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### Sociological Aspects of Music Education in Higher Education in Brazil, Canada, Israel, Norway, and the United States During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Edward Richard McClellan  
*Loyola University New Orleans, emcclell@loyno.edu*

Stian Vestby  
*Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences, stian.vestby@gmail.com*

Jennifer Lang  
*University of Saskatchewan, jennifer.lang@usask.ca*

Amira Ehrlich  
*Levinsky College of Education, tipehamusic@gmail.com*

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**Edward Richard McClellan**

Loyola University New Orleans

**Stian Vestby**

Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences

**Jennifer Lang**

University of Saskatchewan

**Amira Ehrlich**

Levinsky-Wingate Academic College

# **Sociological Aspects of Music Education in Higher Education in Brazil, Canada, Israel, Norway, and the United States During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

## **ABSTRACT**

*The purpose of this study was to examine the sociological aspects of music education and perspectives of university music education professors in five continents in relation to remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The concepts of community of practice and agency were used to investigate the social interaction, socialization, and collective impact of people and experiences observed in university-level music education in different parts of the world. As the global pandemic completely changed the conditions on university campuses and music education programs, each participant-author provided 1) an overview of the parameters of virtual and in-person instruction implemented by select institutions, 2) sociological aspects of music education in select institutions, and 3) the social, emotional, and mental health of students, faculty, and staff amidst the pandemic. As the conditions of the global pandemic had consequential impacts on music education programs at institutions of higher education in Brazil, Canada, Israel, Norway, and the United States, each university implemented varied models of instruction to address remote learning. Changes in conditions, circumstances, and sociological aspects of music education had an impact on the socialization, physical presence, and interaction, as well as on the social, emotional, and mental health of students, faculty, and staff. Universities need to broaden and*

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*secure services available to students, faculty, and staff that will cultivate supportive environments of learning, instruction, socialization, and communities of practice within music education departments and across the university.*

## Keywords

COVID-19, Sociological Aspects, Social, Emotional, Mental Health, Models of Remote Learning

The global COVID-19 pandemic has directly affected sectors such as health, education, and finance (Telli et al., 2020). Teaching, in general, can be considered a stressful profession (Gray et al., 2017; MetLife, 2013), and for music teachers, there are specific stressors, such as finding a balance between personal and professional life demands, the inclusion of job tasks not related to music, a lack of resources, and the experience of role overload, are commonplace (Scheib, 2003). Teachers may become anxious, considering leaving the field, and yet remain committed to their students (Educator Voice, 2020; Goldstein & Shapiro, 2020).

Music teachers have adapted to remote teaching and learning (Hash, 2021); however, early research indicates that the well-being of music teachers has suffered during the COVID-19 pandemic and high levels of depression have been reported (Parkes et al., 2021). For many music teachers, being unable to interact through music and sound in a timed and synchronous fashion meant a complete loss of their core professional practices—unable to sing together or conduct musical ensembles online in real time made their entire teaching aims and goals irrelevant.

Hash (2021, p. 384) suggested that the first six months of remote learning in Spring 2020 were “emergency teaching” rather than online distance learning (ODL). Hodges et al. (2020) noted that emergency remote teaching is different to carefully designed ODL. In addition to Hash’s (2021) work in the United States, there are a few researchers who have examined music teachers’ instructional experiences in other countries. Daubney and Fautley (2020, 2021) suggested that music education in England during the COVID-19 pandemic could be likened to “U-turns in the fog” (Daubney & Fautley, 2021, p. 3). Since the teaching professionals were holding communities together, educating young people, and feeding families in the most challenging of times, “they [the teachers] might also bring renewed respect for the profession” (Daubney & Fautley, 2021, p. 10).

In Australia, de Bruin (2021) explored the pedagogical practices and behaviors of 15 instrumental music teachers over 8 months of isolated remote learning. He found that the development of relatedness between teacher and student was critical. Relatedness was important not only for helping students connect with musical experiences, but also to the teacher. Relatedness is defined as the connection, and sense of belonging with others (Martin & Downson, 2009). De Bruin suggested that strong forms of connection, social expression, and relatedness were important in the

engagement between students and teacher(s) in musical experiences within their studies, as well as in student emotional engagement and well-being.

