



A conversation in 1996 ...

“The best methods class you will ever take is your major ensemble.”

“I’m here to train  
*band directors...*

and you’re here to educate  
*music teachers.”*

Finally, something we agree on.

# Degree Tracks in Music Education: An Impediment to the Future

John Kratus

Symposium on Music Teacher Education  
Minneapolis • September 9, 2017

# Outline

- A history lesson
- The prevalence of the paradigm
- Why change?
- The forces of inertia
- Acts of subversion
- Educating music teachers

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Seven years, 363 days ago in  
Greensboro, North Carolina ...

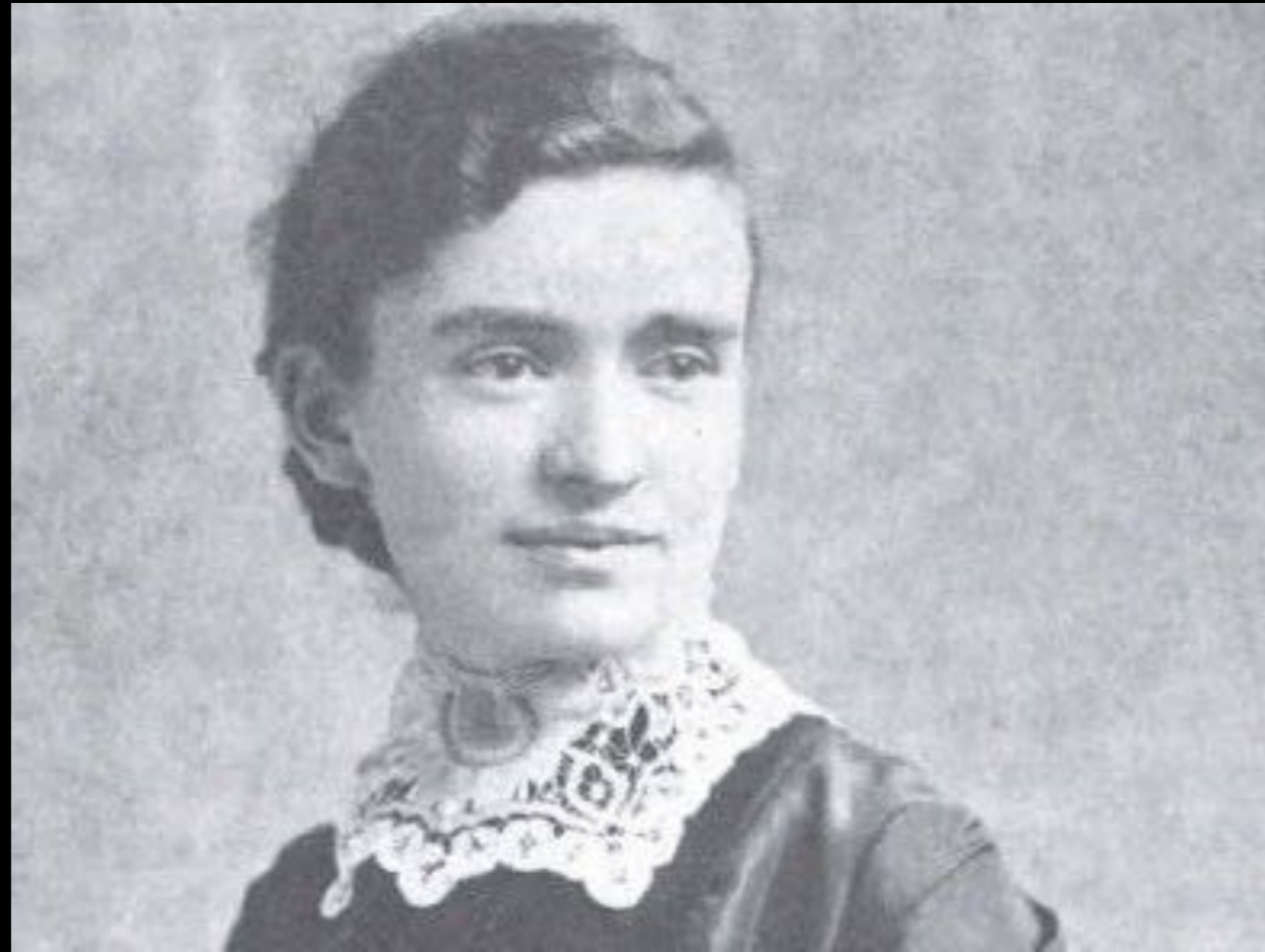
# Requirements for the B.M. in Music Education: Michigan State University

