literature that sometimes student learning and curricular goals are by-products of the practice.

Wind Band Commissioning

The wind band has a long and storied tradition of commissioning new music, mostly stemming from the desire of conductors for high-quality original music for the ensemble (Battisti, 2002). The history of commissioning music for the wind band can be traced to the days of the professional band, with bandleaders such as John Philip Sousa and Edwin Franko Goldman leading the charge for new music. Battisti (2002) laid out a detailed history of literature for the wind band, from orchestral transcriptions to original commissioned works. He asserted that the main driving force for commissioned works has been the desire of conductors for wind band music of the highest possible quality. This point is illustrated best by his statement, “it is clear that the practice of commissioning works for the contemporary wind band/ensemble is alive and well. In the past three decades commissioned works by college and university ensembles have improved the quality and quantity of literature for wind bands/ensembles at this level” (p. 208). There has been much scholarship on the history of commissioned music for the wind band that points to this desire for repertoire expansion.

Goldman (1946) wrote about the necessity faced by the Goldman Band in seeking newly commissioned music. In producing concert programs, recordings, and radio broadcasts, Goldman

found that there was a lack of serious music for the wind band, and what music was available often was of poor quality. His band then sought to commission new music from composers that Goldman esteemed to be among the best of the contemporary composers in the United States, eventually attracting composers such as Vincent Persichetti (1915-1987) and Robert Russell Bennett (1894-1981). While this historical perspective on the commissioning activities of the Goldman Band is useful, it does not address student learning or attitudes towards commissioning as a primary or even ancillary topic. Although the Goldman Band was one of the premier professional bands in the United States, the fact remains that the professional band movement clearly influenced the school band movement, especially in its choice and scope of repertoire. Persichetti, for example, became a stalwart proponent of quality band music, and his compositions for the medium were performed by high school, college, and professional bands alike (Battisti, 2002).

The Goldman Band's legacy of commissioning high-quality band music was also documented by Belser (1994), who gave an historical overview of the commissioned music by the Goldman Band. Citing the important musical and historical works commissioned by the ensemble, Belser wrote about the relationship between the Goldman Band and the American Bandmasters Association, which became an important organization with regard to its contribution to bands across the United States. But he did include the connection between the Goldman Band and the shaping of repertoire for the school band movement.

Another historical review of commissioning projects for professional bands can be found in Griggs (2004), in which the music for wind band commissioned by the Air Force Band while it was under the direction of conductor Lowell Graham (b. 1948) is chronicled. Griggs gave a complete analysis of two works that were commissioned by Graham during his tenure as

conductor of the ensemble, citing these works as emblematic of the types of works commissioned by professional military bands across the United States. Once again, however, no connectivity is provided between these commissioned works and the expansion of repertoire for the school wind band, as well as no discussion of student learning or change in attitudes that may take place as a result of these commissions.

Olfert (1992) provided yet another historical review of a professional wind band and its commissioning practices with his dissertation on the history of the American Wind Symphony Orchestra. Citing the same rationale and intent for these commissions by the AWSO that both Goldman (1946) and Belser (1994) cited for the Goldman Band, Olfert gave a detailed history of the ensemble and detailed several of its commissioned works in depth. As with both Goldman and Belser, Olfert provided no connectivity between students and composers, commissioned works, and the expansion of the repertoire for the school band movement. These writers did not seem to view the professional wind band as influencing the repertoire of the school wind band.

Another important organization to consider in the development of wind band literature and the commissioning of new music is the College Band Director's National Association (CBDNA). Since its organization in 1941, the CBDNA has been a tireless advocate for the creation of high-quality original compositions for the wind band and has sought to promote new music. Hopwood (1998) chronicled the literature performed at the national and regional conferences of CBDNA during a period of activity ranging from 1941 to 1995. He found that the music performed at these conferences was mostly original music composed for the wind band, with an emphasis on works specifically commissioned for CBDNA national or regional conferences.

This emphasis was confirmed by Halseth (1987), who wrote about the impact of the CBDNA on wind band repertoire. According to Halseth, in addition to shaping the repertoire through programming practices at its regional and national conferences, CBDNA has shaped the repertoire by educating its members about what constitutes quality literature. Halseth found that the commissioning practices of the CBDNA ran to the more avant-garde and serious side of contemporary art music, so much so that only the top-level ensembles had the ability to perform the commissioned works that were premiered at those conferences. He also asserted that most of the CBDNA commissions were criticized by many directors as being too difficult for their ensembles to perform.

This criticism appears regularly in the literature. Kish (2003) related disapproval from directors that the works produced by the CBDNA commissioning projects were too long, too arduous, and forgotten too quickly by many of their colleagues. Writing about the compositions commissioned by CBDNA, Kish wrote, “the majority of the compositions, however, tend to be more difficult. The average college band will never perform most of the CBDNA commissions or consortiums. The works are either too difficult for the ensemble or require unusual instrumentation” (p. 133).

His point is echoed by Smithwick (1999), who wrote about the familiarity level of college band directors with the CBDNA commissioned works. She found that the majority of college band directors are not familiar with these works, having never performed or even heard of most of them. She also cited the fact that many of the commissioned works are not in print and therefore unavailable as one reason for the seeming unfamiliarity with the works.

Interestingly, this criticism seems to cut both ways. Battisti (2002) wrote a scathing review of what he deemed to be inferior commissions for the wind band by composers of “educational music,” illustrated by his statement,

Much of the music created in the late 1990’s through commissions (and otherwise) by writers of “educational music” for school bands is of low and mediocre quality. In the 1950’s and 1960’s, distinguished composers . . . composed numerous pieces for the high school band. Bands of that era commissioned and performed these works; thus, music publishers printed and sold the compositions. School band directors today should take the initiative and commission works from important composers in order to develop and improve the quality of literature for their ensembles. (p. 209)

While Battisti’s apparent disdain for educational music is clear, what is not so clear is the notion for whom these commissioning projects are conceived and implemented. The idea of expanding the repertoire to include high-quality music by important composers is a laudable one, but then to exclude the majority of wind bands who either cannot or will not perform these works seems counterproductive.

Seeking to answer some of the questions about the motivating factors for commissioning wind band music, Nicholls (1980) wrote of the factors that have influenced the commissioned wind band repertoire since 1945. While outlining some of the more practical factors such as instrumentation and increased composer recognition by composing music for the wind band, he generally ignored the pedagogical factors behind commissioning projects.

Indeed, this researcher was hard pressed to find any scholarship on the topic of pedagogical reasons for commissioning projects, whether from composers or conductors. Campo

(2007) also sought to find a rationale for commissioning projects, albeit from the historical perspective of original music for the wind band since 1950. Like Nicholls (1980), Campo found logistical reasons for the emergence of commissioning projects, such as repertoire expansion and the interest in promoting new music, but found no philosophical or pedagogical reasons. However, unlike some previously mentioned studies (Belser, 1994; Goldman, 1946; Olfert, 1992) Campo did draw a connection between the commissioning projects undertaken by various school and professional wind bands and their influence on an emerging repertoire. Unfortunately, Campo did not chronicle the contribution that many high school wind bands have made to the repertoire by commissioning new music for the medium, citing that the majority of the commissioning projects undertaken by these organizations fell outside of the time period of his study.

Where these studies leave a gap is an examination of the rationale behind wind band conductors commissioning new music for their ensembles. While authors of most studies cite the rationale of furthering the repertoire of the wind band as their primary concern when commissioning new music, other authors assert that sometimes performers and conductors commission new music to promote their own agendas and performance careers. It is clear to this researcher that there is no scholarship on the rationale behind commissioning projects undertaken by wind band conductors, other than the practical reasons behind such projects. It is also just as clear that many of these same conductors are not aware of the pedagogical and curricular benefits that these types of projects may afford their students.

Commissioning and Music Education

If there is no research into the rationale behind commissioning projects, then perhaps one can glean information about the mindset of conductor-educators who participate in such projects through their published scholarship. Sindberg (2005) is one of the leading scholars in such research, having written extensively about her experiences commissioning music with her middle school band. Her article about the commissioning projects undertaken by the Central Middle School (WI) Band sets a standard for student learning and curricular function that has not been found in previous literature. While being clear about the logistical aspects of commissioning composers and procuring funding for the projects, it is also clear that the experience that the students would have in such a project is of high priority to Sindberg, who described the projects as multidimensional in nature. While one dimension involved the organizational details, “a second dimension was made up of teaching and learning activities related to the commission, such as meeting local composers, writing letters to composers whose music the students were studying, having students write music, and helping them become familiar with the music written by ‘their’ composer” (p. 25).

This statement shows a clear curricular focus on the commissioning project, a focus that seems to be lacking in much of the literature about college and high school wind band commissioning. A major impetus in the creation of Sindberg’s project seems to be the idea that the students had no idea of who a composer is and what he or she does. Having students meet living, working composers and participate in the creation of an original piece of music for them to perform was, according to Sindberg, one of the most rewarding experiences of the commissioning project. While this focus on student learning and curricular goals is admirable, Sindberg gave no empirical evidence on what learning or changes in attitude took place during

the project, and what form that learning or changes in attitude might have taken if they existed. She described an assessment procedure in which the students answered a questionnaire about their experiences once the project was finished, but did not elaborate on any type of methodology. To be fair, the purpose of her article was not to provide an empirical assessment of student learning through commissioning project; rather, it was to provide general information and inspire modeling of the project to other music educators interested in undertaking projects of their own. This researcher has not found literature that examines student learning or changing of attitudes in a commissioning project.

Norcross (1991) also examined the commissioning projects undertaken by the Ithaca (NY) High School Band from both an historical and curricular viewpoint. He wrote a detailed history of the band's activities from 1955-1967, a period in which eminent wind band conductor Frank Battisti directed the band. During this time, the band not only participated in commissioning projects as detailed by Sindberg (2005), but engaged in creative music making projects with a clear curricular goal, such as student composition projects and solo recitals. Once again, this researcher found no direct connection to student learning through these projects, although one could infer the type of learning that the students were receiving through their almost constant contact with composers and other guest artists. Norcross examined student reactions to the commissioning projects in his study, but found little conclusive evidence that there was any direct connection between the commissioning projects and student learning. However, he did report that many of the students who participated in these projects gained a more humanized view of composers and composition as a creative experience through their participation. Although the actual act of the commissioning projects was important to the

students, the way in which they were able to interact with the composers and view the creative process from the inside was equally important to them as well.

Writing about his experience as an outside observer of the Ithaca High School (NY) Band commissioning projects, Everett (1976) cited the program as one worthy of emulation for high school bands across the United States. He asserted that the projects themselves produced a number of high quality pieces for the wind band and highly influenced the creative output of the students who were involved with the band at that time. Highlighting the experience of working with the composer as an avenue for student creativity, Everett then went on to relate his experiences as a high school band director and the implementation of a similar project with his students. Like Sindberg (2005), Everett advanced the notion that the commissioning project connects students to the creative process and composers, but gave no evidence that students learn anything musical or otherwise through participation in these types of projects. Rather, by encouraging music educators to produce their own commissioning projects for their own ensembles, he gave logistical suggestions for the implementation and funding of such projects.

Robinson (1998) wrote specifically about the process of commissioning a work for wind band, relating the steps in the process in detailed format. He found that there were three stages of the commissioning process: the conceptual phase, the production stage, and the preparation stage (p. 18). Student learning and changes of attitude are addressed in the conceptual phase, in which Robinson related numerous reasons to commission a new work for wind band. Providing opportunities for students to participate in the creative process through interacting with composers and maintaining the status of music as a living art were given as examples of student learning in the commissioning project. However, no direct evidence was given that would tie student learning or changes of student attitude to this practice. Much like Everett (1976), a

detailed analysis of the logistical procedures required for such an undertaking and a specific example of how Robinson (1998) had accomplished them with his own ensemble was given. The rationale of Robinson's project was clear: to promote new, high-quality literature for the wind band in order to expand the medium's repertoire.

Indeed, throughout the literature it seems as if music educators are content to promote the ideals of the commissioning project without giving any specific evidence that the projects teach creative thinking and musical concepts. In fact, in some literature the commissioning project is touted as only one way to connect students to contemporary art music. Costes (2005) promoted this concept in her article on how music educators can save contemporary music by introducing their students to the world of contemporary music. Asserting several ways in which music educators can use contemporary music to expand their students' musical horizons, she cited the commissioning project as only one of various methods that accomplish this goal. While Costes gave several examples of learning projects that involve commissioning new music and other techniques, she stopped short of giving evidence that students learn anything musical or otherwise through participation in these projects.

Contemporary music and its connection with students is also the subject of an article by Colgrass (2004). Writing about his experiences working with a middle school band on his commissioned work *Old Churches*, Colgrass wrote about the difficulty that he faced in writing for this level of student, and how he was challenged to write music for amateurs that was musically satisfying and that conveyed emotion. Again, while the sentiments expressed by Colgrass are noble, he gave little evidence about what the students involved in the project learned through participation. Indeed, his article was rather composer-centric, containing advice to fellow composers on how to connect with younger band students through their compositions,

and citing ways in which collegiate-level composition instructors can encourage their students to write quality music for younger ensembles.

Both Colgrass's (2004) and Costes's (2005) assertions about teaching music in performance ensembles beyond the scope of the literature they are preparing for performance are not new, and fall within the purview of the Comprehensive Musicianship movement (c.f. Mark, 1996). Some music educators have been examining this issue in depth and seem to agree that commissioning projects can be a useful tool in teaching music beyond merely preparing literature for performance. Thomas (1970) asserted that the music classroom should become a learning laboratory for the teaching of creative thinking and experimentation. Part of this laboratory would be the inclusion of composers, commissioning, and student compositions. Thomas laid the philosophical framework for this type of student learning, but provided no evidence that students learn anything by participation in these types of activities.

Garofalo (1983) also examined student learning in commissioning projects from a curricular standpoint and gave detailed descriptions of what an instrumental music program based on the ideals of comprehensive musicianship would look like. Part of his "blueprint" included commissioning composers and having students interact with them, and while he detailed what student learning and attitude changes may happen by interaction with a composer, he gave no evidence that this learning or attitude change occurred.

Summary

The literature on this topic is broad-based, well thought out, and full of ideas about how to conduct commissioning projects from the logistical point of view. Commissioning music is a practice that extends far beyond the wind band. The rationale for these projects runs the gamut

from altruistic ideals of expanding the repertoire for one's instrument or medium to the pragmatism of self-promotion. The wind band itself has a long tradition of commissioning new music with the goals of expanding the repertoire for the medium, providing a higher quality of repertoire for that medium, and promoting the medium as an artistic ensemble. Music educators have been seeking to teach music in their performance ensembles that goes beyond the product-oriented goals of music performance. What is clear from the literature is that sometimes this education intersects with commissioning projects, in particular when students are introduced to composers, composition, and creative thinking as a result of these projects. In addition to the literature about music education and commissioning projects, a great deal of literature provides logistical help with conducting a commissioning project--how to find funding, where to find composers, and how to promote and market a premiere performance.

Where the literature leaves a gap, however, is in the notion that students demonstrate a change in attitude towards specific musical concepts by participation in commissioning projects. The virtues of commissioning projects--increased connection to music as a living art, interaction with composers and the creative process, and the opportunity to give inspiration to student composers are extolled throughout the literature without any evidence that these concepts actually occur. While it is pleasant to think that students are learning and growing through the course of these projects, one must ask if the attitudes of students are changing in the manner in which music educators assume.