Remote or distance learning has existed as an option for music instruction since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when professional artists offered lessons through the mail (Martin, 1999). ODL presents both advantages and challenges. Advantages include facilitating instruction to remote areas, flexible scheduling, and reduced travel (Albert, 2015; Meyen et al., 1998; Welker & Berardino, 2005-2006). Some students also might feel that the online environment is a safer space compared to the traditional classroom (Huang, 2014). Challenges include ensuring access to technology for all students, especially in high-poverty (Warschauer et al., 2004) and rural (Sundeen & Sundeen, 2013) schools; maintaining privacy and security of online data and interactions, connectivity of networks, and firmware; and monitoring students' internet activity.

Convenience was one of the advantages of synchronous (Dammers, 2009) and asynchronous (Bayley & Waldron, 2020; Kenny, 2013; Waldron, 2013) eLearning cited most often, even for underserved students (Pike, 2017). In addition, eLearning or ODL can offer flexibility and multimodal pedagogy through written materials, message board discussions, emails, and videos. The internet facilitates these and other processes such as recording and file sharing, all of which might sustain students' interest more than traditional instruction (Koutsoupidou, 2014).

We experience and acknowledge that a large number of digital teaching and learning models and platforms have been employed during the pandemic. In this article our purpose is not to define or compare these models and platforms. However, we would like to emphasize that we generally consider the various digital technologies mentioned in the article as overlapping and interrelated with regards to form and function. Examples of this include “virtual teaching,” “online teaching,” “hybrid teaching,” “eLearning,” and “online distance learning.” These represent terms and technologies that are closely related and that have often been used interchangeably in the context of higher (music) education during the pandemic. As with more traditional forms of distance education, digital teaching and learning models and platforms embody “form[s] of education in which students, teachers, and teaching materials in different geographies are brought together through communication technology” (Keleş & Özel, 2016, p. 2). This generic understanding of the phenomenon underpins our use of various terms related to digital teaching and learning throughout this article.

## **THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES OF SOCIOLOGY**

Identifying the tenets of commonly studied sociological constructs that influence identity construction, can be traced back to research based on Blumer's (1969) symbolic interactionism. An extensive review of research on social theory, socialization, symbolic interactionism, occupational identity, and influences of the university school of music culture has shaped the context through which the music education profession has examined music teacher identity construction (McClellan 2017, p. 68). In this research, the concepts of “community of practice” and “agency” were used to investigate the

social interaction, socialization, and collective impact of people and experiences observed in university-level music education in different parts of the world. As noted, disempowerment among music teachers and students constitutes a focus in this study.

From a sociological point of view, research study participants are perceived as social actors acting within social spaces and social constructs (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1998). Sociocultural approaches stress the reciprocity of words, actions, and meanings. Rogoff (2003) promoted culturally informed sociological research as a means to expose regularities and patterns of change that underlie one's own everyday life and of those of others. Bruner (1990) advocated the study of "contexts of practice," insisting "it is always necessary to ask what people are doing or trying to do in that context" (p. 118). Exposing ways of knowing and experiencing music specific to music education, Barrett (2011) proposed possible insight to be gained from cross cultural research exposing multiple approaches to the development of musical thought and practice.

McClellan's (2014) literature review stated that symbolic interactionism is a sociological theory that has been used to investigate socialization and occupational identity among preservice music teachers (Isbell, 2008; L'Roy, 1983; Paul, 1998; Roberts, 2000; Wolfgang, 1990). Blumer (1969) created the term "symbolic interactionism" to propose that people act toward things based on the meaning those things ascribe to them; and these meanings are derived from social interaction and modified through interpretation. Austin et al. (2012) defined socialization as "the collective impact of people and experiences most connected to the individual or context," and claim occupational identity is "a merger of teacher-musician and self-other dimensions" (p. 67) based on symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969). Further, Austin et al. (2012) defined symbolic interactionism as "the process of interacting with and defining the actions of others—is mediated by people's interpretations of their surroundings and the symbolic meaning derived from their experiences" (p. 67). As such, symbolic interactionism and sociocultural theory constitute the main ontological premise of our study.

The concept of "community of practice" is directly linked to a social learning theory proposed by Wenger (1998). Wenger described that we are all part of distinct communities of practice, although the vast majority of these do not have labels, as membership is not always explicit. Community members interact with one another due to a shared learning need, bond due to collective learning, and produce common resources as a result. Communities of practice provide participants with environments that combine knowledge and practice and opportunities to learn through relationships with their peers and teachers in the community. Sociocultural learning (Schirato & Yell, 2000, p. 109-10; Wenger, 1998, 2009) stresses participation in a community in which members proceed by working actively towards a goal. An individual's own understanding of their role in a given situation or circumstance is constructed through participation in the community (McClellan, 2018).

