

Friday, January 12, 2018

RE: Paradigm Shift with regards to philosophy and purpose of music department trip

Dr. McCoy,

Here is the clarifying description requested regarding the music trip to help the board understand the deviation of our normal request.

Up until this year, the purpose of our music trips was to participate in the Worldstrides (Heritage) music festivals hosted in various cities across the country. The festivals offered our students the opportunity to perform and be evaluated by nationally recognized instrumental and choral directors. These evaluations were based on Worldstrides rubrics (industry standard areas of focus when evaluating performing ensembles) and awards and ranking were given based on that feedback.

Although that process and feedback was extremely beneficial and informative for our students and my teaching, there was another part of their process that I identified as an even more foundational part of the experience. After we would perform, one of the professional adjudicators would come onstage and hold a 5 minute masterclass with our ensemble. During that 5 minutes there is such a deep and enriching exchange between our students and the conductor. Upon reflection of the last 12 years of traveling, this short time with these professionals has meant more than almost any other plaque or trophy. It has been for our students not only a professional reinforcement of techniques and concepts learned in class but also an extension into even more advanced techniques and concepts through the eyes and ears of even more advanced experts in the field.

So, we created our own version of festival where it is our intention to prepare our pieces in the same fashion, perform them for a professional conductor educator (working with Professor from Westchester University), but instead of only getting 5 minutes of interaction we have built in extended time (tentatively 1 hour). It is my belief that this will be an even more enriching educational experience. This belief is the driving force to alter our usual trip practices.

I hope this helps and am always free to answer any question you may have.

Respectfully,

Mr. LaCasse