In addition to the lack of evidence of student learning, there is no study of the rationale of wind band conductors and composers as they continue the practice of commissioning new music in the Twenty-first Century. While there has been scholarship behind the rationale of individual performers and ensembles that commission new music, there is no such study about the wind

band. Are wind band conductors aware of the student learning that may or may not take place during the commissioning projects that they undertake? Are they really seeking, as it has been suggested (Battisti, 2002), to further and expand the repertoire of the medium? Why do composers who regularly accept commissions to write music for the wind band continue to do so? Is there a purely financial motivation as has been suggested (Rocco, 1991), or are they aware of the impact that their music may have on the lives of students? When one considers these questions, the need for this study is clear.

Therefore the purpose of this study is to examine what changes in student attitude may take place during a commissioning project for wind band and what factors may have motivated the development of this project.

Chapter Three

Method

A mixed-method design was employed to ensure that all aspects of the research questions would be examined. A pretest-posttest survey was developed to examine the issue of student learning through participation in a commissioning project. In addition, qualitative methods were employed to examine the issue of the rationales behind the commissioning project.

The Commissioning Project

A commissioning project was undertaken by the researcher with a consortium of 24 college and high school wind bands. The Western Plains Consortium (WPC) contracted with composer Brian Balmages in September 2008 to complete a Grade IV wind band composition entitled *The Temple of the Murals*. This composition was to be original, of standard wind band instrumentation, and of sufficient quality. The composer was contracted to travel to Garden City, Kansas in October 2010 to participate in a clinic that would provide an opportunity for WPC schools to interact with the composer and perform the world premiere of the commissioned work.

An honor band ($N=41$) was selected from the WPC schools that agreed to participate in the Balmages clinic. This group was selected from the three high school and two college wind bands that elected to participate. Each school submitted names of their top musicians to this researcher, who then formed an honor band according to the instrumentation requirements. The music for the concert was sent out in September 2010 to the participating schools, which were responsible for the preparation of the music before the clinic.

The clinic was held on the campus of Garden City Community College on October 29 and 30, 2010. A full day of rehearsals was held on Friday, October 29, with Brian Balmages rehearsing and interacting with the honor band. The clinic continued on Saturday, October 30, with morning rehearsals and a concert performance that afternoon. This concert performance was free and open to the public. During the clinic, special attention was paid by Balmages to answer questions about his compositional process, concepts such as the form and harmonic structure of *The Temple of the Murals*, and what the role of a composer encompasses. The music educators involved with the project also received an opportunity to interact with Balmages in a special session on Friday, October 29.

Survey Aspect

The first phase was a pre and post administration of a survey examining the attitudes of students who participated in the premiere of the commissioned piece and to determine what the students may have learned during their participation in the commissioning project. Members of the WPC honor band ($N=41$) were given the Ensemble Members' Attitude Survey (EMAS; cf. Appendix A) to examine the members' attitudes towards Brian Balmages' *The Temple of the Murals*. The EMAS is a survey instrument designed by the researcher to measure ensemble members' attitudes towards the commissioning project on five-point Likert-type scales. The EMAS was vetted for reliability by a panel of three experts in the field of music education research and tested by Cronbach's alpha with outcomes equaling .82 for the pre-administration of the survey and .82 for the post administration of the survey.

The first section of the EMAS examined attitudes of the musicians towards new music. Questions on the survey instrument rated the ensemble members' responses to the following statements:

1. New music is enjoyable to perform.
2. I enjoy performing the premiere of a new piece.
3. New music is important to perform.
4. I enjoy meeting with the composer of a piece and interacting with him or her.
5. Understanding the composer's point of view helps me to understand his or her piece.
6. Anyone can compose music.
7. Participating in this project makes me aware of the role of the composer.

The goal of this first section of the EMAS was to measure the attitudes of the ensemble members towards the concept of new music and whether or not these attitudes had any bearing on the students' attitudes towards the commissioned work itself.

The second section of the EMAS dealt with the attitude of the ensemble members towards Brian Balmages and the commissioned piece, *The Temple of the Murals*. These items examined respondents' ratings of the following statements:

8. I enjoy playing this piece.
9. This piece is similar to other pieces I have played by Brian Balmages.
10. I understand the harmonic concepts in this piece.

11. I understand the form of this piece.

12. Meeting the composer helps me believe that I can compose music.

This second section of EMAS was intended to measure the ensemble members' attitude toward the specific commissioned work as well as specific musical concepts such as form and harmonic analysis.

The third section of the EMAS requested demographic information from the students, including gender, age, and primary performing medium. Two specific questions were geared toward either high school or college students. For college students, their status as a music major or non-major was requested. For high school-aged students, their response to the question "I am planning on playing my instrument in a college band" was recorded as a yes, no, or undecided.

The EMAS was given as a pre-survey to the participants as the opening of the clinic session on Friday, October 29, 2010. The EMAS pre-survey was given before rehearsal began on the first clinic day. This researcher assumed that the participants were familiar with their individual parts before arriving at the clinic. The participants were instructed to place an identifying marker on their sheet in order for this researcher to match pre-surveys and post-surveys. The identifying marker was not specific to their names and included their instrument section and an assigned number. The EMAS was given as a post-survey after the premiere performance of the work and the conclusion of the clinic on Saturday, October 30, 2010.

Qualitative Aspect

To further examine the reasoning behind these commissioning projects, this researcher also conducted a qualitative phase of the study. This qualitative phase consisted of a three-part

conceptual framework that addressed the issue from four corresponding viewpoints. This framework established the practice of commissioning music for the wind band from the role of both conductor and composer, examined the rationale behind the conception of such projects, and explored the viewpoint of the participants on the issue of student learning in such projects. This conceptualization draws on the culture and practices of wind band conductors and composers to establish a context for how and why they commission music for the wind band, and how their view of student learning in such projects may or may not influence the practice of commissioning new music.

To better understand the choices that wind band conductors and composers make in commissioning music, the qualitative approach employed (cf. Merriam, 2009) involved this researcher interviewing two wind band conductors who regularly commission music and two composers who regularly accept such commissions. The participants were selected based on purposive sampling, having had extensive experience sponsoring commissioning projects. The participants who were selected to participate in the study were all male and from various geographic locations in the country. Both composers selected for the study have had numerous commissions for wind band music from professional, college and university level, high school, and middle school wind bands. The two conductors selected for the study had each commissioned composers within the past five years to compose music for their ensembles, either as part of a commissioning consortium or as a lone commissioner. One conductor is a university-level wind band conductor, and the other is the conductor of a middle school band.

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner in which the researcher asked ten questions in the same order for each participant on three separate occasions, with the participants having the freedom to give open-ended answers to these questions. These questions

were based on the research questions of the study and developed using the conceptual framework described above.

The questions themselves were divided into three separate sections. The first section of questions examined the role of the composer/conductor in commissioning music for the wind band and the participants' view of the importance of wind band music and commissioned music in general. The second section of questions examined the rationale behind accepting a commissioning project and how central a role the commissioning ensemble takes in the formation of the commission. This line of questioning examined the mindset of both the conductor and composer in how these projects were conceived and shaped.

The third section of questions examined the role of student learning that these projects may or may not take. Questions directly related to student learning, including what concepts music educators who are engaging in these types of projects should be teaching in their curricula and the importance of student interaction with the composer were examined. A complete listing of the interview questions may be found in Appendix B.

The interviews lasted no more than sixty minutes and were conducted at a time selected by the participants. The interviews were held over a three-week period, during which the researcher conducted each interview with each participant three times and asked the same questions of each participant. During the course of the study, a selected wind band conductor participant withdrew from the study, citing time and commitment issues. The researcher withdrew the data already collected from this participant and replaced this participant with a new wind band conductor participant. This had the effect of lengthening the study. The interviews were recorded with a Sony ICD-PX820 Digital Voice Recorder and then transcribed by the

interviewer. Of the interviews, two were completed in person, while the rest were completed either by the telephone or via Skype. The data were transcribed from the interview recordings and were stored both electronically and in hard copy by the researcher.

Once the interviews were completed, the researcher began coding the data, using a table developed by the researcher in *Microsoft Word*. This enabled the researcher to compare answers provided by the three participants and begin to formulate the themes that were present in the interviews. The themes themselves were identified by examining the answers to the questions and developing a hierarchy of response rankings. The researcher then took these themes and studied them. An external reviewer was employed to check for transcription errors and the reliability of the data. The reviewer randomly checked both the manuscript and the data for the reliability of the data, and made no suggested changes to the transcripts of the interviews.

Lincoln and Guba (1982) have suggested that this external review of the collected data, which they term as an “educational audit,” provides the necessary reliability for a qualitative study. The entire eight-step process for an audit culminates with the review of procedures of the study and the comparison of raw data to final product by an independent reviewer (p. 17). While Lincoln and Guba have acknowledged that an educational audit does not provide ironclad proof of the study’s trustworthiness, they have claimed that audits “. . . do provide major assurance of the dependability and confirmability of such a study” (p. 20).

An important aspect of this educational audit is the concept of triangulation, which Lincoln and Guba (1982) as well as Merriam (2009) have suggested as the primary method of assuring data reliability. In triangulation, the researcher must find the same data in multiple sources in order to reach a reasonable conclusion that the data are present as interpreted. Indeed,

Lincoln and Guba made this point clearly, stating “. . . conclusions should be demonstrably triangulated by reference to multiple data sources (preferably collected and analyzed by multiple methods and representing multiple perspectives)” (p. 15). This researcher achieved triangulation in his study by finding data in the multiple data sources provided by the participants in the study. By finding themes in the qualitative aspect that were present in all four participants’ interviews, this researcher has found triangulation in the data as prescribed by Lincoln and Guba (1982).

The concept of prolonged engagement with the research subjects in a naturalistic study is one that Lincoln and Guba (1986) advocated to ensure the credibility of such a study. Prolonged engagement was supplied by the researcher in this study through repeated interaction with the conductors and composers who participated in the study. By conducting three separate interviews with each conductor and composer over the span of several weeks, this researcher matched the criteria suggested by Lincoln and Guba to provide trustworthiness of the study, a term which they suggest is parallel to rigor (1982, p. 18). By engaging in both an educational audit and in prolonged engagement, this researcher has attempted to meet the expectations of reliability and credibility for the qualitative aspect of the study.

Chapter 4

Results and Discussion of Survey Aspect of Study

Results

Data from the pre and post administration of the survey were tested via two-way chi-square analyses. Results indicated no statistically significant differences between the two sample groups for all but one of the statements on the Ensemble Members Attitude Survey (EMAS). For Statement 14, “This piece is similar to other pieces by Brian Balmages,” there was a statistically significant difference between pre and post administrations. Therefore, except for Statement 14 the null hypotheses dealing with pre and post differences were not rejected.

Next, hypotheses dealing with differences on the post administration of the survey were examined. Data from the post administration of the survey were tested via one-way chi-square analyses. Outcomes demonstrated that all statements on the EMAS achieved statistical significance ($p < .05$) except for Statement 4, “Popular music is more enjoyable to me than the music that we perform in band” and Statement 11, “Anyone can compose music.” For these two statements only, the null hypotheses were not rejected. For the other fifteen statements on the EMAS, the null hypotheses were rejected, suggesting a positive orientation in the attitudes of the participants on the statements measured by the EMAS. The complete one way chi-square statistical data for the post administration of the EMAS may be found in Table 1.

Composer Interaction with the Participants

The EMAS outcomes suggest that student learning in these types of projects might correspond with areas that both Sindberg (2005) and Norcross (1991) have prescribed. For example, Statements 9, 10, and 12 all deal with the participants attitudes toward a composer and his or her

Table 1. *Outcomes and Chi-Square Analyses for the Post Administration of the EMAS*

Statement	Categories					χ^2
	SD	D	N	A	SA	
Statement 1	New Music is Enjoyable					
Observed	0	1	4	19	17	24.07 ***
Statement 2	Enjoy Performing Premiere					
Observed	0	1	4	15	20	24.20 ***
Statement 3	New Music is Important					
Observed	0	1	8	15	17	15.48 **
Statement 4	Pop Music is More Enjoyable					
Observed	0	8	13	13	6	4.36 *
Statement 5	Understand What a Composer Does					
Observed	0	1	9	22	9	22.12 ***
Statement 6	New Music is Interesting					
Observed	0	1	6	22	12	23.87 ***
Statement 7	Understand What a Popular Songwriter Does					
Observed	0	4	15	20	2	21.92 ***
Statement 8	Composer is the Musical Equivalent of a Songwriter					
Observed	2	5	12	14	8	11.80 *
Statement 9	I Enjoy Meeting the Composer					
Observed	0	0	4	13	24	14.68 **

Table 1 (continued)

Statement	Categories					χ^2
	SD	D	N	A	SA	
Statement 10	Understanding the Composer's Point of View					
Observed	0	1	4	9	27	39.68 ***
Statement 11	Anyone Can Compose Music					
Observed	7	11	12	9	2	7.65 *
Statement 12	Personalization of the Composer					
Observed	0	0	6	14	21	8.24 *
Statement 13	I Enjoy Playing This Piece					
Observed	0	2	1	12	26	34.48 ***
Statement 14	Similar to Other Pieces by Balmages					
Observed	3	7	15	12	3	15.95 **
Statement 15	Understand Harmonic Concepts					
Observed	0	2	13	19	6	18.41 ***
Statement 16	Understand Formal Concepts					
Observed	1	0	13	17	9	15.09 **
Statement 17	Compose Own Music					
Observed	1	5	19	10	5	26.19 ***

* $p < .05$.** $p < .01$.*** $p < .001$.

interaction with the ensemble. For Statement 9, “I enjoy meeting the composer of a piece and interacting with him/her,” 1% (4) of the participants selected the “Neutral” category, 32 % (13) selected the “Agree” category, and 59% (24) selected the “Strongly Agree” category, indicating that meeting with the composer and interacting with him seemed to be an enjoyable experience.

Importantly, Statement 10, “Understanding the composer’s point of view helps me to understand his/her piece” demonstrated a similar trend, with no participants selecting “Strongly Agree,” only one participant selecting “Disagree”, 1% (4) of the participants selecting “Neutral”, 22% (9) selecting “Agree”, and 69 % (27) selecting “Strongly Agree.” These findings would seem to indicate that interaction with the composer was not only important to the participants, but vital to their understanding of the commissioned work.

Another illustration of the importance of composer interaction with participants is found in Statement 12, “Participating in this project helps me to see the composer as a real person.” On this statement, 14% (6) of the participants selected “Neutral,” 34 % (14) selected “Agree,” and 51% (21) selected “Strongly Agree.” No participants disagreed. This finding helps solidify the argument made by Norcross (1991) and Sindberg (2005) that many students do not see the composer as a living person, but rather as a nameless, faceless person who creates music in a vacuum. Commissioning projects might help students to see the composer as a realized individual. Clearly, the composer became more real to the participants through their participation in this project.

Attitudes toward “The Temple of the Murals”

Statements 13, 15, and 16 all dealt with the participants’ attitudes toward *The Temple of the Murals*. For Statement 13, “I enjoy playing this piece,” a great majority of participants

selected the “Agree” and “Strongly Agree” categories, with 29% (12) selecting “Agree” and 63% (26) selecting “Strongly Agree.” Two (0.05%) selected the “Disagree” category while 0.02% (1) selected the “Neutral” category. While it seems intuitive that participants would gain a certain enjoyment from performing the work at its premiere after working with the composer, not all pieces are necessarily liked by students after they have been learned or performed. Their attitude towards the piece could even be negatively affected by interacting with its composer. The trend toward agreeing with Statement 13 suggests that participants received a positive musical experience from the performance of the work, and that they interacted positively with the composer. By extension, such positive experiences can form a positive connection with the music. This type of positive experience may help to keep students interested in band and to seek new musical experiences, which is one of the benefits of commissioning projects touted by Sindberg (2005). She asserted that in addition to generating positive musical experiences, participation in commissioning projects helps to develop specific musical concepts.