The current study addresses music teachers and music students as social agents within the sociological and cultural contexts of their manifold classrooms. Lang's (2015)

literature review on “agency” was based on Willis’ (1978) theory that this construct refers to an individual’s capacity for action. Further clarifying that agency is the “will, ability, and power to act” (Lang, 2015, p. 14) serves as a guiding principle throughout the paper. The researchers contextualize the conditions and affordances for both educators and students to continue to engage in musicking (Small, 1998) through circumstances of adversity where that “ability” has been challenged. The main focus of the study is exploring moments of professional disempowerment, looking at moments when the effects of the pandemic disarmed music teachers, and their students, from what they had previously learned and worked hard to do best. Sociologically speaking, teachers and students had to relearn and re-acclaim their identities as teaching professionals and students.

## **PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Although many opportunities for learning music exist online (e.g., *Lessons in Your Home*, 2020), most university students receive instruction through face-to-face interaction with professors in university studios or music classrooms. Circumstances changed, however, in March 2020, when a novel coronavirus designated as COVID-19 led to a global pandemic.

The global pandemic (2020) resulted in higher education institutions moving entirely or partly to remote learning models from March 2020 to June 2021 of the 2020-2021 calendar year. With little or no preparation, university professors moved instruction from physical classrooms to remote online and offline platforms. As there had not been study of music education programs in institutions of higher education under these conditions, the purpose of this study was to examine the sociological aspects of music education and perspectives of university music education professors in five continents in relation to remote learning during this unprecedented time.

As the global coronavirus pandemic has completely changed the conditions on the university campus and in the study programs, each participant-author will provide 1) an overview of the parameters of virtual and in-person instruction implemented by select institutions, 2) sociological aspects of music education in select institutions, 3) the social, emotional, and mental health of students, faculty, and staff amidst the pandemic, and 4) recommendations that can improve social and emotional conditions, and circumstances of virtual instruction in the future.

## **PROCEDURES**

Participants-authors were five professors at universities in Brazil, Canada, Israel, Norway, and the United States who presented their findings on this subject in a panel presentation at the 2021 International Symposium of the Sociology of Music Education (ISSME). By participating in this study, each professor gave informed consent acknowledging the key elements of this research study (e.g., problem, purpose, research questions, their reflection and reporting regarding this period, and what their participation would involve). Their findings are presented in this paper.

Participants-authors analyzed the sociological aspects of music education through a symbolic interactionist lens, and from the perspective of agency, reporting on the conditions and practices of the university music education program, challenges and successes of socialization and the capacity for student and teacher action, student and faculty interaction, and communities of practice from March 2020 to June 2021 of the 2020-2021 calendar years (i.e., the period of enforced digitalization and home quarantine). Recommendations were made for improving social and emotional conditions, and circumstances of virtual instruction in future music education. The results, conclusions, and recommendations of the ISSME roundtable presentation are presented in this paper.

## **PARAMETERS OF VIRTUAL AND IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION**

Each participant-author in this study reported on the sociological conditions of his or her university music education program and general observations in their region and country. In response to the research question presenting an overview of the parameters of virtual and in-person instruction implemented at each institution, there were a variety of reports from the five participant-authors.

### **Brazil**

Since the start of the pandemic in March 2020 until June 2021, teaching, learning, and other student-related activities ranged from in-person to digital formats. In Brazil, the process of setting up virtual activities was slow and arduous since it depended on a diagnosis of the students' ability to obtain access to the internet, as well as proper devices, such as decent computers, laptops, or tablets. Federal universities welcome students from different social and economic backgrounds, in which many must pursue employment besides their studies. Some students come from the countryside to study in the university and, during the pandemic, had to move back to their hometowns, enduring limited access to the internet and scarcer resources.

### **Canada**

The online gathering platform originally offered by the university in Canada was not ideal for music instruction. Faculty had to advocate strongly to be supported in their preference to use Zoom, which was a more user-friendly platform and a program more conducive to pedagogical needs. Students often did not have cameras on their laptops or were in remote areas in which high-speed internet was not readily available or stable. Students were also responsible for purchasing their own devices, although the university did establish COVID-19 emergency relief funds for students.

In the new academic year in September 2021, all classes under 150 in which the professor wished to teach in person were conducted in that manner. Masks were worn; however, physical distancing was not required. For activities of elevated risk such as music performance, participants were required to be double vaccinated, allowing masks to be removed.

