

TEACHING music

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HBCUs: Nurturing the Next Generation of Music Educators

Perspectives on the invaluable role of HBCUs and the future of music education

How do you tell a big, complex, powerful, and important story in a few pages of a magazine? Maybe a good place to start is to realize that while there are overall themes and a storyline, it is really about hundreds of thousands of stories that connect across space and time, shaped by a rich cultural heritage, generational mentoring, leadership, collaboration, and inspiration.

This article shares a few perspectives from outstanding music education leaders who were profoundly impacted by their experiences at various Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and/or whose musical journeys led them to devote their careers to guiding HBCU students in the pursuit of excellence.

There are many more inspirational people connected to HBCUs. If you were or are a music education student or faculty member at an HBCU and want to share a quote or story with NafME about your experience, contact marcomm@nafme.org.

T. MARSHALL JONES

A native of Orange County, Virginia, Jones has a Bachelor of Science in Instrumental Music Education from Virginia State University in Petersburg, Virginia, a Master of Music from the University of Michigan School of Music in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and a Doctorate in Music

Education from the University of Oklahoma School of Music in Norman. After serving as band director at the Lapeer State Training School in Lapeer, Michigan, he became Director of Bands at Albany State (College) University in Albany, Georgia. Jones served at Albany State in various capacities for 47 years. He has been awarded a number of regional and national honors. In 2011, the school named its Lyceum Series for him: The T. Marshall Jones Lyceum Series.

TM: *How did you get your start as a musician and educator?*

JONES: When I was 5 years old, my blind uncle “JD” taught me a few chords on the guitar when people gathered at our home in Barboursville, Virginia. And later, my mother’s brother sent me a guitar. I always had a keen ear for what was played on the radio. Then, at my elementary school — which had two rooms, with the upper room for grades 4–7 — my teacher gave me piano lessons.

We need more music educators across the country at all levels to buy into the significance of studying African American music... We need to develop a broader scope of offerings, degrees with purpose and rationale, and good career paths. Why not have a full-blown degree focused on African American music, just as there has been for Western music?

T. MARSHALL JONES



T. Marshall Jones (right) with his son (at the organ) and students at the Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Albany, Georgia

When I was in 7th grade, I went to a high school that was 25 miles away, each way. I wanted to join the band. They wanted me to play clarinet, but I was drawn to the trombone. I had three different music teachers in high school. The last one was a trombonist, Elmer Sampson. I adored him. He had good instrumental ensembles and choirs. Every year, we got superior ratings in marching and performance. *He did not just tell me — he showed me how to play.* He also introduced me to Virginia State, where we had gone each year for band and choir festivals. That led me to study there from 1952 to 1956.

TM: *What are some of the highlights for you as a music educator? What are you proudest of?*

JONES: I accepted a job at Albany State University as director of bands, arriving there on July 4, 1963. They only had a 32-piece band, and there were no scholarships. I was assigned travel to cities to set up visits to talk to band directors and students. As the band began to grow, I managed to convince the administration to provide some funds for quality musicians. As the program's reputation grew, many high school directors began to recommend our program. We became competitive with other bands and grew to 135 musicians.

TM: *What are some of the most important strengths that HBCUs have, especially related to music education?*

JONES: HBCUs have made many contributions. They have given the field of music education an alternative to consider as we have shared the culture of our ancestors, who came, not of their own will, from Western Africa starting in 1619. HBCUs provide an alternative as creative as the European tradition, an emphasis that was thrust upon us. We no longer had to accept the creativity of centuries-old dead composers. We could be exposed to live composers in real time.

Being able to offer courses in jazz history, improvisation, theory, arranging, and technology in the curriculum was enormously important. We also collaborated with business and



The first recognized Black College and University was The Institute for Colored Youth, which was established in 1837 in Cheyney, Pennsylvania. The Institute's mission was to address the initial educational needs of Black students. Consequently, the Institute and two other universities, Lincoln University, in Pennsylvania (1854), and Wilberforce University, in Ohio (1856), only addressed elementary and secondary education. Over time, the expansion of HBCUs would grow to 107 and provide educational opportunities in all disciplines, degrees, research, the arts, law, medicine, and so much more.

There is a rich history surrounding HBCUs and the profound importance they played in educating Black students, particularly when Black students were denied admission to white institutions. Denied access did not deter Black students and faculty. Then and now, HBCUs continue to produce excellent musical artists, composers, opera singers, researchers, and educators.