- 3 1/2 years of applied lessons (piano, strings, brass, woodwinds, percussion, voice)
- 3 1/2 years of major ensemble
- 1 year class piano
- 2 1/2 years theory/aural skills
- 1 1/2 years history/literature
- 1 year conducting
- intro to music education
- 3 tracks: instrumental, strings, choral/general
- methods classes (dependent on track): elementary general, secondary general, instrumental, choral
- class instruments/voice (dependent on track)
- education classes: ed psych, school and society, classroom methods
- 1/2 year student teaching

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1959



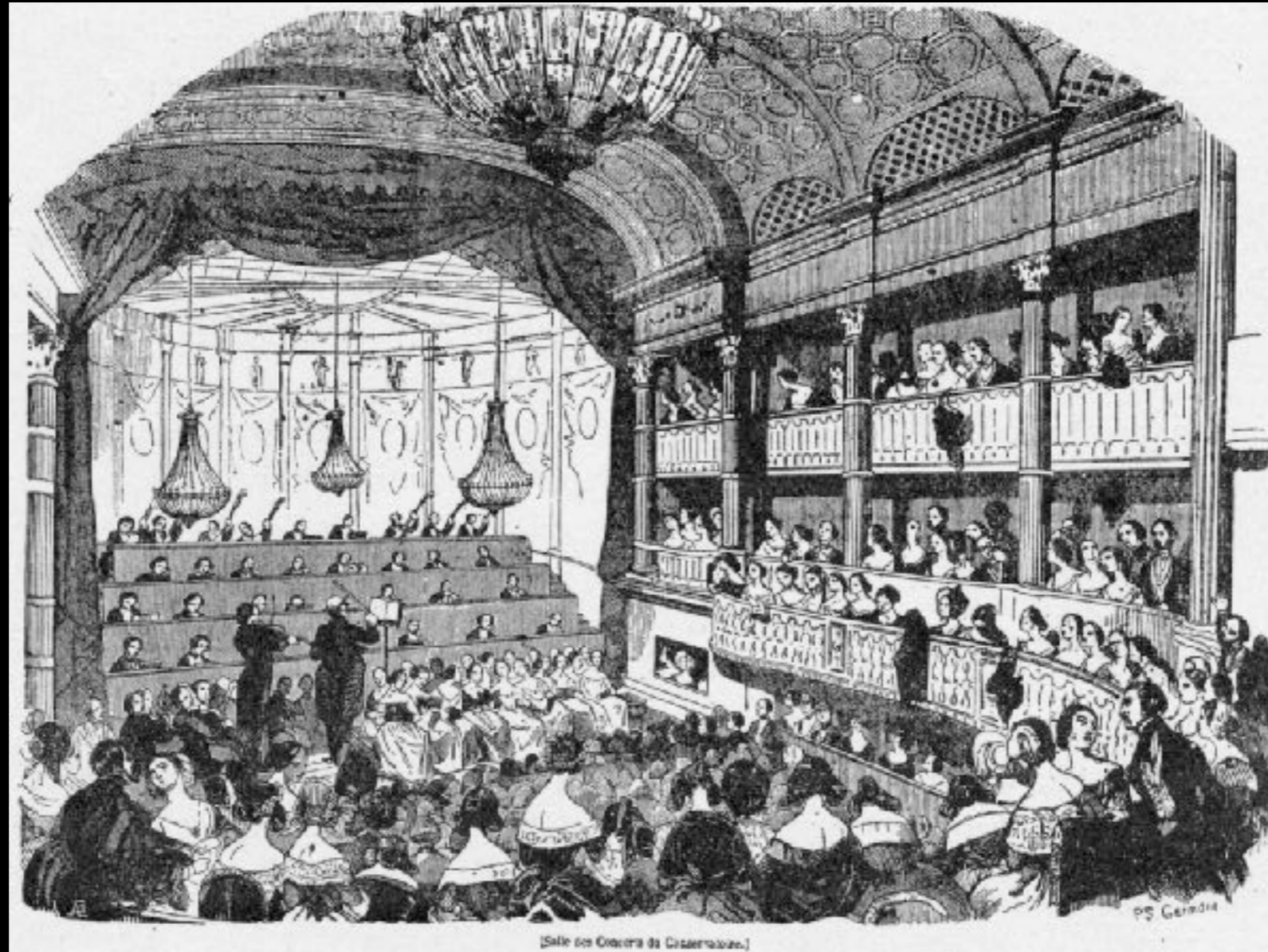
# Julia Etta Crane

Founder of the Crane Normal  
Institute, Potsdam, NY, 1886

# Curriculum at the Crane Normal Institute, 1903

- 2 1/2 years choir
- 2 1/2 years music theory
- 2 years sight singing/ear training
- 1/2 year psychology
- 1/4 year acoustics
- 1/4 year history of education
- 1 year observation
- private voice lessons
- conducting of choruses
- teaching classes in ear training and theory
- teaching in the practice school
- teaching in the schools in town

Caron Collins, *The Messengers of Music: The Legacy of Julia E. Crane*, 2011.



Julia Crane was heavily influenced by the curricula in European conservatories, the first of which was the Paris Conservatory, founded in 1795.

“These conservatories are largely a 19th century invention, designed in an era obsessed with the child protégé, whose principal *raison d’être* was the fostering of solo as well as rank-and-file talent for the burgeoning orchestras and opera houses at the mainstay of European musical life a century ago” (Bruno, 2006).

# Course of Study

- 19th C. Conservatory
  - extensive small group instruction focusing on a single instrument or voice in the classic tradition
  - extensive conductor-led large ensemble or opera experience with 19th C. repertoire
  - some piano study
  - multiple years of theory emphasizing written notation and solfege
  - historical study of European music literature
- 21st C. School of Music
  - extensive private instruction focusing on a single instrument or voice in the classic tradition
  - extensive conductor-led large ensemble or opera experience with primarily 19th C. repertoire
  - some piano study