## Israel

Israel is a small country, and throughout the pandemic, it was featured in international headlines for both its ups and its downs. Israel was quick to recover from the first wave of COVID-19 in May 2020, but it was later represented as quite a failure. The second and third waves hit the country in September 2020 and January 2021, respectively, bringing Israel to the fore when the country scored the highest rate of daily new coronavirus infections per capita in September 2020.

During the pandemic, faculty experienced three alternative teaching structures and combinations between them, as the country fluctuated between full closures in March 2020, September 2020, January 2021; partial closures in between; and the final full re-opening of campus in March 2021. Universities implemented distance learning via Zoom from March 2020; outdoor socially distanced impromptu solutions were executed in October 2020, and hybrid teaching with some students on campus and others logging on Zoom was applied from March 2021 through June 2021.

## Norway

In Norway, the authorities' strategies and measures for infection control were rigorous and largely effective. In higher education institutions little physical interaction was allowed, and campuses changed overnight from various physical forms and formats to digital ones. In Norwegian institutions, a generally solid and accessible digital infrastructure across the sector, including student and teacher access to relevant hardware, software, digital learning platforms, and support systems, made this sudden shift possible. As such, the capacity to change and function was already built into the structure of higher education.

However, during the academic year 2020-21, many music education students benefited from dispensation programs that enabled in-person teaching and rehearsals on campus when the nature of the subject and the learning outcomes required it. Hence, a mix of physical and digital teaching and learning formats were implemented to ensure necessary minimum learning outcomes. At the institutions in question, physical activities on campus were carried out within strict infection control regimes, whose success depended on the students', teachers', and management's willingness and ability to act and cooperate.

## United States

In the United States, conditions varied from state to state, and local community to local community. The mayor in New Orleans held strict standards of wearing a mask and social distancing. Conditions at the university changed from most strict COVID-19 restrictions at the beginning of the pandemic (March 2020) until May 2021. At the beginning in March 2020, the campus closed, and all classes moved to online delivery. In the fall 2020, many courses were taught online; some courses in Hyflex format; and few in-person. In Hyflex format, half the class reported in-person while half the class simultaneously reported online. In the spring 2021 term, faculty continued in a similar manner with Hyflex and online delivery, with few in-person classes.



In the emergency mode of online delivery in March 2020, the university made an effort to provide laptops to students and faculty who needed to participate in online learning. Students, especially, faced challenges accessing broadband internet service to meet the needs of online instruction. Many times, students would locate internet hotspots across the city in which they would attend class via their laptop, tablet, or phone. As a result, students were only able to listen (i.e., audio) to class without participating, answering questions, or speaking during the class. Access to technology and broadband internet improved in the fall 2020 and spring 2021 semesters. There were still challenges with internet connections and computer hardware. The students' video access and participation were limited during this time.

Ensembles were limited to six or seven students. Rehearsals were limited to 30 minutes, and students were encouraged to meet outside. Ensemble performances were presented outdoors each semester. Students had the option of pre-recording their recital for streaming, or live-streaming their performance (with no audience) via the college's School of Music Facebook and YouTube pages. Recital performances limited the number of performers who could participate. The length of the recital was limited to a 30-minute performance, a 30-minute break, and 30-minute concluding performance.

### **Sociological Aspects**

The varied responses from each university describing the context and social climate during the pandemic outline the unique challenges presented to higher music education programs as they attempted to adapt programmatic delivery according to national, state, and provincial policies and restrictions. The participant-authors reported common themes and recounted the experiences of students, faculty, and staff at the five universities in response to the research question regarding sociological aspects of music education during the pandemic.

Music education students reported that learning outcomes were affected negatively. Students said that they would have learned more and more effectively if they had been allowed to follow traditional class schedules, play together, interact, create, and rehearse in-person with others, rather than in full or partial isolation from home. Regardless of some adverse reactions, in many situations where ensemble participation was optional, students still felt motivated and compelled to participate, indicating a strong will or agency to join a musical community and retain connections to music and others.

Program chairs often had to model steep learning curves, being the first to adapt and lead communities of lecturers and their students into new realms of interaction. Distance learning, especially during tight national lockdowns, led to an intensification of interaction. Faculty worked together intensively to support each other in creating new learning solutions. The sense of sharing between faculty members peaked in ways that are often uncommon under normal conditions.

The communities of practice aspect of each college or department quickly became apparent. It was a critical component that was built into many courses and

rehearsals that faculty facilitated, which involved entering the Zoom room early providing a space for students to congregate with limited intervention from the professor, who turned over the control of hosting duties to a student.

Program chairs monitored email and communication apps regularly, held informal meetings with students, or conducted office hours via the Zoom online portal. From March 2020 on, chairs maintained a high level of communication, advised meetings, counseled students regarding academic business, and advised and supported students regarding their mental health.