Attitudes toward Specific Musical Concepts

Statement 15, “I understand the harmonic concepts found in this piece,” examined participants’ attitudes towards the harmonic concepts found in *The Temple of the Murals*. Only two participants (0.05%) selected the “Disagree” category, while 32% (13) selected “Neutral,” 46% (19) “Agree,” and 14% (6) “Strongly Agree,” suggesting that working directly with the composer helped participants to understand the harmonic concepts found in the work. Statement 16, “I understand the form of this piece,” reflects a similar trend, with only one participant (0.02%) selecting “Strongly Disagree,” while 31% (13) selected “Neutral,” 41% (17) “Agree,” and 22% (9) “Strongly Agree.” Outcomes would seem to indicate that working with the composer of the work also had a positive influence on the participants’ understanding of

harmonic and formal concepts. Outcomes in these two statements helps to solidify the connection between commissioning projects and student learning of specific musical concepts, as Everett (1976) and Sindberg (2005) have both advocated.

Attitudes toward New Music in General

In addition to assessing the participants' attitudes toward specific musical concepts such as form and harmony, the EMAS assessed the participants' attitudes towards new music in general. Statements 1, 2, 3, and 6 dealt with the participants' attitudes towards new music as they performed it in a wind band setting. For Statement 1, "New music is enjoyable to perform" only one participant selected the "Disagree" category, while 1% (4) selected "Neutral," 46% (19) selected "Agree," and 41% (17) selected "Strongly Agree." For Statement 2, "I enjoy performing the premiere of a new piece," only one participant selected "Disagree," while 1% (4) selected "Neutral," 37% (15) "Agree," and 49% (20) "Strongly Agree." A similar result is found with Statement 3, "New music is important to perform," with one participant (0.02%) selecting "Disagree," 20% (8) "Neutral," 37% (15) "Agree," and 41% (17) selecting "Strongly Agree." Lastly, for Statement 6 "New Music is interesting to me," only one participant selected "Disagree," while 14% (6) selected "Neutral," 53% (22) "Agree," and 29% (12) "Strongly Agree." Findings for these three statements suggest that there was positive influence on the participants' attitudes towards new music, a concept also asserted by Norcross (1991) and Costes (2005). The participants seemed to gain satisfaction out of performing *The Temple of the Murals* at its premiere. During clinic sessions, the composer staunchly advocated for new music.

Attitudes toward the Composer

The concept of who a composer is and what he or she does was seemingly influenced by this project. The composer, Brian Balmages, shared a great deal of material during the clinic sessions about his creative process and the genesis of the commissioned work. This seemed to have an impact on the success of the commissioning project. For Statement 5, “I understand what a composer does,” one participant (0.02%) selected “Disagree,” while 22% (9) selected “Neutral,” 54% (22) “Agree,” and 22% (9) “Strongly Agree.” Findings suggest that the majority of the participants agreed with the statement. For Statement 7, “I understand what a popular songwriter does,” four (1%) of participants selected “Disagree,” 37% (15) “Neutral,” 49% (20) “Agree,” and 4% (2) “Strongly Agree.” Outcomes for Statement 7 trended more than usual toward neutral, as 19 participants (46%) selected either “Disagree” or “Neutral.” When viewed in tandem with Statement 8, “A composer is the musical equivalent of a songwriter,” in which two participants (0.02%) selected the “Strongly Disagree” category, 12% (5) “Disagree,” 29% (12) “Neutral,” 34% (14) “Agree,” and 20% (8) “Strongly Agree,” it seems that participants found at least some difference between a composer of band music and a popular music songwriter. While the majority of participants selected “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” for Statement 8, 12 also selected the “Neutral” category, suggesting that some participants perhaps were unsure about a popular songwriter being the musical equivalent of a composer. They might have felt that the two types of composers had different skill sets. Perhaps participants still did not have a complete picture of what the skill sets of a composer may be, at least not enough to make a clear statement to them in terms of the results of this study.

Some scholars (Norcross, 1991; Sindberg, 2005) have asserted that through the course of participating in a commissioning project, some students may identify with the composer and

become inspired to try their hand at composition. Statement 17 “Meeting the composer helps me believe that I can compose music” examines this idea. For this statement, only one of the participants (0.02%) selected “Strongly Disagree,” 12% (5) “Disagree,” 46% (19) “Neutral,” 24% (10) “Agree,” and 12% (5) “Strongly Agree.” These findings suggest that at least some participants believed that they could compose their own music after interacting with the composer, which corresponds with the findings of Norcross (1991) and Sindberg (2005). The definition of the composer’s role through the rehearsal and promotion of his own music may help some students identify with the creative process and inspire them to try composition. While the majority of participants still seemed to view composition as something foreign, the personalization of the composer during the commissioning project might have helped to demystify the process of composition, and it may have helped some participants to realize that they themselves could compose music if so inclined.

Similarity of Commissioned Work to Others by Brian Balmages

One interesting outcome centers on the attitude of the participants towards the similarity of *The Temple of the Murals* to other works by Brian Balmages. The similarity in style, difficulty, and compositional originality between pieces by the same composer is a charge often leveled at so-called “educational music” by critics of the genre (Rocco, 1991; Battisti, 2002). These critics claim that much of music written for wind band is vastly similar, so much so that it is almost disposable. For Statement 14, “This piece is similar to others that I have played by Brian Balmages,” 0.07% (3) of participants selected “Strongly Disagree,” while 17% (7) selected “Disagree,” 37% (15) selected “Neutral,” 29% (12) selected “Agree,” and .07% (3) selected “Strongly Agree.” The plurality selected the “Neutral” category, with the other selections ranging in an almost bell-like curve. This seeming disparity suggests that about one-third of the

participants did not find *The Temple of the Murals* similar to other works by Brian Balmages, even though the work was premiered on a concert exclusively of the composer's music.

Musical Preferences of Participants

Statement 4 "Popular music is more enjoyable to me than the music that we play in band" was one of two statements that did not result in statistically significant differences on the post administration of the survey. A total of 20% (8) of participants selected "Disagree," while 32% (13) selected "Neutral," 32% (13) selected "Agree," and 15% (6) selected "Strongly Agree." Participants seemed ambivalent in their attitudes, with an almost even split between those who selected responses on the negative side of the scale and those who selected responses on the positive side of the scale. Participants seemed not to prefer the music that they perform in their school wind bands over popular music, and vice versa. Statement 4 was included to assess the participants' "taste for quality" (Battisti, 2002), which some e.g., (Rocco, 1991) have asserted is an important element of developing the musical sophistication required to have learning from participation in a commissioning project. The concept of musical sophistication is discussed at greater length in Chapter 5.

The other statement that did not achieve statistical significance during the post administration of the survey was Statement 11, "Anyone can compose music." A total of 17% (7) of the participants selected "Strongly Disagree," 27% (11) "Disagree," 29% (12) "Neutral," 22% (9) "Agree," and only two (0.05%) "Strongly Agree." Participants seemed mixed on this statement as well. While 44% of the participants selected either the "Strongly Disagree" or "Disagree" categories, the largest single category selected was "Neutral." This ambivalence seems to contradict some authors' (Everett, 1976; Norcross, 1991; Sindberg, 2005) assertions

that students gain an affinity for composition and the skill-sets of a composer through participation in a commissioning project. These participants may have never had the opportunity to work with a composer before. Therefore, demystification of the composition process may need to take place over several commissioning projects. A rival explanation may be that the participants do not have enough experience with being musically creative, and the possibility that they might be able to compose had never occurred to them. Regardless, when coupled with the results from Statement 17, “Meeting the composer helps me believe that I can compose music,” some participants seemed to gain an affinity for composition. Participating in the project may have fostered participants’ own creativity.

Statement 14 “This piece is similar to other pieces I have played by Brian Balmages” was the only one that demonstrated a statistically significant difference between the pre and post administration of the survey. Of particular interest is the net gain of three participants to the “Strongly Disagree” category on the posttest. This may indicate that these students found that *The Temple of the Murals* was not similar to other works by Brian Balmages after working with the composer, or it may indicate that these students were confused by the statement. Regardless, this outcome might indicate that participants found that *The Temple of the Murals* was more similar to other works by Brian Balmages at the beginning than at the end of the commissioning project.

Demographics of Participants

In addition to measuring the attitudes of ensemble members towards new music and *The Temple of the Murals*, the Ensemble Members Attitude Survey (EMAS) requested demographic information from participants in order to allow a more complete picture of who the participants

were and how they may or may not differ in their responses. The EMAS recorded the gender of the participants, their age as either high school or college students, their primary performing medium, and, finally, two separate queries dependent upon the participant's answer to the age question. College students were asked if they were music or non-music majors at the time of the survey, and high school students were asked if they were planning to continue their study of an instrument in college.

Due to a relatively small sample size ($N=41$), a bootstrapping procedure was employed involving a total of 1,000 theoretical samples of this size generated by the statistical program used (SPSS). Results indicated no statistically significant differences for any of the demographic categories supplied by the EMAS with the exception of Statement 5, "I understand what a composer does." Complete outcomes for the two-way chi-square analyses of the demographics may be found in Tables 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7.

Statement 5 was statistically significant across the demographic categories of choice of college major, age of the participants, and high school students' choice of continuing instrumental study in college. Nothing inherent in the clinic sessions would explain the differences across the demographic groups on this one statement. The concept of who a composer is and what he or she may do is one that resonated with some participants strongly and, in particular, with the high school-aged participants who indicated that they planned to continue the study of their instruments in college.

The sole unifying factor on this statement could be the composer himself. One explanation may be found in the manner in which Brian Balmages interacted with the participants during the clinic and rehearsal sessions. Balmages was an extremely dynamic figure,

intent on rehearsing the music as well as providing the participants with the “backstory” of how he composed *The Temple of the Murals*. In addition to giving insight about his compositional process and how he put the piece together, he spent a great deal of time discussing creativity in general and describing his creative process. Sindberg (2005) described this type of interaction as being influential on forming the participant’s notion of who a composer is and what he or she does. The interaction between Balmages and the participants may be one of the determining factors concerning whether or not participants learned anything as a result the commissioning project. A composer who can collaborate with an ensemble and its students is a strong factor for some wind band conductors in their choice of whom to commission, a subject discussed in further detail in later chapters.

Age Demographic

That there were no differences between the way that different genders or different instrumental families view the statements on the Ensemble Members Attitude Survey is logical. However, that there were no differences between the way that college-aged participants and their high-school aged counterparts viewed the statements was unexpected. This seeming lack of difference between these two age groups of participants is discussed in later chapters, in which it is asserted that high school-aged students would not have the sophistication to understand musical concepts such as form and harmony unless taught to have this sophistication by their band directors.

The participants for this study were mainly from rural Southwest Kansas, which has little access to private instrument instruction or other resources more available to students who live in a metropolitan area. In addition to a lack of resources, one of the assumptions made by this

researcher was that the participants would have no prior knowledge of formal or harmonic concepts found in the work, or have a concept of composition or the compositional process prior to the clinic sessions. It seems unlikely that the music educators involved in this honor band would have taken time to teach this specific group of students the harmonic and formal concepts necessary prior to the clinic sessions to achieve the outcomes. The fact that there is no difference between the two age demographic groups on these statements questions the assertion that high school students lack the necessary musical sophistication to gain something by participation in commissioning projects.

Statement 4, “Popular music is more enjoyable to me than the music that we perform in band,” is another example of the issue of musical sophistication. Again, the outcomes indicate that there is no difference between the attitudes of high school-aged participants and their college-aged counterparts. The question of whether the participants enjoy popular music more than the music that they perform in band might shed some light on the preferences of the participants towards genres of music, indicating their taste for “the gourmet in music” (Wind Band Conductor One, cf. Chapter 5) as asserted in later chapters. Some wind band conductors (Rocco, 1991; Battisti, 2002) that have thought high school-aged students may lack the musical sophistication for the “gourmet” (Wind Band Conductor One, cf. Chapter 5) in music, and would therefore prefer popular music to repertoire performed in their school wind bands, and certainly more so than their college-aged counterparts. Outcomes from this study suggest otherwise, as there was no difference between the two demographic groups on this statement.

Choice of College Major Demographic

Another demographic in which an absence of difference is counterintuitive is choice of college major. The absence of difference between the selections of music majors and non-music majors on the EMAS might speak to the issue of musical sophistication. While one would expect music major participants to be more aware of form, harmonic concepts, and who a composer is and what his or her skill sets may be, seemed not to be the case. Statement 10, “Understanding the composer’s point of view helps me to understand his/her piece,” was especially intriguing, as the majority of both college music majors and non-majors were on the “Agree” side of the EMAS. This suggests that while music majors may have an idea of the composer and his or her point of view, non-music majors also may have a firm positive idea of the point of view of the composer and as good an understanding of the work.

The lack of difference between college majors is unexpected as well in Statement 17, “Meeting the composer helps me believe that I can compose music.” This statement speaks to the transferability of the composer’s skill sets that both Norcross (1991) and Sindberg (2005) suggested is present in these types of projects. Both music majors and non-music majors agreed with the statement, indicating that the non-music major participants felt as if they could compose music after interacting with the composer to the same extent as the music majors. Perhaps the non-music major participants believed they were more creative after composer interaction, or perhaps they felt as if the process of composition had been de-mystified to the point that they were able to try composition on their own. Regardless, that non-music majors agreed with the statement as much as their music major counterparts also speaks against the notion that one must be musically sophisticated in order to gain something from participation in a commissioning project.

High School Participants' Plans to Continue Study of Their Instrument

Another demographic demonstrating no differences was the high school-aged participants' choice of whether or not they were planning to continue the study of their instrument in college. One would expect those students who were planning to continue playing their instrument in a college band to agree with some of the statements on the EMAS more than their undecided or non-participatory counterparts.

Statement 11, "Anyone can compose music" also illustrates the question of sophistication. The expectation that the high school participants who have already decided to continue playing their instrument in college would agree more with the statement than their counterparts makes sense intuitively. However, outcomes demonstrated no difference between these three divisions of high school-aged participants, perhaps indicating that participants, regardless of their affinity for performance on their instrument in a college wind band, have roughly similar views when it comes to the concept that anyone could compose music. Interaction with the composer may have influenced the participants' attitudes, or perhaps these participants are still baffled by the process of composition enough to doubt whether any person could create music on his or her own.

Another statement displaying no difference in the high school demographic category is Statement 13, "I enjoy playing this piece." The expectation that affinity for the commissioned work would be strongest among those participants who have indicated that they plan to continue their music education by participating in a college wind band is not supported by the outcomes. The outcome of no differences may be attributed to the composer and his skill in presenting the piece during the rehearsal/clinic sessions. The dynamicism of the composer presenting his piece

and connecting with the participants during this process cannot be overstated, as participants seemed to resonate with both the composer and the piece during the clinic sessions. The piece itself received an outstanding performance at its premiere, and the way that responses to Statement 13 cut across all demographics gives credence to assertions by Sindberg (2005) and others that composer interaction during these projects is essential for student learning.