As the White House Initiatives continue to support, promote, and build the capacity of HBCUs, it is imperative that we, as a music education organization, connect with the students and faculty at HBCUs in an intentional effort to create more diverse music associations and workforce. I am exceptionally grateful to the contributors of this article which is written to highlight the great music programs and teaching at HBCUs.

Here is an additional resource to learn more about music programs at HBCUs: www.thehundred-seven.org/more-than-a-band-1.html

Mackie Spradley, NAFME President

industry to support these efforts. For example, we wrote a proposal to support having an expanded curriculum and got some funding from an executive in New York who was interested in African American music.

Given these music education alternatives, many students from HBCUs went on to become world-class performers, composers, and executives in different fields. One student, Travis Pratt, from Tifton, Georgia, became famous on American television and then all over the world, including performing with the Houston Opera. He is now performing in New York City.

There have been so many HBCU teachers, performers, and composers who have possessed an uncanny ability to relate to their students in a transformative way, with musical roots that connect back to Africa.

We have had an edge in bringing out the musicality and nuances that others just did not seem to manifest, including rhythmic interpretation and stylistic feel. *We were inspired to play with spirit, vitality, enthusiasm, and drive.* When I was a student at Virginia State, it was expected that we would be highly skilled and perform at a higher level of confidence. My trombone teacher inspired me to be the best I could be.

TM: *What are some of the key challenges or opportunities you see?*

JONES: We need to create a culture of collaboration. I remember working with the conductor of the Albany Symphony Orchestra to perform a series of works by African American composers. Some were skeptical at first. I serve as the minister of music at the Mt. Zion Baptist Church, on the



south side of Albany. We hired a renowned singer, and each year got up-and-coming classical music students from the Sphinx music organization to perform with the orchestra, including the Harlem Quartet and many others. When the orchestra performed a program in my honor, they invited a 15-year-old African American violinist who commanded the stage with masterful skills.

We also need to get more music educators across the country at all levels to buy into the significance of studying African American music. There are opportunities for the gospel and concert choir traditions to coexist better, and we can find ways to integrate African American music where it fits across the core curriculum. We need to develop a broader scope of offerings, degrees with purpose and rationale, and good career paths. Why not have a full-blown degree focused on African American music, just as there has been for Western music?

In 1972, when I was at the University of Oklahoma, I was playing in a 30-piece trombone choir, directed by Dr. Irvin Wagner, from the Eastman School of Music. We were invited to Atlanta to perform at the MENC [Music Educators National Conference, now NAFME] convention in March. When we arrived, there was not one African American person on the conference program. *How do you hold a convention in Atlanta and not have one African American on the program?* As a result, we expressed our feelings to the national organization. Ted McDaniel allowed us to meet in the Morehouse College band room. And from that meeting, the National Black Music Caucus was founded. For 25 years, we performed concerts, conducted workshops in every type of genre, and subsequently became the National Association for the Study & Performance of African American Music (NASPAAM). 2022 is NASPAAM's 50th anniversary. We have made great progress over the past 50 years.

TM: Any final thoughts about the future?

JONES: We need to prepare students to be more proficient and to have good technical skills that they manifest in all phases of music and in life. If it can be thought of, it can happen in the 21st century.

It has been a great thrill watching my students grow. Frankly, I had to tell some that they might consider another profession. Later, they thanked me for my advice — they told me it was the right decision. For those who do perform, you want listeners to be moved in an emotional way by what you do. How did you deal with the crescendo, or decrescendo, or improvisation? Sometimes we try to make it too academic. Listen, for example, to Fletcher Henderson. He was a very influential African American pianist, bandleader, arranger, and composer who helped pave the way for big band jazz and swing bands. One of the things I am most proud of is creating a jazz festival in his name in Cuthbert, Georgia, in 1987.

ANGELICA BROOKS

Brooks earned a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance and Media Management from the Bowie State University in Bowie, Maryland. She completed graduate work in the Master of Music program with a focus in Vocal Pedagogy from The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. She is currently a DMA Candidate in the Music Teaching and Learning program at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. An acclaimed choral director and music educator, she has taught at all levels and served various student populations. Brooks was recently the director of choral activities at Bowie High School in Prince George's County, Maryland, where she taught choir, drama, and music theory. She is a member of the National Association for Music Education Equity Committee, the American Choral Directors Association, and Sigma Alpha Iota International Music Fraternity, and she is active as a choir guest conductor, choral festival adjudicator, conference presenter, mentor teacher, and curriculum writer.