During the pandemic, WhatsApp and other communication apps emerged as the most accessible communicative platform, including, and to some extent empowering, even those students with less internet access and lower-level technological equipment and skills. Every cohort or program developed its own outlets for communication, in addition to the university learning management system. As these platforms intensified communication among students, and between students and faculty, lines of professional and personal schedules and boundaries were often blurred. Programs such as WhatsApp were also used for sharing recordings during performance courses.

Teachers on all campuses were also faced with a steep learning curve of using university learning management systems such as Blackboard or Canvas while teaching and conducting online. However, instructors were provided with many workshops and support on effective remote teaching if they chose to access them. In so doing, institutions sought to empower teachers, advocating for agency.

In terms of communication, faculty inboxes were flooded with a barrage of emails from upper administration regarding policies, procedures, and updates, which was led by pandemic response teams. While helpful yet overwhelming, there were at times different rules for different needs. Certain disciplines were often treated as special cases (i.e., science labs and fieldwork) that provided exemptions to the rules of online instruction or distance requirements. In Norway, many practical subjects within music education programs benefited from such dispensations.

Students, faculty, and staff reported that they felt overwhelmed by the large number of virtual activities. All participants were already connected on the internet checking emails, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter, watching and listening to music via YouTube, and Spotify. In addition to this routine, they were required to connect to all the platforms available for lectures and meetings.

Students and faculty complained about the excessive exposure to the internet, reporting fatigue and longing for direct human contact. The overwhelming feelings of intense use of social media and teaching/learning platforms did not guarantee a deep level of communication. Instead, participants reported that they revealed generally shallow exchanges, which can lead to frustrations and other negative states.

With some exceptions, in-person classes met with all participants wearing masks, and all were socially distanced. After class, all dispersed; there was no gathering at the end of the class meeting. In addition, there were normally no in-person gatherings on-

campus for the duration (i.e., March 2020-May 2021). Most meetings were conducted online via Zoom.

The pandemic heightened faculty and students' feelings of powerlessness, which is a key factor in one's feelings of having or lacking agency. For ensembles, leading rehearsals on Zoom left faculty feeling exhausted, as they were the ones responsible for the talking and planning, whereby students had the option, if desired, to sit back and be passive observers rather than active learners in the process. In fact, some students did not even turn on their cameras, resulting in black screens in the virtual classroom.

When student singers returned to in-person rehearsals on many campuses in January 2021, they still felt or acted as if they were muted in the outside world—as if their personas on Zoom had become their new norms of interaction. They were frightened to talk, socialize, and sing again, which is not surprising because they were told for more than a year that the very language they use to make music is dangerous—something to be feared and covered. Therefore, musical performers embodied retreat behaviors (i.e., in posture/alignment, in ownership, and contribution of their voices). Choral and singing instructors observed that muted musicians extended far beyond their physical manifestations and into psychological concerns in which students might not feel that they have agency regarding the ownership and contribution of their voices.

### **Social, Emotional, and Mental Health**

In response to the research question regarding the social, emotional, and mental health of students, faculty, and staff amidst the pandemic, participant-authors found similar conditions among their university sites. On all campuses, many students reported to participant-authors that they experienced increased loneliness, anxiety, distress, and reduced motivation, structure, and social contact during the pandemic. Participant-authors described different levels of social, emotional, and mental health issues as reported by their students, faculty, and staff. Corresponding to these accounts, each participant-author experienced substantial challenges to the community at their university. Similarly, faculty colleagues observed that reports of social, emotional, and health issues increased immensely during the pandemic, with many cases of depression, anxiety, and panic attacks.

Despite regular challenges among students, faculty, staff, and administration on matters of infection control, teaching methods, and altered exam forms, mutual support and cooperation have characterized each learning community throughout the pandemic. However, faculty reported that it was quite common to have in-class reports outlining the students' inability to follow the courses, due to medical prescriptions for antidepressant and anxiolytic medicines that caused disruptions to their learning processes.

In the Spring 2021, significant “Zoom fatigue” among students and faculty became evident on most campuses. Student engagement in online Zoom courses dropped; student participation in class activities and discussions suffered; and student attendance in Zoom classes lagged. There was noticeable overall fatigue among faculty

and students across campuses. In planning for fall 2021, the faculty and staff on most campuses worked to bring almost all courses, ensembles, activities, faculty and student meetings back to campus in-person, while there was interest in continuing online formats on others.

