An Education of Music: Ball State University

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

By

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Abstract

Music has always been, and always will be, a form of expression. Whether playing a musical instrument, singing a song, or merely listening to the radio, music is a part of life that can be enjoyed by anyone. Students who take an active part in music programs throughout their educational careers develop beneficial skills and an open mindset that those without music may lack. Through its many programs, Ball State University is one such institution that offers opportunities for students to continue or begin their pathway toward music. Whether in BSU Chamber Choir, or the Pride of Mid-America Marching Band, students learn to the best of their ability. They realize how music affects them as individuals while also keeping in mind the impact of school music programs for young musicians in the future. Questions such as, “How does music define me as a person?” and “How will music help me become the person I want to be?” are important questions for any student to ask in the journey to self-discovery.
Acknowledgements

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I would also like to thank Katlyn Ness for helping me film the marching band at the stadium. She stepped up to help me film when no one else would, and I really appreciate the time she put aside when she did not have to, to lend me a hand and give me support on those first few days of filming.

I would like to thank Dr. Shawn Vondran for allowing me permission to film the marching band and being respectful and courteous to me while I was at practices.

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I would also like thank all of the marching band and chamber choir members who signed my release forms and were very cooperative throughout this process.
Author's Statement

Although I did not sign up for HNRS 499 until the spring semester of 2013, my honors thesis, "An Education of Music: Ball State University", began in the fall of 2012, the first semester of my senior year. After spending a summer trying to choose a topic, I landed on an idea. After three years, this was the first semester I was not participating in the Ball State marching band. The experiences that I had in band especially were something that I wanted to share with others. I was not a music major, so I did not want to perform a recital, but I did believe that music was a part of me and something special that I had been a part of while being a student here. I felt like other students could benefit from learning and participating in some part of Ball State's music program if they just knew how great it was. In all of my video classes, I had never seen or heard of anyone trying to film the marching band, and no one I knew in band was a video production major, so I felt like students were missing out on knowing how inspiring this group of people was. I decided to combine my love of band and my video production major into a documentary about music here at Ball State, and what the students and faculty think about music in their lives.

From the beginning I wanted to gain multiple perspectives on what the music department here at Ball State has to offer, so I interviewed students and staff alike from band, choir, and music media production, as well as checking out a band class at an Anderson middle school, outside of Ball State's campus. This way I was sure to gain many diverse views on music.

The process of my thesis began by gaining permissions, planning interviews, scheduling days to film, and figuring out what the real questions I'd like to ask these people were. After getting permission, I began by filming the marching band on game day and at practices. I knew
since the band would not be active in the spring, the fall semester was the only time they could be filmed. I conducted interviews with band members and faculty. Spring semester I filmed the chamber choir, interviewed the instructor and a student involved. I also interviewed a student in the music media production department and captured more b-roll of campus. I filmed students in a seventh grade band class at Highland Middle School in Anderson while doing research on how music affects learning and how funds for arts programs are being cut from schools. I included these statistics throughout the documentary to show the ugly truth of what students are losing when they lose music. Throughout the summer, I then began the editing stages by matching up the audio (which I recorded separately on a zoom recorder) to the video footage. I made a rough cut of each interview, edited all the b-roll, then began matching the b-roll to the interviews and combining interviews together. After the complete edit I then began touching up sound, transitions, and color correction. I sent the edit to my advisor, and with his feedback I created the final edit. Finally, I exported the video onto a DVD for submission.

I faced many challenges throughout this process, having never taken on a project of this scale on my own, but I also learned a lot from it. First of all, I began shooting on a PD150 camera, capturing DV footage, since the new HD cameras had not yet arrived to be available for check out. Therefore, I had both DV footage and HD footage to combine into the same project, something I’d never come across. I have also gained a lot of practice, especially conducting interviews. After editing the footage, even six months later, I have caught mistakes in the footage I do not think I would make now if I were to film again. I decided to branch out in my software knowledge as well. I usually use Final Cut Pro to edit, but I decided to use a program I was less familiar with for this project. I combined all the footage into Premiere Pro CS6. I had a couple no shows for interviews, and I learned better how to work with people. The hardest
challenge I faced was gaining permission to film at Highland Middle School. I did not have to include that in the documentary, but I wanted to see if I could do it. I had to contact three different offices in Muncie before one of them suggested to film at Anderson instead because she knew faculty there. Once I contacted the principal and band director there with very clear instruction of what I would like to do, I sent out release forms with a BSU grad who worked there to send home with the students to get signed by them and their parents. From there I simply had to keep on task, and work with the end goal in mind.

From this project, I want students to know and be proud of Ball State’s music department, and to be inspired to work hard in anything they do. I want them to be grateful for any music education they might have had, and to understand the impact that music has on people, young or old. Students should see their value in groups here at Ball State, and I hope this project shows the meaning of individual involvement. Each group, whether music majors, singers, or marching band members, is a family, and I want students to know that Ball State welcomes all students into its many families.

Music brings people together, and while I began and continued to craft this project, I was privileged to catch up with a few old friends and meet new people too. This project has truly made me a better person by increasing my knowledge through technical video practices as well as putting me out there by expanding my social interactions and communication. Music cannot be completely expressed in words, but I had fun trying to capture the excitement and spirit of adventure that it can bring to us all.
Works Cited from Research