TM: What led you to be a musician and music educator?

BROOKS: I came from a musical family. My father played the piano, and my mother was a singer. I was exposed to music at an early age. My grandma wanted me to play piano, as my father was a church musician. I started taking formal lessons on the piano when I was 7 or 8 years old and was already singing in church at that time. By the upper-elementary grades, I was thinking, "This is what I want to do the rest of my life." People loved to hear me sing, and I loved it. By high school, I auditioned for a scholarship at Bowie State University, the oldest HBCU in Maryland.

TM: Did you have any mentors who were especially meaningful for you?

BROOKS: My high school choral teacher, Ned Lewis. I tell the story often. When he came, we needed a rejuvenation in the program. For me personally, I was going through a lot of trauma in my home life. Music gave me hope. Having someone who believed in me at that time in my life was so important. He worked with me after school, helped me with solos, and encouraged me.

TM: What was most impactful about your time at Bowie State University?

BROOKS: It has a rich culture that empowers students to reflect on our own excellence and history as a people. It was not until I went to a PWI (primarily white Institution) that I realized what an affirming experience I had. At Bowie State, people said my name right. We covered classical music, but also jazz and gospel. We were exposed to different genres. My major was vocal performance, so I sang arias, but I also sang in the jazz band, gospel choir, and with the marching band. I had opportunities to explore diverse genres that have rich traditions.

TM: What are some things you are proudest of in your career so far?

BROOKS: My change in perspective regarding music education. In my early years, I thought I had to teach as I was taught, but through training,



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ANGELICA BROOKS



Photo by Randall Pike

professional development, reading, and the influence of mentor teachers, I learned how to be a more responsive educator — to see the needs of my students. I learned not to get too caught up in my own view. I changed the way I catered programs for middle school and high school.

TM: *What do you see as some of the most important contributions HBCUs have made to music education?*

BROOKS: They've played an invaluable role in continuing to train and prepare minority music educators. As the National Education Association says, "Education justice is racial justice." There is a huge disparity between the number of minority and Caucasian educators. We need more minority voices at the table to help shape curricula and serve on local music education association boards. It is important. The way we do the work, the fight we have to do: *It starts with who we have before us.* And not just having minority teachers, but also giving them the training they need to be culturally responsive, since we all came up through a Western-dominated system. It is important to have diverse representation in the classroom and the curriculum. The most important thing HBCUs do is prepare people to serve our students.

HBCUs have also provided an opportunity for music to grow in more than one genre. That is key for educators when they leave a university setting. When you go to a PreK–12 setting, you won't have a chamber ensemble in front of you. You need capability and

confidence when you come in, not just as a master of music, but as a facilitator of great learning experiences.

Another strength of HBCUs is how one generation influences another. They have strong choral, chamber, and marching band programs. They have students who can learn from aural and written traditions, have a great ear, and can hear progressions and patterns. I grew up in the church. I learned early how to hear a "5 of 5" (the dominant of the dominant) just by listening to hymns. Many of them have secondary dominants. I also had a lot of influences from jazz, blues, and funk, especially from '70s music. They all have these harmonic underpinnings that allow people to hear and replicate complex melodies and harmonies. That is an advantage at HBCUs: having music educators who are astute in reading, hearing, and writing music.

TM: *What are you studying in your doctoral program?*

BROOKS: I am focusing on music teaching and learning. I am looking at either being in academia, a professor, or starting or working with a non-profit focusing on making the field of music education more socially just and culturally relevant.

TM: *What types of initiatives and research would you like to see in the future?*

BROOKS: A greater emphasis on social justice through recruiting and retaining minority teachers. I did a project where I interviewed district leaders, officers in charge of hiring,

There may be general awareness of social justice issues, but what is your district or university doing about it? We see a disparity, but how do we fix it? Not everyone can agree on what the work is. We all have to look back at our practices and ask: Who do they cater to? Who do they exclude? We need to expand outreach in hiring and recruiting to different universities, such as HBCUs, and not just advertise in the one medium we may have used in the past, such as through music education associations.