In Israel, the program chair assigned students to faculty, assigning specific students to specific faculty members in a type of buddy system, aimed at maintaining ongoing personal communication, making sure no student was unattended. Faculty members were guided on how to initiate Zoom sessions by addressing every student personally and allowing time for sharing emotions. Program chairs and faculty in Brazil, Canada, and the United States frequently assisted students with mental health issues that affected their performance in particular music courses. Chairs also assisted faculty with students' attendance, participation, and completion of coursework.

Each university established services for students' emotional and mental health. Students needed to schedule appointments for such services. University Offices of Accessible Education established procedures for requesting special accommodations for course participation and assignments. Student welfare organizations were accessible to all campus communities, with upscaled counseling, psychologists, and student services.

Faculty in Brazil, Canada, and Israel also hosted Music and Wellbeing Conferences, which led to the development of courses presented in an online modality to reach students from departments and locations across the university community. While the focus of mental and emotional health for students was a concern for faculty and administration throughout the pandemic, faculty also sought support for their own self-care practices from administrators.

## DISCUSSION

The COVID-19 pandemic caused unprecedented changes in the lives of people around the world (Miksza et al., 2022). Sociologically, it had numerous interwoven and interpersonal impacts on communities of practice and agency in music education; the dynamics of in-person and remote learning; and the social, emotional, and mental health of students, faculty, and staff in music education programs. For students and teachers, the nature and level of participation (McClellan, 2018; Wenger, 1998) and agency (Lang, 2015; Willis, 1978) changed in ways that gave rise to new practices, dilemmas, and ambivalences. In these processes, structural policies and institutional initiatives provided both tensions and solutions for individuals and agents in higher music education. Simply stated, students, teachers, program chairs, counseling centers, and others operated together in communities of practice (Wenger, 1998).

First, in attempts to remedy disempowerment and lack of participation, higher education institutions provided healthcare to students in many ways. While music education students at the university level have traditionally been socially active, creative, and engaged in each others' lives, numerous students reported experiencing loneliness, anxiety, distress, Zoom fatigue, reduced motivation, and in some cases depression,

during the pandemic. Individual isolation restricted the usual opportunities for socialization, interaction, and community across programs and the university overall. Hence, university counseling centers, student success centers, and student welfare organizations increased their availability to students, awareness of these issues during the school year, and support to students experiencing anxiety, stress, fatigue, and depression.

Even university administrators, school chairpersons, music education program chairs, and faculty were sensitive to these social and emotional issues, provided support to their students, and directed them to qualified individuals and services to obtain assistance during this trying time. Furthermore, administrators and chairs provided support to their faculty in addressing issues of class attendance, inadequate completion of course assignments, and student matters affecting completion of coursework. Program chairs also provided support for students' mental health themselves and by directing them to professional counseling at the university. In some cases, universities altered semester course grading from a traditional system (e.g., A, B, C, D, E, F) to a pass-fail system to lessen the stress and anxiety of competing coursework during the global pandemic. In summary, these efforts had positive effects on student participation and their dispositions and capability to act (Lang, 2015) in learning communities.

Second, as community was deemed important across each university throughout the pandemic, universities generally maintained regular communication regarding policy, procedures, etc. School directors and department chairs maintained high levels of communication with faculty, staff, and students through email, Apps, and platforms such as WhatsApp, Moodle, and Canvas to conduct advising. In some cases, these new platforms of digital communication created a stronger sense of community within faculty teams than had previously been experienced in their institution. As the few in-person classes were often socially distanced with masks, any type of gathering, whether social or academically related, were conducted online to continue a sense of community among students and continue music education as a community of practice (Wenger, 1998). Clearly, trying to cope with the consequences of the pandemic, institutions introduced new practices and forms of communication that, while not ideal and rid of dilemmas, gained sufficient degrees of legitimacy and strengthened the level of meaningful participation and identity among students and faculty (Austin, et al., 2012).

Third, students and faculty reported that shifting to a completely online learning situation resulted in negative learning outcomes. For academic institutions in general and music teacher education in particular, this was—and still is—a critical concern. Despite widespread fear of the virus and its severe consequences, transferring practical music courses and performance-based course components into fully digital teaching and learning settings was sometimes unwanted and illegitimate by students and teachers at some universities. In these cases, it was, on the one hand, seen as being of lesser value than traditional forms of operationalizing music and music education in physical communities of practice. On the other hand, maintaining some in-person classes and activities was considered crucial to secure the necessary minimum learning outcomes

for music teacher students. In such instances, program chairs and faculty exercised their agency and influence on university management and authorities to secure the required in-person classes and rehearsal opportunities. With infection-control measures in place, the risk of catching the virus even in physical communities of practice was minimized. Thus, the relative success of some music education programs during the pandemic was partly the result of initial disempowerment and forced digitalization turned into meaningful participation and beneficial learning by way of certain agents' skillful negotiation and influence on the micro-macro nexus (Lang, 2015; Willis, 1978).