Demographics Summary

Overall, findings suggest that participants, regardless of their performance medium, age, and choice of college major, gained something through the process of interacting with the composer during the course of this study. While there were some interesting sub-currents in the data revolving around pre-conceived notions of who may or may not receive the benefits of participating in a commissioning project, it seems that all participants took something away from the experience, and that students do not have to be college music majors to benefit from working with a composer.

Discussion

The data collected from the post administration of the survey suggests that positive student attitudes towards the survey statements are present and that the orientation is in line with what Sindberg (2005) observed about her own students and what they were learning by participating in the Central Schools Commissioning Projects. Meeting the composer, understanding who the composer is and what he or she does, and then transferring that knowledge into personal creative music making are all supported as positive outcomes as a result of participation in this commissioning project. Post administration outcomes on Statements 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 17 all indicate that what Sindberg (2005) suggests as positive student attitudes in

these types of projects is actually taking place, at least in this project. Of particular interest is Statement 12, “Participating in this project helps me to see the composer as a real person.” Through interacting with the composer in this commissioning project, students began to make the abstractions of who a composer is and what he or she does perhaps much more concrete. Findings from this study help corroborate what Sindberg (2005) and Norcross (1991) had claimed in their studies.

Specific Musical Concepts

Findings indicated that there are specific musical concepts taught by working with a composer, and that there may be even more specific types of conceptual learning that could be targeted by music educators intent on making curricular goals an essential part of a commissioning project. For example, Statements 15 and 16 targeted two specific musical concepts about *The Temple of the Murals*, the harmonic concepts found in the piece and the overall form of the work. Statistically significant outcomes on the post administration suggest that participants had a greater understanding of both the form and the harmonic concepts present in the piece after working with the composer. Perhaps it was the interaction with the composer that led to this greater understanding. This type of learning might be transferred to other specific musical concepts, especially if the coordinator the project clearly focused on curricular goals as well as the product-oriented goal of premiering the new work with his or her band.

The outcomes are equally clear with the statements involving the concept of new music and how it relates to performers in the band. Statements 1, 2, and 3 all assessed the attitudes of the participants toward new music. The majority of the participants’ responses were on the positive side. Costes (2005) asserted that music educators could help promote new music with

their students by providing opportunities for composer-student interaction, and she suggested that participation in a commissioning project would foster awareness and appreciation for new music. Outcomes support her statements about students and new music and her view that a commissioning project is an excellent activity for the promotion of new music as a curricular goal.

The Personalization of the Composer

Nicholls (1980), Norcross (1991), and Sindberg (2005) have suggested that students participating in commissioning projects not only find that the composers that they work with become more real to them during the process, but that these same students learn about the composer and his or her skill set. This assertion was the basis of Statements 5, 8, 10, and 11, all of which all dealt with the concept of who the composer is and what he or she may do as a composer. All of these statements demonstrated mostly positive responses. Participants expressed that they gained some knowledge of who a composer is and what he or she does. Of particular interest is Statement 17, “Meeting the composer helps me believe that I can compose music,” which speaks to the transferability of the skill of composing. Some participants indicated a greater understanding of the composer and what his or her skill sets could be, and were able to envision themselves composing their own music, thus substantiating Norcross (1991) and Sindberg (2005).

Performance of Commissioned Work

Lastly, it seems clear that at the very least the participants gained knowledge of and appreciation for *The Temple of the Murals* by participating in the project and having the opportunity to work with its composer. Statement 13, “I enjoy playing this piece,” reflected

positive attitude towards the piece after interaction with Brian Balmages. This researcher noted several times during rehearsals and the performance the excitement level of the participants and how their outlook changed from the beginning of the clinic to the performance. Excitement, pride, and enjoyment were strongly evident among the participants. Participating gave these students an experience uncommon in their band performance careers. Indeed, this likely will be the only time that some of these students will have the opportunity to work and interact with a renowned composer.

Chapter 5

Results and Discussion of the Qualitative Aspect of the Study

Introduction

The qualitative aspect of this study involved interviewing two wind band conductors and two composers who have written extensively for the medium. These participants were chosen through purposive sampling and have had a great deal of experience with commissioning projects, either as composers or commissioning parties. The participants were interviewed in a semi-structured format in which they were asked the same questions for each interview, but allowed to expand on their opinions about the questions as well. Each participant was interviewed on three different occasions. The interviews were transcribed by the researcher, who then submitted the transcripts for an external audit of the data found in the interviews. The external auditor found no discrepancies between the transcriptions and the recorded interviews. The auditor also examined the data as it was reported in the Chapter 5 for inconsistencies with the interview transcripts and reported no errors.

Data Coding

Once the interviews were transcribed and the audit completed, the researcher then began the coding of data in order to find the themes present. Merriam (2009) suggests that data coding begins as the researcher transcribes the interviews and for this reason advises that researchers transcribe their own interviews as opposed to hiring someone else to complete this task. Parallel to this personal transcription of interviews, she also suggests that researchers keep track of thought-processes and hunches as the data are prepared for analysis (p. 175). This inventory of the data set is an essential part of what Lincoln and Guba (1982) term as an “educational audit”

for naturalistic inquiry. By creating a “paper trail” of thoughts, hunches, and notes about the data set coupled with the transcription of interviews, the researcher creates documentation for an auditor to examine how the data was analyzed.

This researcher transcribed the interviews of the participants himself, and kept a log of his thoughts and hunches on the interview questions that he used to conduct each interview. As these data evolved, this researcher built a table in *Microsoft Word* in which he catalogued the answers that each participant gave to each question, in order to allow easy analysis and comparison. Looking for recurring data in the transcribed interviews, this researcher then built a hierarchy of thoughts and ideas that he found present in all of the interviews. It was from this hierarchy that he began to make sense of the data, which Merriam (2009) described as “. . . determining how best to arrange the material into a narrative account of the findings” (p.193). Building upon these “narrative themes” allowed this researcher to examine themes that emerged from the data.

Results

First Theme

The first of these themes is that both wind band conductors and composers have a great interest in connecting with students during these projects. The wind band conductors want their students to connect with the composers that they have commissioned in order for their students to gain musical knowledge from the experience. In addition, composers are interested in connecting with students not only to gain insight on how to compose music for the wind band, but also to gain a sense of collaboration with a commissioning group. Wind Band Conductor Two made this point when he asserted that student interaction and connection with a composer is

an essential element of a commissioning project, not only to provide the students with a sense that a composer is a real, breathing person, but also to enhance the curricular goals that he has for the ensemble. Wind Band Conductor One agreed with this point, but does not share the same curricular goal aspect as his colleague. His main assertion was that the students gain a connection with the composer through interaction with him or her on the podium, explaining the thought process behind the genesis of the work.

Interestingly, both composers agreed with the wind band conductors that seeking a connection with students is a vital aspect of a commissioning project, albeit from a different focus. While they both concurred that students learn musical concepts through commissioning projects, both composers had a more philosophical paradigm that they espoused on the subject. Composer One stated it best saying, “They . . . learn probably one of the most valuable lessons of all, and that’s music is not just a piece of paper with notes on it, it’s a person.” While this may seem like an intuitive statement to most music educators, it is important to assert that what sometimes seems obvious to us as trained professionals is not always as self-evident to our students. Composer One made the point that these types of projects can provide a real and concrete pedagogical method of having students learn the seemingly basic concept that music is not just notes on a page. Composer Two, while agreeing with his colleague, spoke about the wonderful and interesting interactions that a composer can have with students during a commissioning project. During his third interview, Composer Two spoke of an eighth-grade band he had worked with just that morning on the piece that the group had commissioned from him. He cited the ownership and excitement that the group had in preparing the work for its premiere, and what it was like for them to “get their hands dirty” in the realization of the premiere. He states,

And even at the eighth grade level I saw glimmers of understanding in their eyes, you know? That . . . they were having a different kind of musical experience than uh, if they were just doing a . . . piece you know, store-bought off the shelf and I wasn't involved with it and, and they didn't know that they were being the, the special people that were making it come alive.

It is precisely this type of connective experience with an ensemble that all four participants highlighted as being one of the best reasons to commission music for the wind band, and one of the greatest rationales for the practice. Over the course of all twelve interviews, this point was made again and again by the participants.

Necessity of Composer Interaction

The natural sub-current in this theme is the notion of student learning that takes place while the composer is connecting with the students during the commissioning project. Logically, the wind band conductors emphasized this point more so than their composer colleagues, but both composers were adamant about the notion that student learning is an important aspect of these types of projects. Composer One was particularly vehement on the subject, stating that one of the main concepts addressed in these types of projects is the notion of music as a tool for communication, and especially the communication of emotions. He asserted that there is no better way for students to learn about the communicative power of music than having the composer right there, describing to the students what emotions went into the genesis of a piece, and then charging the students with the responsibility of conveying those emotions to an audience. Composer Two echoed these sentiments, stating that commissioning music can help students get more invested emotionally in a piece. His claim is that when students learn the

concept of emotional investment with a piece of music, they can then transfer that concept to other pieces of music not specifically written for them. Composer Two believes that working with a composer during these projects is one of the ways that music educators can break down the natural barriers that students have that keep them from emotionally investing in their own performances.

Wind Band Conductor One reiterated this statement, but cautioned that any type of student learning is largely dependent upon the amount of musical sophistication that the usual conductor of the group has already taught the ensemble. He asserted that while student learning inside of a commissioning project should work at any age level, the ensembles that will gain the most from the experience are ones that are already well-versed in basic and more advanced musical concepts. Wind Band Conductor Two agreed to a point on this issue, stating that it is the conductor's job to adequately prepare the students for interaction with the composer, which is a curricular goal that he strongly maintains. His goals for the ensemble include strong curricular themes such as historical and formal units, as well as a unit on student composition. He wants to involve his students as much as possible in the preparation of the commissioned work, having the students research the composer that they have engaged as well as looking at earlier pieces that the composer has written and even suggesting concepts for the eventual commissioned work. It is this type of active engagement with the composer and preparation for musical learning that Wind Band Conductor Two suggested is at the core of his success with commissioning projects. He even went so far as to have his students perform their own individual composition projects for the composer when he or she is was in residence with the ensemble before the premiere of the commissioned work, something that seems to be unique to this set of participants. Having the composer in residence is an essential part of the equation to Wind Band Conductor Two, who

stated that having the composer there and interacting with the students is necessary part of making music a living art form.

Curiously, there is a great deal of dissent among the participants on the necessity of having the composer interact with the students directly, especially since a main theme that emerged from the data was having the students connect with the composer in some fashion. While all four participants agreed that having the composer present with the students can be beneficial to the learning process, the disagreement occurred on whether or not the live interaction is essential to student learning. Only Wind Band Conductor Two insisted that the composer be available to come and work with the students in some fashion, which is intuitive considering his strong tie to curricular goals within these projects. Both Composers and Wind Band Conductor One lauded the concept of direct composer interaction with the students, but all three were hesitant to assert that composer interaction was essential. Cost and distance were the most cited factors for not having the composer directly interact with the students by both Composers and Wind Band Conductor One, which gave this researcher the impression that all three were trying to assuage the guilt felt by some wind band conductors who could not afford to bring the composer out to have a residency with their ensemble. Logistical issues aside, sometimes the composer of a work is just not available to work directly with the students in a commissioning project, which does not have to be the defining factor in these types of projects. Composer Two put it best with his statement,

We certainly don't have that option available to us with all the composers who have passed away, and we still do their music and we have great experiences with them.

Gustav Holst comes alive in a band room under the baton of a knowledgeable conductor, you know?

However, all four participants agree that having the commissioned composer come in and work with the group is the first, best practice, and if practical, should be the goal of every commissioning group. Fortunately, with the advent of internet-based video technology such as Skype, the ability of composers to work directly with students no matter how far removed they are geographically from the commissioning group is only improving. Perhaps within the next five to ten years the notion of composers not being able to work with students directly due to geographical or other logistical reasons will become a moot issue.

Specific Musical Learning

Other than the teaching of the concept of music as a living art form, there was little consensus among the participants about the specific types of musical learning that take place inside of these commissioning projects. As previously stated, the two participating composers tended to list philosophical or “big picture” ideas about the concepts that were learned inside of a commissioning project, while the two participating wind band conductors tended more towards a pragmatic idea of the concepts learned by students inside of a commissioning project. Composers One and Two both listed the concept of having the abstract idea of who a composer is and what he or she does becoming more concrete as a result of participation inside one of these projects. Interestingly, both Composers One and Two both cited the amount of ownership that an ensemble obtains as a result of participating inside one of these projects as a strong musical/philosophical concept as well. The notion of a commissioning project as being one of “team-building” is not a new one (Norcross, 1991), but Composer One asserted that this can transfer into more musical performances by the ensemble on other works as well.

. . . and I think that ultimately you're boiling down to ownership of the piece, people committing more to the music, people feeling like they have more in stake in the music, and if they do, the performances tend to be more inspired.

His statement illustrates this point succinctly. Composer Two agreed with his colleague, but took it even a bit further, suggesting that students who are participating inside of a commissioning project are helping to “birth” a new piece of art music. He spoke of teaching the concept of how music is actually a process of pulling together the collective minds and souls of the composer, musicians, and audience to the eighth-grade band he was working with on the morning of his third interview, and how having the “composer on the box” in front of them was a contributing factor in making this abstract concept much more concrete to these students.

Curricular Goals versus Performance Goals

The two wind band conductors, while agreeing with their composer colleagues on philosophical concepts that are taught by participation in commissioning projects, had separate ideas about the more pragmatic concepts taught. For example, Wind Band Conductor Two was much more in tune with the curricular goals of his program, and was very specific about the types of student learning that he was planning to find inside of these projects once they were completed. In addition to specific skill outcomes that the commissioned works provided, he expected to find knowledge-based outcomes as well as what he termed “affective” outcomes. The skill outcomes he expected to find would be fairly familiar to any practicing music educator, ranging from scale and etude-based technical skills to proper performance of key and metric changes. The historical and affective outcomes that Wind Band Conductor Two expected to find are based upon general guidelines suggested by Comprehensive Musicianship Programs

(Garofalo, 1983). The students in Wind Band Conductor Two's ensemble learned about the commissioned composer by studying previous works by the composer as well as learning about the historical impact of the composer on the genre of wind band music. The historical skills outcome that Wind Band Conductor Two expected to find within the unit provided the students with an historical and contextual framework for the music that they are about to study, as well as reinforced the concept that a composer is a living, breathing person who creates music today, not in some historical antiquity. The affective element of these curricular goals, what might be termed the shaping of attitudes and habits (Garofalo, 1983, p. 2) is a main curricular goal of these types of commissioning projects for Wind Band Conductor Two. He illustrated this point with his statement, "I try to come up with an affect that's going to tie into the piece; that's going to be deep and rich enough for me to be able to do many strategies underneath it." His insistence on trying to develop Higher Order Thinking Skills for his students shows the depth of thinking that goes behind his commissioning projects, and reinforces the point that student learning does take place inside of these projects and should be a curricular concentration. Wind Band Conductor Two's focus on process-based music education instead of performance-based music education is where he differs from the other participants in the study, and this focus on curricular goals was a consistent theme in all three interviews that took place with the participant.

Contrasted with Wind Band Conductor Two's emphasis on curricular goals, Wind Band Conductor One was seemingly uninterested in the topic. However, during the interviews he did make several specific points about student learning inside of these commissioning projects. His main assertion about student learning during these projects was that he wanted the composer to relate to the students about the "nuts and bolts" of technical aspects of the piece. As a conductor, he is prepared to relate his own analysis of the work, but finds that the composer does a much

better job of teaching the specific technical considerations of the work. For example, during Wind Band Conductor One's third and final interview, he recounted a story about composer Gunther Schuller. Schuller happened to be on campus one week while Wind Band Conductor One was rehearsing a piece by Schuller in which the affect of the work was escaping the ensemble, and he invited the composer to come in and work with the group. After one rehearsal with Schuller explaining the piece and how he had put it together, the ensemble was able to perform the work with a much higher degree of success, a success that Wind Band Conductor One attributed to Schuller's "explaining, selling, and teaching" of the work.