We also need to take a more critical look at how teachers are being assessed for licensure, especially praxis. There are better ways to assess a student's knowledge of music, music pedagogy, and readiness to teach PreK–12 music. We have to take a critical look at practices, systems, and barriers that make it harder for teachers of color to enter the profession. It's not about getting rid of benchmarks, but rather about making them more culturally relevant and making processes more socially just.

If there are teachers who are looking for ways to be more diverse and improve their programs, it can be as simple as listening to your students. We have to examine what we are doing and who we are serving — or excluding. My biggest change in perspective came from listening to my students. We should promote lifelong learning and connect through what our students love and enjoy: music.

Photo by Philip McCollum



UZEE BROWN JR.

A native of Cowpens, South Carolina, Brown is chair of the Division of Creative and Performing Arts at Morehouse College in Atlanta and is editor of the Morehouse College Choral Series at GIA Publications in Chicago. He formerly served as chair of music at Clark Atlanta University, and as director of the historic Ebenezer Baptist Church Choir in Atlanta. His diverse career as educator, singer/performer, composer/arranger, and choir director has taken him to more than 26 countries. He holds a bachelor's degree from Morehouse College, a master's degree in composition from Bowling Green State University, and master's and doctoral degrees from the University of Michigan. In 2011, he was voted Vulcan Teacher of the Year at Morehouse College.

TM: *When did you know you wanted to devote your career to music and music education?*

BROWN: I did not come to it until my sophomore year at Morehouse. I enrolled as a pre-med student but was also involved with the glee club and band. I became fascinated by music and started spending more time in the practice room than in the labs. I had to make a decision. Once I got into music, I was totally immersed. Morehouse provided a very supportive smaller-college environment.

TM: *What are some of the most important influences on your career?*

BROWN: Benjamin E. Mays, who was an important mentor to Martin

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UZEE BROWN JR.

Luther King Jr., and a past president of Morehouse College, was an early influence who meant a lot to me. He was from South Carolina, as I was. I went to Benjamin E. Mays High School and was able to meet him. I related to his journey. In his 1981 book *Lord, The People Have Driven Me On*, he talked about going places and achieving things that he never knew he would, but he also never doubted that he could do it.

Morehouse was an educational mecca like nothing else for me. It was at the center of civil and human rights. I was able to work with teachers and mentors who had national and

international careers, such as Wendall Phillips Whalum, a major figure as a choral director and a close friend of conductor Robert Shaw.

During my freshman year, I was in the glee club. We participated in a choral festival with 16 countries, sang at the Lincoln Center and National Cathedral, and performed with Robert Shaw as conductor. Then, in my senior year, we worked with Dr. T.J. Anderson, a distinguished composer and professor who was the first African American resident composer with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. He is well known for his orchestration of Scott Joplin's opera *Treemonisha*,

What Defines an HBCU?

According to "Fast Facts" from the National Center for Education Statistics (Historically Black Colleges and Universities (667) (ED.gov), "HBCUs are a source of accomplishment and great pride for the African American community as well as the entire nation. The Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, defines an HBCU as: '... any historically black college or university that was established prior to 1964, whose principal mission was, and is, the education of black Americans, and that is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association determined by the Secretary [of Education] to be a reliable authority as to the quality of training offered or is, according to such an agency or association, making reasonable progress toward accreditation.' HBCUs offer all students, regardless of race, an opportunity to develop their skills and talents. These institutions train young people who go on to serve domestically and internationally in the professions as entrepreneurs and in the public and private sectors."



which premiered in Atlanta in 1972, and in which I sang one of the leading roles as Parson Alltalk.

TM: What do you see as some of the most important contributions HBCUs have made to music education?

BROWN: There are many. They have made an extraordinary contribution to people of color. They have provided rich learning environments for students with very limited opportunities where they could hone their skills to the point of being competitive with any university or conservatory. I know for sure that without HBCUs, many students would have had no chance to competitively audition in a predominantly white institution as freshmen.

HBCUs provide personal support and individual attention, which is extremely important. It is an enabling environment that keeps students from falling through the cracks. HBCUs provide networking opportunities for students, and those relationships last throughout their careers.