In some cases, performance instructors developed and implemented creative methods for incorporating innovations that made use of talents and expertise, often within the digital realm, that had previously been untouched in their classrooms. Inviting students to self-record, and take an active role (Lang, 2015) in editing and production work was experienced as an exciting recognition of additional talents and skills for some students.

During lockdowns, faculty had students reach out to family members and neighbors, and they incorporated such home musical collaborations into the ensemble coursework. These activities provided a new aspect of community engagement and even activism in the college performance context through a shared learning need bond due to collective learning and production of common resources as a result (Wenger, 1998).

As noted, students and faculty continuously engaged in online learning frequently developed fatigue in using the online model. The isolation from others in front of a computer screen for extended hours led to professors teaching to darkened screens that created challenges in engaging students, adequately reading student responses, and captivating student interest in a similar manner to that of an in-person classroom. Consequently, relatedness (de Bruin, 2021; Martin & Downson, 2009) between teachers and students was often obstructed. Depending on factors such as fatigue, disempowerment, access to the internet, and level of technology and media resources available to students and faculty, individuals faced challenges in participating in online classes and completing fundamental responsibilities of teaching and learning music.

In some locations, the COVID-19 cycles created moments of hybrid teaching—where either student numbers were limited on campus or students were given the choice to either come to campus or attend online. During such times, most faculty found it difficult to balance having students in the classroom and others on Zoom. While faculty have learned to navigate the ups and downs of ODL, the hybrid twist of double-track teaching was still confusing. Pedagogies seemed to work either online or in person; trying to create a synthesis that would cater to two student populations at once was baffling and confusing for lecturers and for students alike. While one group was being attended to, the other was consequently ignored. Clearly, numerous teachers and students experienced reduced, sometimes even discriminatory, teaching and learning opportunities due to lack of relatedness (de Bruin, 2021; Martin & Downson, 2009),

agency (Lang, 2015; Willis, 1978), and meaningful participation (McClellan, 2018; Wenger, 1998) in hybrid teaching processes.

Despite the many problems that arose throughout extended periods of ODL and hybrid teaching, once campuses reopened, students (and certain faculty) in some countries were not so quick to return. Certain institutions began to understand that as long as ODL was an option—no matter how much Zoom fatigue and less-than-optimal performance experiences this entailed—students (and some faculty) adapted to the new normal lifestyle that COVID-19 forced upon them. While there may be agreement as to the better quality of on-campus learning, many students are hesitant to forego the benefits of home ODL—the flexibility in scheduling and the lack of travel and traffic. In some but not all locations, this gave rise to new legitimate practices and modes of participation even in higher music education.

## Conclusions

The conditions of the global pandemic between March 2020 and June 2021 had consequential impacts on music education programs at institutions of higher education in Brazil, Canada, Israel, Norway, and the United States. The circumstances at each university influenced the models of instruction implemented to address remote learning during this unprecedented period. Though varied models of online distance learning emerged, these adaptations and changes affected the sociological aspects of music education communities of practice and level of agency among participants and stakeholders in each respective institution.

From the transition to remote learning, accommodations to provide technological support to students and faculty, and adjustment to methodology that was primarily used in online instruction, students, faculty, and administrators had to become creative and innovative in finding new ways of executing instruction, applying curriculum, and implementing program requirements to meet the needs of students in such unparalleled times. These changes in conditions, circumstances, and sociological aspects of music education had an impact on the socialization, physical presence and interaction among, and the social, emotional, and mental health of students, faculty, and staff.

Recognizing these effects from March 2020 to June 2021, it is essential for universities to develop the resources necessary to sustain varied models of instruction implemented over this affected period of time. These assets include providing the proper equipment, technology, and access to broadband internet for both online and in-person instruction, and acknowledging the communal aspects of music-making in the future.

It is important for administration and faculty to also cultivate curricula, course offerings, and delivery platforms that can be easily adapted depending on the sociological conditions that exist during particular periods/times. It is crucial that such adaptive innovative structures provide opportunities for student interaction with other students and with faculty and provide for collective experiences among members of the

program's learning communities. It is vital for community members to interact with one another in shared learning activities, bond with others through collective learning experiences, and produce common resources and outcomes through the relationships they develop among peers and teachers in joint learning communities. Learning platforms and pedagogies provide opportunities to facilitate agency so that the will, power, and ability to act are experienced by both learners and teachers.