It is this "explaining, selling, and teaching" of a new work that Wind Band Conductor One believed was at the center of student learning. He asserted that students learn real-world applications of concepts inside of a commissioning project that they study in theory and methods classes. By having the composer of a commissioned work interact with the ensemble and model creative concepts as well as theoretical ones, the ensemble learns practical applications of these concepts. A primary example of this can be found during Wind Band Conductor One's second interview. His response to the question of whether or not students learn more about the craft of music by participating in a commissioning project was frank when he stated, "They sure as hell don't learn about it in a theory class." He went on to explain that it was the interaction with the composer that helped students to learn about music and how it is made, and how the composer is responsible for creating musical ideas and putting them down on paper. He believed that while the conductor of an ensemble is accountable for the "explaining, selling, and teaching" of a piece of music, the act of having a composer there helps to reinforce the idea of the piece and how it works. According to Wind Band Conductor One, the composer can teach basic fundamentals about music and musicianship by explaining the origin of melodic material for the work. The

composer can relate how he or she created the melodies, the counter-melodies, the bass line; varied aspects of the germination of that piece of music that the regular conductor of the ensemble could not duplicate. The whole learning process of how a piece of art is created and disseminated is a very strong concept that is taught by student participation in these types of projects.

Wind Band Conductor One also made a strong point about the composer of the commissioned work learning from the students who are participating in the project. He related that often composers will view their pieces as “works in progress” and will make changes to the work during rehearsals before the premiere. Ironically, neither of the composers interviewed as participants for this study mentioned the editing of works during rehearsal, but Wind Band Conductor One’s assertion is that this has been a common practice in his experience with these types of projects. He believes that the commissioning process is as much a learning experience for the composers as it is for the students. It was his view that composers will often change sections of their pieces after working with the ensemble, and use the experience of rehearsing the piece to hone their craft.

Both conductor participants in the study have much different viewpoints about the type and degree of student learning that takes place inside of a commissioning project, but they both agreed that there is student learning, and that these types of projects help to make several concepts more clear for the students who participate in commissioning projects.

Second Theme

A second theme that emerged from the data is the notion that the repertoire of the wind band is analogous to the dietary needs of human beings. This concept was mentioned in every

interview that was conducted by the researcher, and always in conjunction with the fact that the participants believed that commissioning projects helped to improve the musical diet of the students who were involved with these types of projects. Composer One described the average musical diet of middle school and high school age musicians in his first interview. He states

Because kids are getting burned out because they're getting too much sugar, and not enough meat and potatoes, you know? Not enough protein. There's a lot of fun composers out there, that write music that you know, are gonna make your band sound great, and make them sound great fast, and people feed on that.

This reference to repertoire as protein versus sugar appears in all three interviews with Composer One. For example, in his second interview Composer One equated poor repertoire as the musical equivalent of junk food, and places the responsibility of providing an adequate musical diet for student musicians squarely on the shoulders of the director of the ensemble. Describing a seemingly commonly held belief by some directors that programming what Composer One called "junk music" will placate student demands for interesting music, Composer One disagreed with this philosophy and drew an analogy with this practice to parents allowing their children to choose their own food for dinner, citing that many children would pick "junk food" such as candy and pudding instead of more healthy choices. In Composer One's opinion, directors would be best serving their students by providing what he would call a "more balanced" musical diet that included commissioned works as well as the best possible repertoire for the ensemble.

Developing a Taste for the Gourmet

Wind Band Conductor One agreed with the assessment of repertoire as musical diet, and claims that many high school directors are not doing enough to develop a taste for the "gourmet"

in their students. Using Francis McBeth's term as cited by (Rocco, 1991) for educational music that has no high artistic value, Wind Band Conductor One described many high school band programs as using "paper plate" music to feed the musical soul of their students, and therefore the majority of musicians that graduate from these "mediocre" programs have no taste for quality repertoire.

It's going to be difficult for them at first if they haven't had a steady diet of this and you must realize that most high school bands don't play the Holst *Suites in E-flat*, Holst *Suites in E-flat, F*; they don't play that literature, you know? That literature's not in their vocabulary.

His statement illustrated this point concisely. It was Wind Band Conductor One's assertion that this taste for quality musical diet can be cultivated and grown, but only if the director of the ensemble has solid musical concepts and skills in place for themselves, and can correctly relate them to his or her students.

While Wind Band Conductor One was the most vehement about this point in his interviews, the other three participants in the study echoed his sentiments to one degree or another. Wind Band Conductor Two agreed with his colleague, but was not as assertive with his denouncement of the programming practices of some wind band conductors. While describing the pressures that some middle and high school band directors are facing in the classroom today, he cited the fact that so many of his colleagues, as does he, feel the pressure to perform repertoire that may not be as of high quality as some other piece because they want their students to enjoy playing their instruments. He likened this concept to a trap in which many music educators find themselves. However, he was quick to point out his belief that quality repertoire can capture the

interest of students, and that his personal curricular philosophy is to provide a balanced diet of musical experiences that would include some popular selections, which he described as “Godiva Chocolates” in his first interview. Wind Band Conductor Two continued to return to this concept in his second and third interviews, drawing an analogy to repertoire not only nourishing the corporeal bodies of his students, but also their souls as well. During his final interview, Wind Band Conductor Two took this concept further along on the same path by describing composers as chefs in a fancy restaurant. Explaining the process of selecting one composer over another to commission for his ensemble, Wind Band Conductor 2 related choosing a composer by meeting him or her face to face, and having a series of conversations designed to see how well the composer might work with Wind Band Conductor Two’s ensemble. He went on to provide the analogy that choosing a composer is much like dining at a fancy restaurant; you get to meet the chef, who might even come and talk with the patrons and discuss how the food was prepared, and how the patrons might even duplicate the dishes at home. Meeting a composer is much like this process for Wind Band Conductor Two. He meets with the composer and discusses how they prepared the piece, and how they might work with his particular ensemble. It is this interaction with the composer that allows Wind Band Conductor Two to provide his students with a balanced diet of commissioned works that help to provide musical nourishment for their souls.

Composer Two agreed with all three of his colleagues on this theme, but took a different approach when describing the concept of repertoire as nourishment. Describing composers that he feels are published too frequently and seem to be simply re-publishing the same piece, Composer Two asserted that giving a steady diet of these composers to a group of students is a mistake that some music educators make when choosing repertoire for their ensembles.

I'm troubled by, without naming names here either, but there are some composers who are, seem to, you know, sneeze on a napkin and get it published, you know? Because they've got the name and the connection with the publisher and so on, and it's the same sneeze that they've sneezed the day before...having a steady diet of it is an odd educational choice if you've got a really strong group.

His statement was the prime example of his belief on this theme. Over the course of all twelve interviews, the theme of repertoire as musical diet appears several times and with all four participants. The subjects believed that commissioning works for the wind band help to supplement the musical nourishment of students, and in some cases may be the only form of musical protein that some students receive during their performing careers.

Third Theme

The third theme to emerge from the data is that all the participants believe students receive learning in non-musical concepts as well by participating in commissioning projects. For example, Wind Band Conductor Two placed a strong emphasis during his three interviews on his assertion that his students learn about creative thinking as a life skill by participation in commissioning projects. It was Wind Band Conductor Two's view that students in schools do not receive many opportunities to explore creativity and the creative process, and that the arts in general, and bands specifically, afford those opportunities to students. Talking about the nature of student creativity in the current public school climate, Wind Band Conductor Two expressed, "A lot of times in schools, they've been able, you know, they're given information and then they just need to give it back. There's not a lot of opportunity for innovation or creativity. And I think that's right up our alley." It was his viewpoint that participation in music through performance in

an ensemble should afford students an opportunity to express and cultivate their own creativity, which is a strong point of teaching in his curricula. He also emphasized his belief that the ability to think creatively is an essential life skill for students, no matter what course their lives take or what career path they will eventually follow.

The Creative Process as Taught by Commissioning Projects

This is a concept that Composer One agreed with, citing several times during his three interviews that the idea of inspiration, the creative impetus that drives the composer to create music, is something that every student should have some degree of exposure to during the course of his or her music education. Composer One believed that inspiration can be applied into whatever walk of life that students decide to follow, and that students can be introduced to inspiration directly through these types of projects. Composer One also agreed with Wind Band Conductor Two that music and the wind band specifically should take up the mantle of the cultivation of creativity. During his first interview, Composer One described the ubiquity of the school wind band, even at a time when funding for arts education is seemingly being decreased across the United States.

According to Composer One, the fact that most secondary schools in the United States have a wind band as a vehicle for student participation in music education gives the medium a primary role in the development of the artistic and creative sides of the students involved in the ensemble. It was Composer One's assertion that music can teach students creative problem solving skills as well as a passion for life. In this interview, he described a paradigm in which students learn creativity and passion through their involvement with their school wind band can

transfer those skills to other areas of their lives, and eventually any career path that they might choose.

Wind Band Conductor One agreed with his two colleagues about a commissioning project being able to effectively teach the concept of the creative process to students. However he cautioned that sometimes it is just as important that students learn that the creative process does have limitations and that sometimes those limitations must be worked through in order to achieve success in their current endeavor. During his first interview, Wind Band Conductor One described the creative process as analogous to planting a seed in the ground and waiting for that seed to germinate and grow. One would not expect to have a full-grown plant from that seed in a short amount of time, and similarly, it takes some composers a great deal of time to create a new piece of music. Students learn about the process of creation through interacting with the composer, and seeing that he or she does not necessarily wait for inspiration to strike and then begin the process of composition. Wind Band Conductor One pointed out that most composers go about their own creative process in a workman-like fashion, and that sometimes it takes that kind of passion and dedication to the art for creativity to flourish.

More so than his colleagues, Wind Band Conductor One was concerned with the creation of art inside of a commissioning project, and that student participation helps to cement the concept that what they are doing inside of their performance in their wind band is the creation of new art. Surprisingly, none of the other three participants in the study mentioned art in correlation with music or the performance of wind band repertoire. For example, during his first interview, Wind Band Conductor One described one of his personal reasons for participating in commissioning projects as the desire to create art through the vehicle of a commissioned work. The artistic endeavor was important to Wind Band Conductor One, and he imparts that to his

students through participating and originating these types of projects. While it may not be intuitive to some music educators artistic endeavor and creative problem solving are mirror images of one another. To create art is to intrinsically problem solve through creative processes, and creative problem solving is at the heart of the creation of art.

All four participants in the study believed that students learn non-musical concepts such as the creative process during these commissioning projects in addition to musical concepts such as form and harmony. It is also clear that the participants believe that the role of music educators who engage in these projects is to cultivate the non-musical concepts alongside the musical concepts in order for the full potential of the curricular goals of the project to be realized.

Fourth Theme

A fourth theme to emerge from the data is that the rationales for participating in these projects are varied, and split between the two composers and the two wind band conductors who participated in the study. For example, the two composers who participated in the study both mentioned the “right reasons” to commission a new work for the wind band several times during their interviews. Composer One was particularly vehement about this concept, stating several times during his three interviews that it has been his experience that a good number of organizations that he has worked with in the past have commissioned music for what he viewed were the “wrong reasons.” According to Composer One, the wrong reasons for commissioning a new work for wind band included a disregard for the collaborative process and having an interest in commissioning music solely to have the commissioning party’s name put on a piece. During his first interview, Composer One described working with a group who argued with the

composer and his publisher about their names not appearing on the set of parts once the commission was completed. Composer One put it best when he said,

And not just commission a piece and make sure that their name is on it, and on the piece, and make sure that it gets published, and want to know how many copies it's sold, and tell their band boosters how many copies with their name on it, because I don't think that those are the right reasons. I've run into people that have encountered commissioning groups that were having fits because their commissioning name was not published on all the parts of the music, so that everybody in the world could see it. . . I mean, why are you commissioning a piece then? Is it purely to get your name out there?

The Right Reasons to Commission

Having given the wrong reasons for commissioning a piece for the wind band, Composer One was not shy about giving some of the right reasons to commission a new work. He listed furthering the art, creating an emotional experience for students via a collaborative process, expanding the repertoire, and above all, having a true musical reason to commission a work, not merely to serve some vain purpose on the part of the commissioning group. Citing his experience with commissioning groups who did not have the right reasons to commission a new work, Composer One explained how students gained so much more from the experience if the conductor of the group was willing to have a musical experience in mind when first commissioning the work. The collaborative process is important to Composer One, especially when it pertains to the amount of music-making that goes on inside of the commissioning process. In fact, when asked what was the one thing that he wished that more conductors did or understood about the commissioning process, Composer One cited the fact that he wished that

more conductors commissioned for the “right reasons.” He was also adamant in his desire for conductors to research the composer that they wished to commission, in order to ascertain the fit of that person with their ensemble.

Composer-Centric Rationales for Commissioning

Composer Two agreed with the concept of the “right reasons” to commission a new work, but leaned more towards the professional development of himself and his composer colleagues. According to Composer Two, one of the best reasons to commission a new work for wind band was to further the compositional voice of a composer in whom a conductor would be interested. Championing a new composer whose work was not yet familiar or had not been widely published was an important criterion for Composer Two. While he did cite the educational experience that students would have with a conscientious director as a primary reason to commission a new work, his focus during the interviews was rather composer-centric. For example, when asked the reasons that he would accept a commission from a commissioning group, one of the first responses that Composer Two gave during all three interviews was the notion that he needed the money earned from commissioning fees to help support the higher education of his daughters. While he passed it off as being facetious during the interviews, this researcher had the impression that the financial considerations of a commission were a strong motivator to Composer Two, as well as his strong interest in nurturing the same type of collaborative process with the commissioning group that Composer One had previously mentioned. Indeed, while he listed the financial considerations that he had for accepting commissions, Composer Two was stringent about the responsibility that a composer had to provide a piece of music that had intrinsic worth to the commissioning group in order to give the students and their director a strong musical experience through the commissioning project.

According to Composer Two, one of the ways that composers can meet their responsibility to the commissioning group was to nurture a strong collaboration with the group by providing them with musical ideas and seeking their input on the piece. While citing a seemingly selfish reason to accept a commission, Composer Two was clearly interested in the musical growth of students participating in a commissioning project in which he was involved, and was adamant about the pedagogy that may or may not happen during such projects.

Wind Band Conductor One also had a composer-centric notion of the reasons to commission new music for the wind band. He agreed with Composer Two that one of the primary reasons to commission any composer was to further his or her compositional voice, and recommended looking for composers who were already in the conductor's sphere of influence. Identifying and promoting composers who were new or had a unique compositional voice was clearly important to Wind Band Conductor One, who cited this rationale throughout all three interviews. Another point that was made by Wind Band Conductor One was the concept of commissioning works for the wind band in order to raise the artistic reputation of the medium, which was a concept that was not found in the interviews of any of the three other participants in the study. Speaking of composers who may be afraid to compose music for the wind band, Wind Band Conductor One asserted,

They stand back from it, because ours is still a relatively "school" medium; they see it as a "school band" medium and they see it as a, a lot of times they don't see it as being as serious as a medium, maybe as choral music or as writing for chamber music as writing for solo instruments or writing for solo voice and piano.