I serve as a member of the Faculty Council and as an evaluation team chair on accreditation for the National Association of Schools of Music, but I am equally as proud to be a past president of the National Association of Negro Musicians, an important nurturing ground for African American music education, composers, and performers. It is the oldest such organization, and it was founded in Chicago in 1919 against the backdrop of race riots in the city. Their first scholarship went to the famous singer Marian Anderson.

I went on to do graduate work at Bowling Green and Michigan, and have worked in other countries, but nothing was more impactful for me than my beginning at Morehouse. I do that type of mentoring for my students now. I have the ability to understand students of color. Though often having fewer resources, we put in a greater effort to hold onto these students and see them through graduation and assist them in identifying next steps in their careers, including finding jobs.

We also help them determine their strengths and weaknesses. Not everyone is destined for the concert stage or the classroom. We try to find that niche where the student shines and can find gainful employment. I believe we should pay it forward. It is important to step up to the plate and see things in our students that they may not see in themselves at first. There are urgencies in life — things we have to do if we are going to make a difference. We are called to fill a vacuum. Driving other people on to be the best they can be is not self-serving; it is a responsibility that we have to the next generation.

TM: What do you see as some of the key opportunities or challenges for HBCUs?

BROWN: We do have some challenges. We are not a utopia. HBCUs have limited endowments. Many are not public universities, so they have a harder time with funding and staying competitive. There is also much work to be done to upgrade facilities, including making them more viable with technology.

We have to take advantage of things that are historically strengths of HBCUs. There is much to celebrate. We have to do a better job of selling HBCUs, especially at the administrative level. I have really appreciated the tremendous dedication and innovation of our faculty to make things work in spite of the challenges we have faced.

TM: What is your vision for the future?

BROWN: For higher education in general, we have to get out of the one size-fits-all paradigms. We have to prepare students for the present age, not just what we know now, but for creative new disciplines and possibilities. In the music industry, we need people in control who have a feel for the profession. We also need more students to graduate who have a background in music industry, management, music software engineering, teaching, and instructional software development.

I have been involved with the Atlanta Opera. I appreciate that they are doing innovative things such as “The 96-Hour Opera Project” [a composition competition in which teams of composers and librettists have four days to write, cast, direct, and stage completely new 10-minute operas]. If we want to revitalize interest, we need to find composers and stories that are relevant to new generations. We need to find new ways to do things in fields that are old.

We also have to look at assessment and evaluation with fresh eyes. Quantitative assessment is important in music, but there must also be measurable qualitative assessments. Also, we need administrators who understand what it takes to teach music. Some only look at cost, or they look at costs in the arts compared to STEM fields (for example, the cost of a new grand piano can be a head-turner).

The thing I am proudest of in my career is what all my students do. They are the product. Some graduate with a music degree and stay in music, others become doctors, judges, lawyers, or work in industry. Some work in music therapy, or music and psychology, or different interdisciplinary studies. Martin Luther King Jr. talked about sources by which we make a living and *what makes life worth living*. The arts are very important for the human element. I have lost students from my programs who left totally frustrated due to parents who wanted their child to go into well-paying professions such as law, business, or medicine. I am proud that I am the chair of the *Creative and Performing Arts Department*. The world needs people who are committed to the field and who are expressive in creative, positive ways.

TAYLOR WHITEHEAD

A native of Virginia, Taylor played tuba and served as marching band drum major during his junior and senior years of high school. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Music Education from Virginia State University and a Master of Music Education from Norfolk State University. Under his leadership as band director for 20 years at Warren County High School in Warrenton, North Carolina, the Dynamic Marching Machine became one of the most successful show-style marching bands in North Carolina and throughout the nation, winning many honors, including nine National High Stepping Drumline Championships. Since 2018, he has been at VSU, serving as the assistant band director and a member of the music faculty. Whitehead is active in several national fraternities and organizations, including the HBCU Band Directors' Consortium and the Intercollegiate Music Association. He is also the co-author of *The HBCU Experience: The HBCU Band Alumni Edition*.

TM: *When did you know you wanted to devote your career to music education?*

WHITEHEAD: It wasn't until I was a freshman in college. My mom was a guidance counselor and educator. I enjoyed participating in music, but my mom said, "if you want to make money, don't go into education." During freshman orientation, I had to choose a major. I was planning to major in mass communication. I was interested in going into radio. However, my college band director told me, "I think you are making a mistake. I think you would make a great band director." That was great advice!