As social, emotional, and mental health were a concern, universities need to broaden the services available to students, faculty, and staff that will cultivate supportive environments of instruction, socialization, and communities of practice within departments (i.e., music education) and across the university. Establishing programs, support networks, and training for students, faculty, administration, and staff will prepare individuals for a variety of circumstances in the in-person and virtual classroom, and overall environment of the department, school, college, and university.

This study only provides an introduction into a line of research that needs further attention. While this inquiry may be among the first to examine conditions at universities across continents, further research is needed to examine the circumstances in more music education programs at other universities around the world. As COVID-19 and post-pandemic recovery continues during the composition of this report, we believe there is a need for additional studies to explore the evolving sociological conditions and methods of instruction that emerge to address more current circumstances that occur in higher music education programs due to the ever-changing conditions of the pandemic. As we move forward, it is crucial to continue to research ways that socialization, development of community, social, emotional, and mental conditions, and circumstances of virtual and remote teaching and learning can be further advanced in the future.

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### About the Authors

Edward McClellan is the Rita O. Huntsinger Distinguished Professor of Music, Associate Professor and Coordinator of Music Education at Loyola University New Orleans. Dr. McClellan is a member of the Editorial Boards for the *International Journal of Music Education*, *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education*, and *Music Educators Journal*. He has published research in the *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education*, *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, *Contributions to Music Education*, and *Music Educators Journal*. Dr. McClellan is member of the Steering Committee of the International Society for Sociology of Music Education, Louisiana State Chair of the Society of Research in Music Education, Louisiana State Chair of the Society of Music Teacher Education, LMEA Collegiate Division Chair of the National Association for Music Education, and Chair-Elect of the Instructional Strategies Special Research Interest Group for the National Association for Music Education.

Stian Vestby is Associate Professor of Music at Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences. He supervises students and teaches cultural theory and aesthetics as well as music performance. He is the Head of Music Studies at the same institution. Vestby's research explores the intersections of popular music, social class, gender, cultural and educational policy, and activism. He is currently working on the research project *Challenging country music's masculine domination: Feminine identities and creative signification in contemporary Nordica*. As a research fellow, he was a member of the research project *Musical gentrification and socio-cultural diversities* (supported by the Research Council of Norway). Vestby has published in Norwegian and international peer-reviewed journals and anthologies, and he has presented research results at conferences in Europe and the USA within popular music studies, festival studies, music education, cultural sociology, and cultural policy research.

Dr. Jennifer Lang is an Associate Professor of Music Education and the Director of Choral Activities at the University of Saskatchewan. She is a co-lead for the University's Signature Area in Health & Wellness and serves as Pillar Lead for Music, Arts, and

Wellbeing. She is the Graduate Chair and organizer of the Music Education in Action Series, the founder and organizer of the uSing uSask Choral Festival, and her choirs regularly perform with celebrated ensembles and composers. Jennifer's research examines engagement and agency in music education programs, including informal music learning, intergenerational singing programs, and language and music development for Newcomer Youth to Canada for which she holds several research grants. Jennifer is active as a conductor, choral adjudicator, and conference presenter and her forthcoming edited book, *Music and wellbeing in education and community contexts*, presents a variety of contributed chapters exploring the intersections of music education and wellbeing.

Amira Ehrlich is Dean of the Faculty of Music Education and Chair of Graduate Studies (M. Ed) in Music Education at Levinsky- Wingate Academic College in Tel Aviv, Israel; and a former faculty member of Mandel Leadership Institute's Program for Ultraorthodox women in Jerusalem. Amira is a music educator with more than twenty years' experience in the field of music, as a teacher, producer, and researcher. Her published writings explore sociological and cultural aspects of music education. Between 2015 - 2020 Amira has been a member of the international research team of Global Visions Through Mobilizing Networks: Co-Developing Intercultural Music Teacher Education in Finland, Israel and Nepal research project funded by the Academy of Finland. Since 2020 Amira has been the chair of the ISME International Society of Music Education's special interest group for spirituality in music education; and a member of the MSW (Music Spirituality and Wellbeing) steering group. In 2019, Amira co-hosted the International CDIME (Cultural Diversity in Music Education) conference; and is currently involved in book editing and planning on the NIME (Narrative in Music Education) conference team.