It was Wind Band Conductor One's assertion that a beneficial rationale behind the commissioning of new music for the wind band is to raise the artistic integrity of a medium that is seemingly maligned by some composers as being an "educational" medium and not a serious, artistic one. What is clear from Wind Band Conductor One's three interviews is that student learning is not a primary focus of the works that he has commissioned for the wind band, but rather a positive ancillary aspect of the process. While he was adamant that student learning did take place during commissioning projects, Wind Band Conductor One's primary rationale was to further the medium of the wind band and its repertoire.

Student-Focused Rationales for Commissioning

Contrasted with his colleague's rationale for commissioning new works for the wind band, as in some of the other areas explored in this study, Wind Band Conductor Two was seemingly much more curricular- and student-focused in his rationale for commissioning. While he did promote the concept that commissioning new works for wind band is especially important for the age level of student that he teaches, Wind Band Conductor Two believed that the best rationale for commissioning new works was to provide his students with a unique musical experience. The prospect of composer, music educator, and students all working together to create a new and exciting work for wind band was intriguing for Wind Band Conductor Two, and was a major concept during all three of his interviews. While supporting composers and their art is important, the student learning involved in such projects was the clear goal for Wind Band Conductor Two. He made this point when he said, "You know, as an educator, my main mission, my main goal in doing a commission is going to be, selfishly, to give my students that opportunity to work with the composer." Providing his students with a lifelong experience of working directly with the composer of a new piece and teaching them concepts about creative

thinking as well as quality music making were Wind Band Conductor Two's primary rationales for commissioning new music. And while he acknowledged some of the attitudes that Composer One cited about some commissioning groups only being concerned that their name appeared on a new piece, Wind Band Conductor Two disagreed with the notion of selfish commissioning. His curricular focus and process orientation with performance were found during all three interviews and were a contrast with Wind Band Conductor One's composer-centric notion of commissioning new music for the wind band.

Composers with Less than Altruistic Rationales for Commissioning

Another related theme of varied rationales for commissioning music was found in Composer One's assertion that while some commissioning groups had selfish reasons for commissioning new music, some composer colleagues who were equally as guilty of having less than altruistic reasons for accepting commissions. He was quite candid during his first interview when he was discussing some composers and their supposed passion about music.

I know these composers. I've read the same magazine article about every composer that talks about how they're passionate about music. I go out to dinner with them and they talk about how their favorite piece is the one that sold like hotcakes so that they could build their back deck. I know.

Composer One's candidness about this topic did not wane through his three interviews. For example during his second interview, Composer One described motivations for composing music that were less than inspirational from some of his composer colleagues. He asserted that some composers were motivated purely by financial gain, not through a collaborative process that led them to compose music for that specific commissioning group. Adding to this, Composer One

then went on to describe how music publishing software such as *Finale* and *Sibelius* aids these composers with the quick composition of their music, because the “cut and paste” options available in these computer software programs allow the composer to simply move whole scale sections of their music around, to create what Composer One called the “ABA Overture.” According to Composer One in his third interview, this enables the composer to quickly compose music that is exactly like their previous compositions, and capitalize on the fame that they are building for themselves. He described the rationale with this statement,

And they want to see how many times they can dip into the same piece, you know, you dip to write it, you get dipped when it sells royalties, and you get ah, dipped further when somebody performs it and you get an ASCAP check...so, how many times can I dip into the same piece for financial reward?

It seems to be this type of rationale that Wind Band Conductor One described as “mercenary” when he spoke about some composers and their rationale for accepting commissioning projects. However, both Composers One and Two spoke candidly about the financial motivations behind their acceptance of commissioning projects, and it seems that both composers were not solely motivated to compose music for the wind band for financial reasons.

Fifth Theme

A fifth theme to emerge from the data is the apparent division between university and college-level wind band conductors and middle- and high-school level wind band conductors in their goals and rationales for their commissioning projects. This debate is centered on the concept of “educational music,” a term that keeps appearing. For example, Wind Band Conductor One used the term as a pejorative, asserting that composers who write educational

music and the conductors who perform it are doing the medium a great disservice by perpetuating the myth some composers seem to have that composing music for the wind band is less desirable than composing music for other large ensemble media. Wind Band Conductor One illustrates his idea of educational music with the following assertion from his first interview. Speaking of a composer colleague who writes primarily what Wind Band Conductor One terms “educational music,” he said

I have a good friend in the American Bandmasters Association who is a, and makes no bones about it, is an educational publication composer, writer, you know, arranger. Those people are at best, arrangers. I wouldn't call them necessarily composers . . . so, the educational market is for, you know, consumption, it's paper plate music. It's not stuff that's going to last . . . but as far as being art, I wouldn't necessarily say that they are going to be around two hundred years from now, like the Beethoven *Seventh Symphony*.

This was not an isolated example of Wind Band Conductor One using the term “educational music” as a pejorative. During his second interview, he described his opinion that art music and educational music do not necessarily have to be mutually exclusive. It was his assertion that while “educational music” is generally music written by composers for a certain type of student, that does mean that some of these pieces are without craft. While some “educational music” shows great craft in places, Wind Band Conductor One believed that these nice musical moments are not indicative of the quality of the whole. Interestingly, he was candid about the role that his wind band conductor colleagues play in the continued perpetuation of the inadequacy of “educational music.” Speaking during his second interview about the apparent quality of the repertoire being performed by wind bands around Wind Band Conductor One's geographical area, he asserted that ultimately the conductor of the ensemble is responsible for the choice of

quality repertoire for his or her students. The conductor's taste and sophistication is on display when they select literature for their ensemble to perform, and according to Wind Band Conductor One, taste and sophistication are not readily teachable. Again, this is not an isolated assertion by Wind Band Conductor One. In his third interview, he takes wind band conductor colleagues to task for performing "paper plate" music for the sake of expediency instead of works that seemingly have more artistic merit. It was Wind Band Conductor One's assertion that the practice of performing "educational music" steers many quality composers away from the wind band as a performance medium. It is the assertion that some composers see the medium of wind band music as something less than artistic that separated Wind Band Conductor One from the other participants.

For example, Wind Band Conductor Two never specifically addressed the term "educational music" during his three interviews, but instead took some composers that he had commissioned in the past to task for not customizing the experience of commissioning to his specific ensemble, and instead gave them a more generalized type of work. His answer to question about what he wished that more composers did or understood about the commissioning process, he expressed the fact that he wished that composers would ask more questions of the commissioning party in order to develop a collaborative relationship, which seemed to be a major goal of Wind Band Conductor Two's commissioning projects. This desire to see more groundwork by composers is ancillary to this notion of "educational music" because it shows that this is a double-sided issue. By examining the rationale of composers who are seemingly more interested in providing a product to commissioning groups that is less than original, Wind Band Conductor Two re-focused the issue back to composers, whom he felt were equally as

culpable for the trend of “paper plate” music for which Wind Band Conductor One blamed his wind band conductor colleagues.

Desire for More Collaboration by Commissioning Parties

For example, during his second interview, Wind Band Conductor Two presented the analogy that he wished that composers were more like interior designers, and asked questions of their clientele to achieve a design specific for their customer base, instead of just providing a prefabricated design for them. According to his analogy, composers should ask questions about the commissioning group; what their musical tastes are like, whether or not they have commissioned other works, and what type of works those have been in the past. According to Wind Band Conductor Two, he was the one who is forced to engage composers in this manner, leaving all of the design work of the commission up to Wind Band Conductor Two. Central to this premise is the supposition that if these questions are not asked, the commissioning group will engage the composer to write a piece that is not tailored to their ensemble, ensuring that the “paper plate” mentality that Wind Band Conductor One suggests is prevalent in the wind band medium will continue. However, Wind Band Conductor Two was also critical of his conductor colleagues as well, asserting that conductors need to become good listeners and consumers of music as part of their career path and not just settle for the marketing practices of big music publishing companies in selecting music for their ensembles.

Composer Two agreed with Wind Band Conductor One that the term “educational music” is a derogatory comment in some circles, but stopped short at declaring as vehemently as Wind Band Conductor One did that the entire genre is without artistic merit. Rather, Composer Two suggested that conductors present the best possible repertoire that they can find for their

students no matter the age or experience level of the ensemble, and that conductors whose ensembles have achieved a certain level of experience should try to present challenges to their ensembles whenever possible through the exploration of more difficult and broader literature. Interestingly, during this same interview, Composer Two suggested that Wind Band Conductor One's point that some composers are eschewing writing music for the wind band because of their view that the medium is less valid had some merit. Citing what he termed a "schism" between music critics on the topic of the artistic merit of the wind band, Composer Two espoused his view that commissioning music for the wind band would help to bridge this schism, but that it would take time and careful commissioning by wind band conductors. While this schism is seemingly ancillary to the division that exists between wind band conductors in terms of their rationale for commissioning projects, it is clear that the notion that the medium of the wind band is somehow different or less artistic than other large or chamber ensembles would seem to be at the heart of both discussions.

Finally, Composer One took a much more aggressive stance on the term "educational music" than his three colleague participants. For example, during his first interview, Composer One addressed the charge that "educational music" was somehow inferior to other, seemingly more artistic literature stating "I tell people, you know, I think that Mahler is educational. I mean, any time I listen to a Mahler symphony, I learn something. I think that's educational music." He went on to explain that his view about the term "educational music" and how some people use it as pejorative is really indicative of the compositional quality of the composers who write "educational music."

I think educational music is a term to encompass all music that directors choose to program with their groups, and educational music has served as an umbrella that we can

lump all bad music under, and use that term as an excuse for why people are writing it. And finally, I think that educational music has become a great vehicle for adequate composers that wouldn't normally be able to make a living to do great, because they can fit under the umbrella of educational music.

This was not the only instance when Composer One leveled this accusation against some composers during the interview process. During his second interview, Composer One repeated this same charge, adding that it is the whole concept of "educational music" that has done such a great disservice to music education programs across the country by espousing the notion that music for students does not have to be of high quality. Agreeing with Wind Band Conductor Two that music educators need to become highly selective consumers of music, Composer One laid part of the blame for this rampant use of educational music at the feet of music teacher educators, because the concept of inspiration is not always taught or learned in undergraduate music education curricula. Citing that he felt that the majority of music education undergraduates are taught to be mechanics, Composer One during his second interview went on to express his opinion that the majority of music educators are not taught how to be philosophers, and therefore do not deal with the question of why they teach music.

While this concept is seemingly counterintuitive to the seeming division between wind band conductors and their rationale for commissioning projects, the notion that part of the rationale behind commissioning new music for the wind band is flawed because it lacks the type of deep introspection that Composer One has described. What is clear from the interviews is that this division is real, and that it affects more than just a surface-level discussion of the merits of commissioning music for the wind band.

Sixth and Final Theme

The final theme to emerge from the data is the concept that the wind band is the medium of choice for composers who are interested in having a large ensemble perform their music. Ironically, while debating the merits of so called “educational music” versus “art music,” all four participants agreed that most composers view the wind band as the medium of choice for the performance and dissemination of their music for large ensembles, not only because of the ubiquitous nature of the ensemble, but also the fervent desire for new music that conductors of the wind band demonstrate. Indeed, whether commissioning music for high-level college and university wind ensembles or middle- and high-school wind bands, conductors of these ensembles are ardent proponents of new music and new composers, and actively seek out the cutting edge of musical expression by those composers. Wind Band Conductor One made this case during his first interview, stating that not only are more composers realizing that the wind band is the cutting-edge medium for music, but they talk about this concept with their composer colleagues and students.

Relating a story that Francis McBeth had once told him about one of his composition professors at the Eastman School of Music, Wind Band Conductor One made the assertion that this professor had told McBeth that if he wanted to hear his music performed, he would write it for band. This was not the only instance in which he described the wind band as the medium for new music in the Twenty-first Century. For example, during his second interview, Wind Band Conductor One compared the medium of the wind band with the orchestral medium, stating that the differences in their subscription bases were one reason that composers were turning to the wind band as a performance medium for their music. Wind Band Conductor One made the point that most orchestras rely on a subscription base for their concerts that is mostly interested in

hearing music by the traditional masters. Since the university is a home for the wind band, according to Wind Band Conductor One, it allows the conductors to seek out and perform more cutting-edge music with their ensembles. He strongly asserted,

. . . I mean we have more bands in this country than we have orchestras, and every university has a reasonably credible ensemble that can play new music and so it exposes many, many more people to music than are probably going to be exposed to the orchestra. . . I mean, people are not writing new music for orchestra. People are not interested in going to orchestral concerts where there's new music.

Wind Band Conductor One illustrates the point that there seems to be an almost symbiotic relationship between the composer and the wind band medium, with each party needing to promote and nurture the relationship for the maximum success of both parties.

Close Relationship between Composers and Wind Band Conductors

The nature of this close relationship between composers and wind bands was not lost on Composer One, who extended this idea to the amount of rehearsal time that most wind bands spend on his music. During his first interview, Composer One cited that he had grown to have the expectation that most wind bands would spend a great deal more rehearsal time on his music, rather than their orchestral counterparts, mainly owing to the fact that the conductors of the ensembles were much more inclined to do so. This greater interest in rehearsing and performing new music generates musical momentum for a composer, and it is one of the reasons that Composer One feels that his composer colleagues are gravitating more and more to the medium of the wind band. This was not an isolated concept during the course of his three interviews. For example, in his third interview, Composer One cited the fact that wind bands are more willing

and able to rehearse and perform new music as one of the reasons for the increase of artistic bearing for the ensemble, and that the willingness of wind band conductors to collaborate and rehearse his music is one of the primary reasons that Composer One writes so frequently for the wind band.

Composer Two agreed with his colleague during his interviews, adding that the combination of wind and percussion instruments available in the wind band was an intriguing compositional challenge for him personally as a composer. He was also adamant in his opinion that the early Twenty-first Century is a fruitful time for wind band music because of the varied and widespread commissioning projects that are currently taking place. Composer Two asserted that the current crop of composers who are writing music for the wind band are among the finest since the 1950s, when composers such as Vincent Persichetti and Morton Gould were writing music for the medium, which only encourages other composers to seek out the compositional possibilities of the ensemble. This opinion was echoed by Wind Band Conductor Two during his interviews as well, albeit with a different focal point. For example, Wind Band Conductor Two illustrated this point succinctly when he spoke about the wind band as a relatively new ensemble,

I mean, it's such a young ensemble. And I still think it's an untapped resource . . . you talk to young composers and everyone seems pretty enamored with the wind band just because of the amount of colors that are available within a wind band, and so, I still don't think we've reached the pinnacle of that ensemble.

It is this type of thinking that matched so well with the views of Composer One and Wind Band Conductor One who asserted so strongly that the wind band was an attractive ensemble for composers who were seeking to have their music performed.

Interestingly, Wind Band Conductor Two cited his hope that other wind band conductors continue to commission works for mid-level and high-school level wind bands, asserting that one of his greatest fears for the future of the repertoire of the wind band would be that publishing companies would be left to their own devices when it came to the creation and dissemination of new music for the medium. It is his opinion that more music educators should engage in these types of projects to not only provide a valuable educational experience for their students, but also to encourage the creation of high-quality literature for the ensemble. Indeed, all four participants reflected their hope, albeit in different ways, that the practice of commissioning new music would continue to flourish in the wind band, for much the same rationale that Wind Band Conductor Two cited during his interviews.