TM: *Did you have any special mentors?*

WHITEHEAD: My high school and college band directors were heavy influences. My high school band director was a graduate of Virginia State University, and so were my parents. It was in my blood. I joined band in 6th grade and quickly fell in love with the tuba. My high school band director kept me engaged in solo



Photo by James Holden Jr.

We need to improve our institutions and policies and provide more resources — particularly at the high school level. For some students who struggle with behavioral issues, band is huge; some go on to college because of their experience with band.

TAYLOR WHITEHEAD

and ensemble and other competitions. When I got to college, the band director was already an HBCU legend, Harold Haughton Sr. He had been at Jackson State University. In college, I was a sponge. A lot of my pedagogy comes from his style of teaching.

TM: *What have been some other highlights from your experience with HBCUs?*

WHITEHEAD: We in the HBCU community are very proud of our institutions. There is a lot of attention on marching bands, but we have a rich, storied history of great musicianship overall. We have had many legendary musicians and artists come through, including with jazz and concert bands. For example, Billy Taylor, a jazz pianist, was a graduate of Virginia State University. I have had many opportunities to travel, to get exposure and perform, including at the Meadowlands in New Jersey.


As an educator at a HBCU, a highlight has been being able to give back.

I travel the East Coast recruiting. Most HBCU band directors are in a recruiting war. We all know who the 5-star recruits are, we all are trying to get them. I have been able to give scholarships to a variety of students who could not have attended college without that support.

One of my proudest accomplishments was as a high school band director for 20 years. I started in 1997, just out of college. The band was decent, but they had not done much on the competitive side in a few years. I got us involved in marching, indoor percussion, and national high-stepping competitions. We won the Class A national band championship seven times and were overall national drumline champions nine times — very few have won multiple times.

TM: *What were the key ingredients for that success?*

WHITEHEAD: Hard work, dedication, and sacrifice. I learned important lessons from my father, who was a brick



mason. He worked tediously, step by step, to make sure everything was straight. I had that same approach with my students. I had kids with a lot of heart and desire to achieve. Once they experienced winning, they got addicted to that. From 2000 to 2018, we competed almost weekly.

TM: What do you see as some of the most important contributions HBCUs have made to music education overall?

WHITEHEAD: Maybe the biggest one is producing a plethora of outstanding music educators in our school systems. With over 100 HBCUs, there are a lot of good education departments — Virginia State, Norfolk State, Florida A&M, Bethune Cookman in Florida, and so on. They are putting out excellent educators. I don't like to do comparisons, but looking at PWIs and HBCUs, a lot of our schools are in the heart of our communities. We do a lot of school and community partnerships. At Virginia State, for example, we play at the Amazon facility in our area. Everyone wants to see HBCU marching bands perform and dance, but when we go, we don't always dance — we want to show their musicianship. We do business openings, funerals, and weddings.

TM: What other strengths do HBCUs have?

WHITEHEAD: We serve the purpose HBCUs were created for, going back to after the Civil War: to enable Blacks to get an education. So many of our students come from low socio-economic backgrounds. Without HBCUs, they might not have these opportunities to enrich their lives. We graduate out many doctors, lawyers, and other professionals; many would not be in those positions without HBCUs.

Now, interestingly, we are seeing quite a bit of inclusion and diversity in our programs, more Latinos, trans students, Asians. Some people fought that at first, but it is here. As we become more diverse, it helps our growth.

TM: What types of research or initiatives do you think are needed going forward?

WHITEHEAD: I did my master's thesis on the impact that music has on student academic achievement. Administrators often see music as an extracurricular. I see the social skills and other skills students develop in music as having a great impact on academic achievement.

I am working on a doctorate now. My dissertation will be on the historical development of band programs at HBCUs. I am a big John Philip Sousa fan, but there is so much music out there, including things like barbershop music. Unfortunately, the history of HBCU band programs is not well-documented. I consider myself in the fourth generation of HBCU band directors. Dr. William P. Foster was a very impactful director to the HBCU band world. He taught for 52 years at Florida A&M, retiring in 1998. Like Dr. Foster, there were many other greats who made significant contributions to HBCU bands across the country. My desire is to document the development of programs at HBCUs.

TM: What is your vision for the future?