  - multiple years of theory emphasizing written notation and solfege
  - historical study of primarily European music literature



The Crane Normal School had a single track for vocal classroom teachers, what we would call general music.

At the turn of the 20th century, instrumental music in schools was relatively uncommon.

The instrumental and vocal music education tracks that developed later in the 20th century were based on the curriculum for 19th century conservatory students preparing to perform in orchestras and opera companies.

This has become the permanent curriculum in collegiate music, nearly impervious to change.

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Question: How prevalent is tracking in music education degree programs?

Which of the 21 colleges and universities in Florida offering undergraduate degrees in music education place students into instrumental music education or choral music education tracks?

Note: Florida's certification for music educators is Music K-12.

- Baptist College of Florida
- Bethune-Cookman U.
- Florida A&M U.
- Florida Atlantic U.
- Florida Gulf Coast U.
- Florida International U.
- Florida Southern U.
- Florida State U.
- Hobe Sound Bible Col.
- Jacksonville U.
- Palm Beach Atlantic U.
- Southeastern U.
- Stetson U.
- U. of Central Florida
- U. of Florida
- U. of North Florida
- U. of Miami
- U. of South Florida
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# 10 Largest Universities in the United States

- University of Central Florida
- Texas A&M University
- Ohio State University
- Florida International University
- University of Florida
- Arizona State University
- University of Texas, Austin
- University of Minnesota, Twin Cities
- Michigan State University
- Indiana University



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These data suggest that a large majority of pre-service music educators, especially those at large universities, are tracked in narrow degree programs designed to train band directors and choral directors.

Is this a problem?

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If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

Is it broke?

Recent critiques of music education have proposed alternatives to the large ensemble model of teaching.