Discussion

The practice of commissioning new music for the wind band has a healthy and proactive life. All four participants seem to agree on rationales for the practice more often than they disagreed, and a majority of these rationales seem to be student-centered, especially according to the data collected from Composer One and Wind Band Conductor Two. All four participants agreed that there is student learning that takes place in these types of projects, and the participants were able to specifically cite musical concepts and practices that students learned by participating in a commissioning project.

Students learn about both musical and non-musical concepts by their participation in these types of projects and Composer One and Wind Band Conductor Two were quite adamant about how the non-musical concepts that are taught focus on such abstracts as creative thinking and can be transferred into other aspects of students' lives.

Students also learn about the art and craft of composition by participation in these types of projects, especially if the composer is available to work with the ensemble as part of the rehearsal and performance of the piece. While Composer Two made the argument that it is not necessary to have the composer actually present during the rehearsal process to have this concept become clear to the student, with the increasing availability of internet-based communication technology such as Skype, the ability to bring a composer into your classroom is not solely based on your proximity to that composer. The world is becoming smaller, and music educators who are engaged fully with the commissioning projects should be able to find a creative solution to distance and geography.

So-called Educational Music and a Seeming Division Among Wind Band Conductors

The main disagreement among the participants is based on the question of so-called educational music. Composer One made several strong points on this issue, among them being that he feels that all music is educational to some degree, and that the notion that younger musicians cannot play emotionally charged music is extremely antiquated. The real issue seems to stem from the fact that the wind band, while a medium that is achieving more and more success with the integration of its literature into an increasingly difficult and versatile concert music market, is suffering from unfair comparisons to other large ensembles due to its relative youth and perception as an ensemble intended for amateur musicians. Professionals such as Wind Band Conductor One, perhaps the most vehement with this position, are not so much denigrating the ensembles that perform “educational music” as they are seeking to achieve a higher level of artistic acceptance and performance with their ensembles. Regardless, it is clear that this issue requires a great deal more insight and thought, and should be taken on as a vein of future research.

The most surprising concept to arise is the notion that this topic is not far removed from the question of quality literature for the wind band, and that some composers are just as concerned about the apparent lack of quality literature for the medium as some music educators and conductors. Composer One was frank on this topic, as he described some of his composer colleagues as being little more than mercenaries, concerned with how well certain pieces of theirs sell, and how their favorite piece is the one that provided the funding to purchase the new deck on the back of their homes. While not as definitive as his colleague, Composer Two agreed that there was more than a little financial incentive for him to accept a commission, but was also concerned with how to best serve the commissioning party from which he received the commission. It is clear that both composer participants have given much thought to how to provide the best piece possible for their respective clients when a piece is commissioned, and have engaged in best practice in their business transactions with the parties that have commissioned their music. Both composers maintained that while there is indeed a financial rationale for their acceptance of a commission, for them this is an ancillary concern. Both composers seemed to be dedicated musicians and educators, and both participants highlighted student learning as a major benefit to participating in commissioning projects. Indeed, both Composers One and Two cited the student learning and the experience of being involved in the creation of a new piece of music as fundamental elements of any commissioning project. It is clear that both composers are thoughtful participants in this process, concerned with more than merely their own bottom line.

While the composers interviewed during this study were both thoughtful and introspective about the concept of quality literature for the wind band and how this is an interrelated topic with commissioning new music for the wind band, the two wind band

conductors were equally thoughtful practitioners. Wind Band Conductor Two clearly was student-focused during these types of projects and was concerned with achieving and assessing his curricular goals for his students. Wind Band Conductor One, albeit not quite so process-oriented as his colleague, was nevertheless engaged with his students and what they could learn from a commissioning project. Both conductor participants gave insightful opinions about their assessment of the wind band repertoire, and how best to improve the repertoire through these type of projects. The rationales that the two conductor participants gave for commissioning new music for the wind band during this study are not anywhere near the “vanity” projects that some have claimed (Rocco, 1991) as the major rationale for some commissioning projects. And while it is clear to this researcher that there are some conductors and commissioning groups who are merely seeking, as Composer One asserted, to see their name at the top of the page, it is clear that the two conductor participants are not engaging in this type of vanity project. Indeed, all four participants in this aspect of the study are thoughtful practitioners of this practice, and seem to be steeped in the culture of commissioning that has been a hallmark of the wind band for the past one hundred years.

Summary of Themes

The first theme that emerged was the concept that both composers and wind band conductors wished to have connective experiences with students involved with commissioning projects. In addition to this focus on connectivity was the concept of the repertoire of the wind band as being analogous to the dietary needs of human beings, which was the second theme to emerge. The third theme to emerge was the concept that participation in commissioning projects helped to teach non-musical concepts such as creativity and the creative process. After the primary rationale for participation in these projects by wind band conductors and composers was

determined to be connectivity with students, the secondary motivators seem to be varied, which was the fourth theme discovered. The nature of so-called “educational music” and its seeming proliferation among the repertoire of the wind band during the past forty years was the fifth theme present. The sixth theme present was the concept of the wind band as the medium of choice for composers who wish to have large ensembles perform their music.

These themes point to a great deal of connectivity with the post-survey aspect of this study. Chapter Six examines these issues in detail and provides a synthesis of the data collected in both aspects of this study.

Chapter 6

Overall Summary and Discussion

Research Questions

In reviewing the research questions as they were presented in Chapter 1, the main points of this study become clear. The first question was “What are the attitudes of students towards the commissioned work after participation in a commissioning project?” Statement 2 “I enjoy performing the premiere of a new piece and Statement 13 “I enjoy playing this piece” were both designed to measure the attitudes of the participants towards *The Temple of the Murals*. For both statements, the majority of the participants selected either the “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” categories on the post administration of the survey, indicating that a majority of the participants had a positive attitude towards *The Temple of the Murals* after the clinic sessions for the commissioning project.

Secondly, “What are the attitudes of wind band students towards new music in general as a result of participating in the commissioning project?” Statement 1, “New music is enjoyable to perform,” Statement 3, “New music is important to perform,” and Statement 6, “New music is interesting to me,” were intended to measure participants’ attitudes toward new music. Again, the majority of the participants selected either the “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” categories, indicating that the participants had a positive attitude toward new music in general after the clinic sessions.

The third research question, “What are the attitudes of students towards composition and composers as a result of participating in a commissioning project?” examined the attitudes of participants towards composition in general. Statement 5 “I understand what a composer does,”

Statement 7 “I understand what a popular songwriter does,” and Statement 8 “A composer is the musical equivalent of a songwriter” all addressed the issue the attitudes of participants toward composition. The majority of participants agreed with Statement 5, indicating that they understood what composers do. Interestingly, only 54% of participants agreed with the statement for Statement 8, indicating that while participants have a positive attitude towards composers, they are less sure if a composer is equivalent to a songwriter. Perhaps this indicates that some participants are still confused by the process of composition and need more information.

The fourth research question was “Do wind band students who participate in commissioning projects have a better understanding of composers and composition?” Outcomes tend to support the notion that students have a greater understanding of composers in general as a result of participating in this commissioning project, but do not have a greater understanding of the art of composition. Participants gained a better understanding of Brian Balmages through working with him in this project, and certainly have a greater knowledge of what his skill set as a composer would comprise, but did not achieve a greater understanding of the art of composition. Outcomes also suggest that participation in the study helped participants to personalize the abstract concept of a composer. In addition, outcomes also seemed to support the assertions of many of the participants in the qualitative aspect of the study, that is, that students gain a knowledge and greater appreciation for the art of creativity and creative thinking by participation in commissioning projects.

The fifth research question, “Are there disparities in responses to the survey items among selected demographics?” examined the responses of the participants to statements on the EMAS to see if there was difference in the responses based on reported demographics. Outcomes

indicated that there were no differences in responses based on demographic information collected by the EMAS.

The sixth research question was “To what extent are students who participate in commissioning projects engaged with music making?” This researcher noted a great deal of student engagement from the beginning of the project through the completion of the premiere, but there is little evidence from outcomes of the post administration of the survey to suggest this. Perhaps participants were engaged in the music through interaction with the composer, and they seemingly received a great deal from the experience, but this is purely through observation by this researcher. Data from Statement 9, “I enjoy meeting the composer of a piece and interacting with him/her” would seem to suggest that the participants were engaged with Brian Balmages during the clinic sessions. However, the data from the post administration of the survey suggests that students became more engaged with performing *The Temple of the Murals* as a result of participation in this project. Further research is indicated to ascertain if student engagement does indeed transfer to other pieces by the same composer or even to other works that the students may perform.

Regarding the seventh research question, “Do these attitudes and understandings change from the beginning to the end of the project?,” while there was no statistically significant change this researcher did observe several changes in the participants during the clinic sessions. First and foremost, the participants became much more engaged with Brian Balmages during the clinic session. As previously stated, Balmages was an engaging and dynamic figure who seemed intent on connecting participants with his music, perhaps in a way that none of them had been previously engaged. Secondly, as participants became more engaged with the music, the better they performed the other pieces on the concert. It seemed clear to this researcher that not all

participants came with the music equally well prepared. But participants seemed to respond to Balmages in a way that this researcher has rarely observed, and this led to a better performance not only of the commissioned work, but all the pieces on the concert. Clearly Balmages was engaging participants in an inspirational way, modeling behavior that Composer One advocated during his interviews.

The eighth research question, “What are the attitudes and motivating factors of composers who are involved with commissioning projects?” dealt with the qualitative aspect of the study. The composers who participated indicated that a primary rationale for their involvement in commissioning projects was the opportunity to connect with and collaborate with a commissioning group. Both composers asserted that they found collaboration to be both stimulating and rewarding to them as composers, and that they were interested in providing a service to the commissioning group through the process. This seemed to be supported by the two wind band conductors who participated in the study, who suggested that collaboration was a rewarding experience for both them and their ensembles as well.

The composers were also highly motivated by the concept of student learning as it related to the commissioning project, and both suggested that this learning is inherent in these types of projects. Again, this concept was supported by both wind band conductors who participated in the study, even more so by Wind Band Conductor Two. There was also a suggestion by Composer Two that financial gain was a motivator in his acceptance of new commissions, but this was not echoed by Composer One. In fact, Composer One was candid in his assessment that some of his composer colleagues were composing music for the wrong reasons in accepting these types of commissions, and that one of the wrong reasons was financial motivation. Both composers involved with the study are not seemingly solely motivated by financial rationales for

accepting these types of projects, and both composers are reasoned and thoughtful professionals who are eager to provide a quality piece of music for their clients and to further their art.

The ninth research question was “What are the attitudes and motivating factors of wind band conductors who are involved with commissioning projects?” With this question, there was a definite split between the two wind band conductor participants. The primary motivator for Wind Band Conductor Two was student learning and curricular goals for his ensemble. His process orientation was evident in the manner in which he described his approach to the commission, his collaboration with the composer, and his preparation of students with the necessary concepts to premiere the piece. The primary motivator for Wind Band Conductor One was the creation of a new piece to further the artistic acceptance of the wind band as a serious medium. To Wind Band Conductor One, student learning that takes place in the commissioning project is a welcome byproduct of the commission, but not the primary goal of the process.

Interestingly, both conductors agreed on a secondary motivator for the commissioning of new music for the wind band. Both conductors asserted that the wind band holds a unique place in modern concert music as the ensemble for the proliferation of large ensemble new music. The ubiquity of the ensemble and the propensity of its conductors to seek out and promote new compositions give the wind band a unique role as the home of new music for large ensembles. Both composers who participated in the study agreed with this assessment, with Composer One suggesting that it was not only the performance of his music that he found attractive about the ensemble, but the amount of time that conductors spent rehearsing his music before the performance as well.

Both wind band conductors who participated in this study gave reasoned and thoughtful answers and both conductors are clearly concerned about their students and how they may benefit by participating in the commissioning projects that they have undertaken. That being said, there was a clear differentiation in the guiding principles of their respective commissioning projects, and it is this difference that perhaps is at the heart of the division that is open between university wind band conductors and their middle and high school colleagues. Understanding the division is the first step toward bridging the gap, and perhaps the real issue with the division is not the apparent lack of quality in the wind band repertoire, but rather that the culture of wind band commissioning projects seems to be bifurcated. On the one hand, some wind band conductors have as their primary motivation for commissioning projects the creation of more artistic repertoire. On the other hand, a group of wind band conductors see their primary motivation for these projects as curricular and more student-oriented.

It seems that both groups respect the positions of the other, which may be a place to begin. Perhaps it is time for some music educators who believe that selection of music for their ensembles is a purely subjective task to realize that there are real concerns held by some conductors about the apparent lack of quality in the repertoire that is commissioned and performed. Likewise, it may also be time for some wind band conductors to realize that their choice of literature for their ensembles models literature selection and conducting practices for the next generation of music educators. This is an issue that will not be resolved quickly and will take open dialogue.

The tenth and final research question was “Is there connectivity present between the rationale for the commissioning of new music for the wind band and the types of student learning evident after the participation in such a project?” Student learning taking place during a

commissioning project centers on both musical and non-musical learning. Rationales for composers and conductors who participate in these projects can be varied, although there are some rationales that seem to be common among the participating conductors and composers. The composers and conductors who participated in the qualitative aspect of the study did agree that student learning occurs during commissioning projects, and that learning takes place along the lines that Norcross (1991) and Sindberg (2005) have described. Both Composer One and Wind Band Conductor Two were proponents of the incorporation of this student learning into the curricular goals of music educators, and they saw these goals as the primary rationale for the commissioning of new music for the wind band. Wind Band Conductor One also saw student learning from these projects, but suggested that this was not his primary goal when commissioning new music.

There was also connectivity present between the rationales presented in the qualitative study and the data collected by the post administration of the survey aspect of the study with the concept of creativity as it may be taught by participation in commissioning projects. Where this connectivity becomes less clear is in the amount of learning that have subscribed. Both Composer One and Wind Band Conductor Two asserted that the creative process itself was taught as a result of participation in commissioning projects. While the survey did not address creativity specifically during the post administration of the survey phase of the study, a few statements may provide some insight on creativity. Statement 11 on the Ensemble Members Attitude Survey, “Anyone can compose music,” addressed creativity secondarily. The data collected by the post administration of the survey suggests that the majority of the participants were non-committal to this statement, as nearly two-thirds of participants selected either the “Neutral” or “Disagree” categories. Brian Balmages addressed creativity and the creative process

during his clinic sessions with the participants, and it is possible that the participants in the study would think of composition as a natural outlet for creativity.

Another statement that addressed creativity in a secondary manner is Statement 17, “Meeting the composer makes me believe that I can compose music.” Participants exhibited a non-committal attitude towards this statement as well, as the majority of participants selected the “Neutral” category. However, almost one-quarter of the participants selected the “Agree” category on this statement. This suggests that while the concept of creativity is being taught during a commissioning project, it is not being taught as strongly as Composer One and Wind Band Composer Two believe that the concept should be taught. Once again, the survey was not intended to address creativity specifically, and it would seem prudent to suggest a similar study that had the creative process as its primary focus.

Connectivity between Qualitative and Survey Aspects

This study yielded some data suggesting that there is considerable cross-current between the qualitative and survey aspects. The primary theme culled from the qualitative data suggests that both composers and conductors are aware of student learning that takes place inside of wind band commissioning projects, although they differ in how they utilize this learning. Composer One and Wind Band Conductor Two seem to be focused on student learning as a curricular goal, whereas Wind Band Conductor One views this learning as ancillary to his goal of developing artistic literature for the medium.