WHITEHEAD: My philosophy of music is that I believe every child may not have the interest, but all children deserve the opportunity to learn. In so many communities I visit, I meet students who have the desire, but due to circumstances don't have the opportunity. We need to improve our institutions and policies and provide more resources — particularly at the high school level. For some students who struggle with behavioral issues, band is huge; some go on to college because of their experience with band.

As we continue to grow our programs, I also want to see us be more visible nationally, not only having one HBCU at the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade.

When I first started my career, I had struggles in the classrooms my first couple years with classroom management. When I passed out different music, they couldn't sight-read. That led to friction. It was a learning process for me. Having resources for music educators is so valuable.



Arts education is a vital right, not merely an option. It has always been and will continue to be an important element of education's core truths and fabric. The ideals are intensified when they are combined with the concepts of inclusion and equity. This has shaped my pedagogical attitude as a former music educator and current principal. It is a responsibility that I accept daily.

Equally vital is ensuring that all students have equal opportunity. This is what motivates funding decisions to ensure that both Title I and non-Title I students in the same city have similar opportunities to succeed. It is our obligation to guarantee that arts education continues to grow in schools. As a principal, I have led the charge for arts education ideals while also directing our Performing Arts Department's expansion and growth. If you want to discover what other people value, follow their money.

Benny Bolden, Ph.D.

HBCU Alumnus (FAMU), and former Band Director (Miami Northwestern & Barron Collier High School)

Principal, R. Frank Nims Middle School, Tallahassee, Florida

Adjunct Professor, Florida State University

SHELBY CHIPMAN

A native of Miami, Chipman is the director of bands and professor of music at Florida A&M University (FAMU). His responsibilities include teaching Instrumental music education, assisting with student teachers, and conducting the marching and pep bands, wind symphony, symphonic band, and string ensemble. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Computer Science and Music Education from FAMU, a Master of Music Education at the University of Illinois, and Ph.D. in Music Education from the Florida State University (FSU) College of Music. Previously, he taught music in the Miami-Dade County Public School system for 10 years. His band program at Miami Central High School developed into one of the finest band programs in the country. He is an active adjudicator and clinician throughout the Southeastern United States and currently serves as music director/conductor of the Tallahassee Big Bend Community Orchestra and president of the Florida Music Education Association.

TM: *Who have been some of your biggest influences on your music education career?*

CHIPMAN: I have been very fortunate to have some outstanding mentors. At FAMU, I was a conducting student of Dr. William P. Foster and Dr. Julian E. White. At FSU, I studied with Dr. Bentley Shellahamer.

TM: *What do you see as some of the most important contributions HBCUs have made to music education?*

CHIPMAN: HBCUs provide a stable and nurturing environment for those most at risk of not entering or completing college: low-income, first-generation college students.

Although prior to 1964, HBCUs' mission was exclusively to educate Blacks, they now provide other minorities and underrepresented students the opportunity to pursue a postsecondary education. Attending an HBCU music program provides a means for students who may not otherwise have an opportunity to attend



Shelby Chipman conducting the Florida A&M University marching band

It is essential that HBCUs step up to the plate...They must be committed to seeking resources, endowments, and support systems that will help strengthen our ability to ensure the success of tomorrow's students.

SHELBY CHIPMAN

college. Over the years, SAT and ACT scores, as well as GPA requirements, have risen. HBCUs have maintained a platform that sets standards, but also provides exceptional student entrance opportunities in various academic programs on their campuses. We have music education students from different backgrounds including Hispanic, Asian, White, and Creole.

HBCU bands and choirs serve as ambassadors for their universities and are often at the center of culture on campus. They're also fundamental to HBCU marketing and recruiting efforts. Even HBCU students and alumni who are not members of their school's marching band often rank it as a top reason why they chose to attend their college. As some of the most visible organizations for HBCUs off-campus, marching bands allow these schools to gain visibility and prestige for more than academics.

They both play a key role at HBCUs for recruiting and fundraising, but they are also important cultural institutions that help shape the HBCU experience, from performing during events at the local, national, and international levels to entertaining audiences on campus.