- Kratus, J. (2007). Music education at the tipping point. *Music Educators Journal*.
- Williams, D. A. (2011). The elephant in the room. *Music Educators Journal*.

These critiques aside, aren't schools still hiring the more narrowly educated band directors and choral directors who graduate from tracked programs?

**Let's find out!**

Review of 500+ job postings for music teachers on  
monster.com.

Most of the postings were duplicates, or for part-time or temporary replacement jobs, or did not adequately describe the duties of the music teacher. I discarded these.

Result ... n = 89 job descriptions.



# Teaching jobs with a single specialization

- General music = 28
- Instrumental (band) = 12
- Orchestra (strings) = 6
- Choral = 3
- Guitar = 1
- Digital music = 1

# Teaching jobs with two specializations

- General and choral = 10
- Choral and instrumental = 8
- General and instrumental = 7
- Create and perform = 4
- General and orchestra = 1
- Instrumental and orchestra = 1

# Teaching jobs with three or more specializations

- General, instrumental, and choral = 4
- General, music tech, and keyboard = 1
- General, orchestra, and choral = 1
- General, orchestra, instrumental & choral = 1

# Percentage of jobs requiring multiple specializations

- Orchestra (strings) = 40%
- General music = 47%
- Instrumental (band) = 64%
- Choral = 89%
- Total = 60%

By requiring students to follow degree tracks, we are continuing the 200-year-old tradition of preparing musicians to perform in 19th century orchestras or opera companies.

But we are disqualifying our students for more than half of the music teaching jobs available in the 21st century.

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Curriculum change is hard.



The wind and band faculty will  
oppose you.



“If you give students choices,  
they will take all the easy courses.”

“No one will hire our students.”



The students will mistrust you.



**Your administrators will not support you.**



The music education community  
will not welcome change.

Oh, Boy!  
Bring on  
the change!



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# What are Small Acts of Subversion?

- Modest but meaningful changes moving in the direction of a perceived ideal.
- Do not directly challenge the power of those in control of the institution.
- Require patience and a long time frame to be effective.
- Eventually SAS after SAS undermine the status quo, and the paradigm shifts.



Sometimes major curriculum revision  
requires more than a small act.



# Subverting the Permanent Curriculum

- Planning
- Unity
- Persistence
- Advising
- Evaluation



Planning: take your time.



**Unity: resolve differences among music education faculty.**



Persistence: don't take "no"  
for an answer.



**Advising: address every student's concerns.**



Evaluation: if something's not working,  
change it quickly.

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How do we educate wonderfully unique individuals  
to become music teachers ...

...and not merely train them to be band directors, choral directors, orchestra directors, or general music teachers?



# Provide options wherever possible

## Arizona State University: The Art of Teaching Electives (choose 3)

The Art of Teaching Children Music

The Art of Teaching Contemporary Musicians

The Art of Teaching Choral Musicians

The Art of Teaching Beginning Instrumentalists

The Art of Teaching Advanced Instrumentalists

# Provide options wherever possible

## Michigan State University: Creative Musicianship Electives (choose 2)

Beginning Jazz Improvisation I and II

Jazz Arranging and Composition I and II

Jazz Lessons

Composition (individual lessons)

Songwriting

Instrumentation and Orchestration

# Begin music education courses early in the degree program

Anonymous student responses to the question, “Do you think you should take a music education course as a freshman?”

80% Strongly agree

10% Agree

## Student comments on a freshman introduction to music education course

Music education is not for everyone. This course provided thoughtful reflection on whether to pursue this degree.

Having MUS 177 my freshman year made me feel like a part of the music education world and definitely jump-started my enthusiasm for music education.

Students need to begin reflecting on the value of music education, questioning their motives, intentions, and goals from the very first day.

# Prepare students to teach the unknowable

## SUNY at Potsdam: Personal Musicianship Project

- Learn and perform on an unfamiliar instrument
- Compose and perform in an unfamiliar practice
- Listen and expand understanding of a unfamiliar genre

Educating is not the same as training.

Inspiring is not the same as requiring.

If we trust our students to make the right choices, they will make us proud.

Thank you for your kind attention.

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