While the survey data collected seems to confirm that there is student learning taking place inside of these projects, it is clear that this learning does not always take the form that composers and music educators think it does. Composer One, Composer Two, and Wind Band

Conductor Two all asserted that students learn about composers and what their skill sets may be, and that these students obtain a greater understanding of the compositional process by participating in these types of projects. However, the outcomes from the post administration of the survey do not fully support this assertion. While students obtained a clearer understanding of who the composer is, and a greater understanding of what he or she may do, the concept of a composer's skill set and how that might transfer to individual personal composition seemed not as transferable as was previously thought by Everett (1976) and Norcross (1991).

Connectivity Between Participants, Conductors, and Composers

Where we do find connectivity is in the learning of musical concepts, and here the data support claims by Sindberg (2005) and Norcross (1991). Specific musical concepts were learned as a result of the participants working with the composer, and this notion is validated by the statements of Composers One and Two and Wind Band Conductor Two during their interviews.

Another point made by the interviewees in the qualitative aspect of the study was that both conductors and composers are seeking to connect with students in a meaningful way during the commissioning process. One of these ways to connect students to composers may be through the collaborative process for designing and implementing a commissioning project that Composer One and Wind Band Conductor Two described in their interviews. Another method to provide this connectivity between composers and students may be having the composer come and work with the students, as both Composer Two and Wind Band Conductor One asserted during their interviews. However this connectivity is accomplished, students connecting with composers is an important rationale for the inception and execution of these projects. The data collected by the Ensemble Members Attitude Survey during the post administration of the survey

tends to agree with this assertion from the participants in the qualitative aspect, and it does seem that students gain a great deal from the experience of working and interacting with the composer.

Statement 13 on the EMAS, “I enjoy playing this piece” supports the assertion that students gain a great deal from interaction with the composer, as the majority of the participants had a positive attitude toward the statement after interacting with the composer. Moreover, this researcher noted that participants in the post administration of the survey seemed to have a more positive attitude towards the performance of the other works on the concert as well. The experience of working with the composer may transfer into a more positive attitude towards other music, not only the commissioned work.

Another statement supporting the assertion that composers are seeking to connect with students is Statement 9, “I enjoy meeting with the composer of a piece and interacting with him/her.” On the post administration of the survey, the majority of participants selected the “Strongly Agree” category, indicating that they enjoyed meeting Brian Balmages and interacting with him, which lends credence to the idea that a connection was forged between the participants and the composer. Likewise, Statement 10 “Understanding the composer’s point of view helps me to understand his/her piece,” shows connectivity to the composer and his point of view. On the post administration of the survey, almost two-thirds of participants selected the “Strongly Agree” category on the EMAS, suggesting that the participants gained a great deal of understanding about *The Temple of the Murals* by interacting with its composer.

Ensemble Repertoire as Musical Diet

Another juncture between the two aspects of the study is the concept of musical literature as diet. While participants in the qualitative aspect were quick to point out that the literature

music educators select for their students is akin to a musical diet, this assertion was not anticipated in the design of the EMAS or the post administration aspect of this study. Nevertheless, data from the post administration of the survey could be interpreted as reflecting this concept. If one accepts the analogy that literature is to ensemble members as food is to human beings, then it would seem intuitive that music educators seek the most varied and healthiest literature choices for their students.

The Development of Musical Taste as it Relates to Musical Sophistication

For Statement 4, “Popular music is more enjoyable to me than the music that we perform in band,” the majority of the participants selected either the “Disagree” or “Neutral” categories on the post administration of the survey. This would seem to indicate that the participants had no preference between popular music and the music that they perform in their school wind bands, which reflects the concept of musical taste as it was described by Battisti (2002) and Wind Band Conductor Two. If music educators are intent on providing their students with “healthier” musical choices, it would seem imperative to provide them with a contrast between “popular” and “art” music, especially when one of their only sources for “art” music may be in the band room. This was a point that Wind Band Conductor Two made during his interviews when he spoke about providing his students with a balanced diet of musical choices that not only included commissioned works, but works that he deemed to be more in the popular vein. It was also his assertion that students would not be satisfied with these “popular” selections for long. Indeed, he spoke several times during his interviews about his students becoming disenchanted with the works that were more in the “popular” vein, and how as his students developed as musicians, they developed a taste for what he termed “quality” literature as opposed to the works that were more in the “popular” genre.

Wind Band Conductor Two seems to be developing the taste for the “gourmet” in repertoire with his students that Wind Band Conductor One highlighted as one of the precepts in the development of “musical sophistication” that he wished that more music educators practiced. Asserting his point that some music educators do not develop enough taste in their students for the “gourmet” in the wind band repertoire, he spoke of this lack of musical sophistication as being a hindrance to students learning anything at all inside of a commissioning project. However, outcomes from Statements 15 and 16 on the Ensemble Members Attitude Survey place this assertion somewhat into question. The majority of participants agreed with both Statement 15, “I understand the harmonic concepts in this piece” and Statement 16 “I understand the form of this piece” on the post administration of the survey. In addition, outcomes from the demographic data taken by the EMAS suggest that there is no difference between the attitudes of high school and college participants towards these statements. As was previously stated, participants from this study were mostly from rural Southwest Kansas, without easy access to private instrumental instructors, which generally is an indicator of success in instrumental music programs (Garafolo, 1983). These same participants also demonstrated little preference for popular music over the music that they perform in their school wind bands (cf. Statement 4). This would seem to indicate that these participants had enough “musical sophistication” to develop at least a passing taste for “art” music over “popular” music and that they learned specific musical concepts through participation in this commissioning project.

To be fair, Wind Band Conductor One’s assertions about developing a taste for the “gourmet” in repertoire were directed as much toward wind band conductors as they were towards students, but his point was clear. The musical sophistication of students involved in these projects is one of the main determining factors in whether or not they receive any type of

learning from the experience. What these data may illustrate is that “musical sophistication” may be a subjective concept, and that the music educators whose students were participants in this study seem to have done an excellent job in developing their students’ musical sophistication. In addition, outcomes suggest that the age of the participant, choice of instrument, choice of college major, or choice of continuing study of an instrument in college makes no difference in the amount of learning that may be obtained through participation in a commissioning project. Composer One seems to be correct in his belief that students, no matter their age level or musical sophistication, can play music with emotional validity and maturity.

Regardless, in terms of the concept of musical diet, this concept of who a composer is and how his or her skill set differs from that of a songwriter is essential for students to see the differences between “popular” music and “art” music. As students are taught the difference between junk food and healthy food in a health class, so must music students be taught the differences between junk music and music of substance. These distinctions are distasteful to some conductors and music educators, because they rely on seemingly subjective criteria to show a perceived difference. Nevertheless, the question as Composer One framed it during his interviews of “junk” music versus “healthy” music is relevant and is fueling the ongoing division between music educators and some wind band conductors. Composer One was quick to point out the differences between “junk” and “healthy” music during his interviews, and was candid in his assessment of some of his composer colleagues and their apparent culpability in the proliferation of “junk” music. What is suggested from this study is that there is a difference, at least in the mindset of some composers and conductors, between “junk” and “healthy” music, and that the participants who were interviewed in the qualitative aspect of this study would advocate for “healthier” selections for students.

Commissioning Music for the “Right Reasons”

What seems clear from both aspects of this study is that music educators who participate in these types of commissioning projects are missing an opportunity to provide their students with a great deal of musical and emotional depth if they do not consider the curricular aspects of these projects. Indeed, the premise seems to be exemplified by Composer One’s admonition to wind band conductors to commission music for the “right reasons.”

It is this concept of the right reasons for commissioning music that seems to be central to this study. All the participants gave thoughtful and reasoned rationale for what those right reasons might entail, but sometimes differed slightly on the execution of how they put this rationale into practice. What seems to be at the crux of this difference between wind band conductors such as Wind Band Conductor One and his colleague Wind Band Conductor Two is the practice of commissioning music for the wind band and how it best serves the medium. Both conductors agreed that student learning does take place inside commissioning projects, but where Wind Band Conductors One and Two differ is in their approach to that learning.

Focus of Student Learning

Wind Band Conductor One sees student learning as ancillary to the commissioning project. Any student learning that takes place during the project comes about through the preparation of the ensemble by its conductor. The conductor must be a knowledgeable musician, one who has taught his or her students a great deal of musical sophistication, and has prepared them to perform the new piece of art music that the composer has written for the group. The goal is a performance-orientated one: the furthering of the literature of the wind band, and the broadening of its musical horizons.

By contrast, Wind Band Conductor Two sees student learning as the ultimate goal of the project; the premiere performance in this case is ancillary. Wind Band Conductor Two has a process-oriented goal for his students, one that involves student composition, interaction and collaboration with the composer, and the teaching of extra-musical concepts such as the creative process. While Wind Band Conductor Two seeks the expansion of the literature of the wind band and its acceptance as a versatile musical entity, he is seeking this expansion on a different level from his conductor colleague.

At the same time, Wind Band Conductor One seeks to teach his students about musicianship through the expansion of new music and is teaching extra-musical concepts such as creativity as well. Where this division occurs is that these two groups do not seemingly communicate well with each other. Wind Band Conductor Two most likely performed in a university wind ensemble as part of his undergraduate education, and perhaps took away from his experience that he would not be able to perform the majority of literature as a middle school or even high school wind band conductor. Wind Band Conductor Two seeks the avant-garde and cutting edge of his field, perhaps forgetting that the majority of his undergraduate students, unless they go on to earn doctorates and conduct university-level wind bands themselves, will not perform this literature again after leaving his ensemble.

There is no easy solution to bridging this seeming division. Open and thoughtful communication between wind band conductors of any level must be the starting point, as well as the eschewing of pre-conceived notions about the rationale for commissioning projects. Perhaps the commissioning project itself is the ideal forum for this type of communication, because it opens up new territory. Surely there is enough room in the world of the wind band for high-level

artistic performance that has as its goal the thoughtful and purposeful engagement of music education.

Interestingly, the two composers interviewed in the qualitative aspect of this study seemed to be promoting student learning rather than artistic expression as their primary rationale for accepting commissions from wind band conductors. While they were both concerned about the apparent lack of quality of some of the works being commissioned by wind bands, they were also quick to point out that education should be the primary means of combating a perceived lack of quality in some wind band literature. Thoughtful dialogue and the encouragement of best practice when it comes to commissioning new works for the wind band should be fostered. Composers and conductors should also consider both the artistic development of the medium as well as the educational opportunities that commissioning projects present as they plan and execute commissioning projects.

Suggestions for Future Research

In the first place, there is a need for the replication of the post administration of the survey aspect of this study, with its goal a larger number of participants as well as more refined survey statements. It would be interesting to replicate the study with separate ensembles comprised of college level, high school level, and middle school-aged participants to study the difference, if any, in the learning between the different groups. It might be appropriate to replicate the qualitative aspect of the study with a different set of participants in order to see if the views and opinions asserted by this group of participants are found to be similar, or if the views are specific to this study's participants.

Another line of research would be to conduct a similar qualitative study with individual groupings of high school level wind band conductors, middle school level wind band conductors, and university level wind band conductors to determine differences in the rationales for commissioning music. It might be advantageous to examine the specific types of student learning that have been found inside of this study. For example, one can envision an experimental study in which the specific musical concepts of harmony and form are studied in order to ascertain for certain that these concepts are taught as a result of the participation in a commissioning project. Another avenue of research might be the study of the concept of the composer and how it changes as a result of participation in these types of projects.

The study of creativity and how students learn the creative process was a factor that both Composer One and Wind Band Conductor Two felt was an important aspect of the commissioning project, which this particular study did not address. Research into creativity and the ability to create is in order, especially as it relates to composition and commissioning projects. Another area that would benefit from future research would be the concept of how students may learn compositional skills by participation in these types of projects.

The seeming division between wind band conductors merits further study, especially on the perceived differences in goals for the commissioning projects as illustrated between Wind Band Conductors One and Two. A qualitative study investigating the role of wind band conductors in the creation of new music with special emphasis on the philosophies behind such projects would be in order, and perhaps an investigation into the rationales for commissioning projects that recent graduates of music teacher education programs may have. It would also seem relevant to study the differences in repertoire between high school and middle school bands and how these differences may correlate with the undergraduate institution's repertoire. This study

has provided an initial view of the potential of this scholarship. There seems to be much more potential to this line of research.

While this study addressed student learning via a methodology that examined student attitudes towards the commissioning project, it was clear to this researcher through observation that student learning does take place through participation in commissioning projects, although this study provides no evidence of that directly. A study that examines student learning directly inside of a commissioning project should be undertaken to determine the scope of this learning.

In conclusion, student attitudes do seem to be influenced through participation in a commissioning project, and it is up to music educators to decide how best shape these attitudes. Will music educators capitalize on the opportunity that these types of commissioning projects give to them and their students? These projects promote new music as well as the medium of the wind band as a serious artistic musical ensemble, but there seems to be a greater wealth of opportunity with these projects that some music educators realize. One value of these projects is the opportunity to engage students in music making in a much more personal way. Any opportunity that gives students the chance to engage musically with a composer or to explore their own creativity should be taken seriously. In an age of declining ensemble participation, mandated testing, ubiquity of technology, and new ways to experience music, any opportunity that music educators have to engage their students with the types of learning that commissioning projects can afford should not be overlooked. Wind band conductors want to promote the medium and gain further acceptance from peers. There is enough room in curricula to accomplish both the goals of the promotion of new and artistic music for the medium and the goals of student-focused outcomes.

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Appendix A: Ensemble Members Attitude Survey

Please circle the number that best fits your attitude towards each item. Circle a number for each item, but only circle one number. Do not write your name on the sheet.

1= Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3= Neutral 4= Agree 5= Strongly Agree

I. Attitude towards New Music and Composers in General

- | | | | | | | |
|-----|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | New Music is enjoyable to perform | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. | I enjoy performing the premiere of a new piece | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. | New Music is important to perform | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. | Popular music is more enjoyable to me than the music that we perform in band | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. | I understand what a composer does | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. | New Music is interesting to me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. | I understand what a popular songwriter does | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. | A composer is the musical equivalent of a songwriter | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. | I enjoy meeting the composer of a piece and interacting with him/her | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. | Understanding the composer's point of view helps me to understand his/her piece | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. | Anyone can compose music | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. | Participating in this project helps me to see the composer as a real person | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

II. Attitude towards Brian Balmages' *Temple of the Murals*

- | | | | | | | |
|-----|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13. | I enjoy playing this piece | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. | This piece is similar to other pieces I have played by Brian Balmages | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. | I understand the harmonic concepts found in this piece | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. | I understand the form of this piece | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. | Meeting the composer helps me believe that I can compose music | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

III. Demographic Information (Check only one category for each item)

18. I am a male female
19. My age is high school college
20. My primary performing medium is woodwind brass percussion
21. College students only: I am a music major non-music major
22. High School students only: I am planning on playing my instrument in a college band
- yes no undecided

Appendix B: Interview Questions for Qualitative Aspect

- 1) What is your role in the commissioning of new music for the wind band?
- 2) Of what importance is wind band music?
- 3) Commissioned music?
- 4) What makes you decide to take on a commission?
- 5) How much do you consider the strengths and weaknesses of the commissioning ensemble when composing a commissioned work?
- 6) Do students learn anything musically by participating in a commissioning project?
- 7) If so, then what concepts should music educators be seeking to incorporate in their curricula?
- 8) If not, then why commission music in a school setting?
- 9) Do a majority of wind bands perform quality repertoire?
- 10) Is student interaction with a composer an important component of a commissioning project?
- 11) Are students generally receptive to your music?
- 12) What is the one thing that you wish that more conductors (or composers) did or understood about the commissioning process?