TM: *What do you see as some of the most important strengths of HBCUs?*

CHIPMAN: HBCUs have accumulated years of experience in educating ethnically diverse groups, provided faculty and students experiences in a challenging global market, and have made it possible to educate and train professionals despite extremely limited resources. HBCU music teacher education systems have helped strengthen stronger arts/music education programs that support community music programs. HBCUs have provided a musical language that expands our understanding

Shelby Chipman's FAMU Students on What College Band Means to Them



"As a young woman in the Marching 100, it is not only important that I see other women in the band, but also women in leadership. Being able to have role models and mentors that I can relate to on a personal level to help me navigate my journey through college is something that I will never take lightly. The Marching 100 has given me so many opportunities to experience leadership, as well as be a leader myself. I hold my position as university bands chaplain with pride and honor, knowing that another young woman is looking at me as inspiration for whatever goals she may want to achieve."

—Kyndall Sirmons, biology student, College of Science and Technology

"As a Hispanic student at an HBCU, you first think it's not your place — not your place to branch out and lead — but that isn't the case. With the right attitude and mentality, you can become something great. And you might not be the first, but you can definitely be the best. I'm just grateful for the opportunity I've been given here at FAMU as the head drum major for the Marching 100."

— Moises Martinez, environmental science major



"The FAMU Marching 100 cultivates diversity at its finest. As a person of Caribbean descent, being in a group of students who are diverse excites motivation and creativity in myself and others, especially in band. To me, music revolves around this very concept and can't exist without it."

— Gustave Major, music education major





of what music is. Jazz, for instance, which started in New Orleans, is highlighted as a core subject and ensemble. It's been stated that many music teachers attending HBCUs can adapt to learning environments in socially challenging settings due to the preservice training opportunities provided and connectivity that HBCUs tend to establish in communities.

TM: What are the key opportunities or challenges for HBCUs right now related to music education?

CHIPMAN: HBCU bands and choirs continue to be ensembles that promote music education beyond the pedagogical areas of theory, piano, applied music, and other music education courses.

Despite the success of many HBCUs, there are so many schools that struggle with enrollment, retention of students, funding resources, state/national financial aid woes, meeting state guidelines for curriculum/course sequence, certification, faculty stability (especially due to pay), aging buildings, and insufficient professional development and technology.

It is essential that HBCUs step up to the plate and realize these obstacles must be overcome through vision by administrators, faculty, staff, students, alumni, and corporate collaboration. They must be committed to seeking resources, endowments, and support systems that will help strengthen our ability to ensure the success of tomorrow's students. Undergraduates and graduates, particularly in music education, must be aware of the challenges facing them in a world driven by technological advances, yet still provide the artistic nuances that bring interest. Meeting every student where they are is crucial, but also knowing that traditional teaching methods must be counterbalanced with music industry/production, guitar, therapy, and other modern-day education approaches.

TM: What additional thoughts do you have related to DEIA (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access) issues?

CHIPMAN: NAFME has taken the lead on a national level regarding diversity in music education. It's been our theme for the past two years and is emphasized in our strategic planning. The theme of the Florida Music Education Association is "Building communities one note at a time."

COVID-19 has really impacted music education, and many programs have not been able to bounce back. You can't fix all the problems overnight, but it's important to have workshops and webinars to help schools still struggling with race relations. We've made steps in the right direction, and it's a concerted effort, but we're not where we need to be yet.

I have challenged myself to get out more. Two days a week, I go to different areas of the state to meet with teachers to get a better sense of where they are and what's happening in their classrooms.

It's important for experienced teachers to keep up with DEIA trends and to keep up with the times.

Young college novice teachers may need help with classroom-management skills, but they are mostly on board with the DEIA movement, tech-savvy, and ready to perform and act differently. They do a good job of grabbing the attention of the student of today. The old-school approach — "my way or the highway" — won't cut it anymore. It's important that we stay modernized, where the kids are.

Teachers must be very sensitive regarding how they speak to students. It may seem subtle, but you have to be mindful of the things you say. Even how we say good morning with the correct pronunciation of their name and their gender preference. We have to show respect for the diversity in each other.

We must find ways to celebrate our teachers and the diversity of our profession. In Florida, we have had to make an effort to include Blacks, Latinos, and Haitians so the state can see we are serious about growing DEIA in the music profession.

Music teachers must recognize who is on their campus. Music classrooms should reflect the population on campus. If you don't have certain groups in your classroom, look at the reasons why. Where's the disconnect? Be connected to what the students and your community want to hear at your concerts. Get the students' input so you can select the appropriate literature. And don't forget to connect with parents so they get interested in your program as well. Connect your entire audience to your music. Do you know what your kids are listening to in their free time? What about the parents? ☰

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