

Wednesday, August 26, 2015

Working in the Arts: Technology in Music Education

A decade or more ago, OU had a class about the use of classroom technology in music education, but now, reflecting the way professional music is produced, **Associate Professor of Music Deborah VanderLinde** says that technology is infused through almost every course in OU's music education degree. Both she and **Associate Professor Joe Shively** have incorporated the



Music teacher Dakota Cooper (center left) helps students Kenny Fletcher (from left Emma McLean and Audrey Urbanowski use an iPad to compose music in their Webber Elementary School classroom in Lake Orion. The Oakland Press/AFTAB BORKA

up-to-date technology in student projects. In the class Teaching Music in the Twenty-First Century II, all projects are digital.

Once our graduates are working, they assess their curriculum goals, ask themselves what kind of technology will best help them achieve those goals and design their program accordingly, taking into account the resources available to them in their school district.

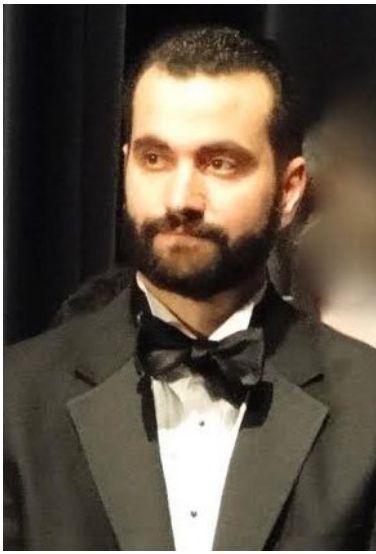
Dakotah Cooper (BM '10 and MEd '14) teaches general music at Carpenter and Webber Elementary Schools in the Lake Orion School District. His students still learn using many traditional classroom activities, but he also has them compose and arrange music with iPads, GarageBand and Logic. "It really comes down to teaching students what tools they have at their disposal," he said, "helping them choose what fits best." He credits OU with giving him a strong philosophical base that helps him adapt his teaching to the needs of his students.

In October 2013, an *Oakland Post* article by **Lara Mossa** featured Dakota's classes. He told the paper, "I'm just always looking for ideas to use in my classroom, ways I can do a better job. I'm just always looking for context, and I'm always pulling ideas." He has recently introduced iPads into his teaching. "It's turned out really well," he said. "The kids are really enjoying it." **You can read the Oakland Press article here.**

Lake Orion's administration is aware and appreciative of music's role in the curriculum. "Dakotah offers students the ability to reach their highest potential by hands on exploration," said **Sarah Manzo**, past principal of Webber Elementary. "He intertwines his discipline with the core curriculum to enhance the general education experience. Students take ownership of their learning and carry that learning to multiple aspects in their day." You can follow **Dakotah on his blog here.**

Dr Spiros Xydias (PhD '14) teaches at Baker Middle School, an International Baccalaureate school, in the Troy School District. Spiros is the band director and his students perform in concerts, take part in festivals, and participate in district and all-state honor bands.

However, he also has them work with Noteflight and other technologies to enhance band instruction. "I use Noteflight, in particular composition, to learn more about the students' music understanding, as well as to engage them in meaningful music experiences," said Spiros. "Technology helps make music more relevant for secondary students. They experience music in a digital world. By using technology and composition embedded into our curriculum



Dr. Spiros Xydas

The band students also use Smart Music software for practice and assessment. Spiros said last year he is “flipping” his classroom, so that lessons from the method book are presented to students ahead of time through videos posted on the learning management system Schoology. This preparation will allow the focus during class rehearsal to be on understanding and connecting with the music, rather than notes and rhythms.

“This type of learning, student-centered, constructivist, is strongly encouraged in the IB program,” said Spiros, “and the vast majority of parents appreciate the varied approaches and challenges I give the students.”

Spiros, who has a BA in music from the University of California, Santa Barbara and an MM in music education from Northwestern, was already using technology and composition in his program before he began his PhD at OU, but he said, “The support I received from my cohort and professors allowed me to better understand the phenomena that were happening in my classroom and better articulate the benefits of connecting to students through composition and technology.”

Associate Professor S. Alex Ruthmann (MM '02, PhD '06) is a faculty member at New York University Steinhardt School of

Culture, Education, and Human Development in the Department of Music and Performing Arts Professions. He is a researcher, educator, and musician, whose research and practice explores new media musicianship, creative computing, and the development of music and media technologies for use in school- and community-based youth programs.

Not only is Alex among the leaders in the field of music education technology, he is asking his students to push the boundaries and innovate new educational and entrepreneurial ventures. One of his NYU classes, Designing Technologies and Experiences for Music Making, Learning and Engagement, teaches idea generation, prototyping, experience design and entrepreneurship. It offers students an opportunity to identify a problem and design a potential solution. Promising projects are presented to the class and to an external panel of educators, technology developers, music industry professionals and funding partners, for both feedback and potentially for small grants to assist commercialization or distribution. There is more detail about the class in the video on [Alex’s faculty bio page](#).

Alex helped found the Play With Your Music (PWYM) project, which is a free online learning community around music. Anyone who wants to learn how to mix their own songs, no matter the level of their musical ability, can do so for free, using the newest tools on the web in a course offered through the cooperative efforts of the music technology program at the NYU Steinhardt School, recording artist Peter Gabriel and Peer 2 Peer University. Other modules of PWYM are under design and will be available soon. **Don’t miss their website**. You can follow [Alex on his blog here](#).

This year Alex was the conference chair for the Annual Interactive Multimedia Performing Arts Collaborative Technology (IMPACT) Conference at NYU Steinhardt, which was centered on Creative Collaboration in Technology and the Arts (Expressing, Engaging Learning, Collaborating). He serves as Director of the **NYU Music Experience Design Lab** which researches co-designs new technologies and experiences for music making, learning and engagement together with schools, youth, community and industry partners. This fall, he and his wife Anne Ruthmann will present at the TEDxOU conference. You can see **more information about that here**.

Mike Medvinsky, (BM '05, MM '15) who until recently taught music at Bloomfield Hills Middle School, is an active proponent of technology in the classroom. He’s made frequent presentations at workshops and conferences, including the 2014 NYU IMPACT conference, where he was a keynote speaker. Mike had his students use Launchpad to foster expression and build creative confidence. Instead of music students, he wanted musicians in his classroom, and technology allowed them to both compose and play.

Mike likens this to the way we learn to speak. We don’t stay silent until our language is perfect. The mission of music education is to build musical fluency, and as technology becomes embedded in the lives of young people at home and across the curriculum, (



Associate Professor Alex Ruthmann



Baker Middle School has a **YouTube video about the iPa Ensemble** Spiros Xydas ran for one half-hour each week for two months. They played their composition during a band concert. "Kids will have access to these music-making devices their whole lives," said Spiros. "Whether or not they go on to play the saxophone is up in the air, but this technology will always be there so they can compose, create, cooperate and share at anytime."

You can read more about music technology education at [this link](#) in the Music Handbook, **which is online here**. See page 1