

Innovation in Recurring Studio Music Masterclasses: Diverging Practices in Group Instruction



Dr. Aaron Hodgson

Associate professor
Don Wright Faculty of Music
Western University
ahodgson@uwo.ca



Rayne Dias

PhD Candidate
Don Wright Faculty of Music
Western University



Elinor Smallman

Undergraduate research
assistant
Don Wright Faculty of Music
Western University



Dr. Laura Benjamins

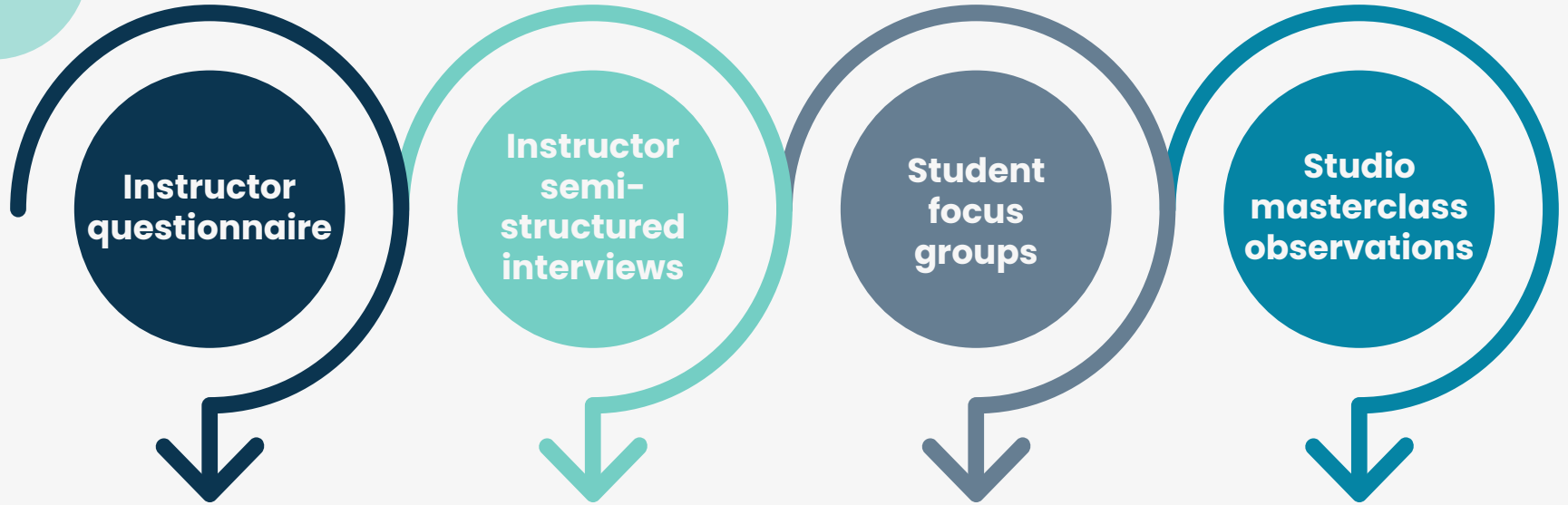
Assistant professor
Redeemer University
lbenjamins@redeemer.ca



**Gustavo Jimenez
Pereira**

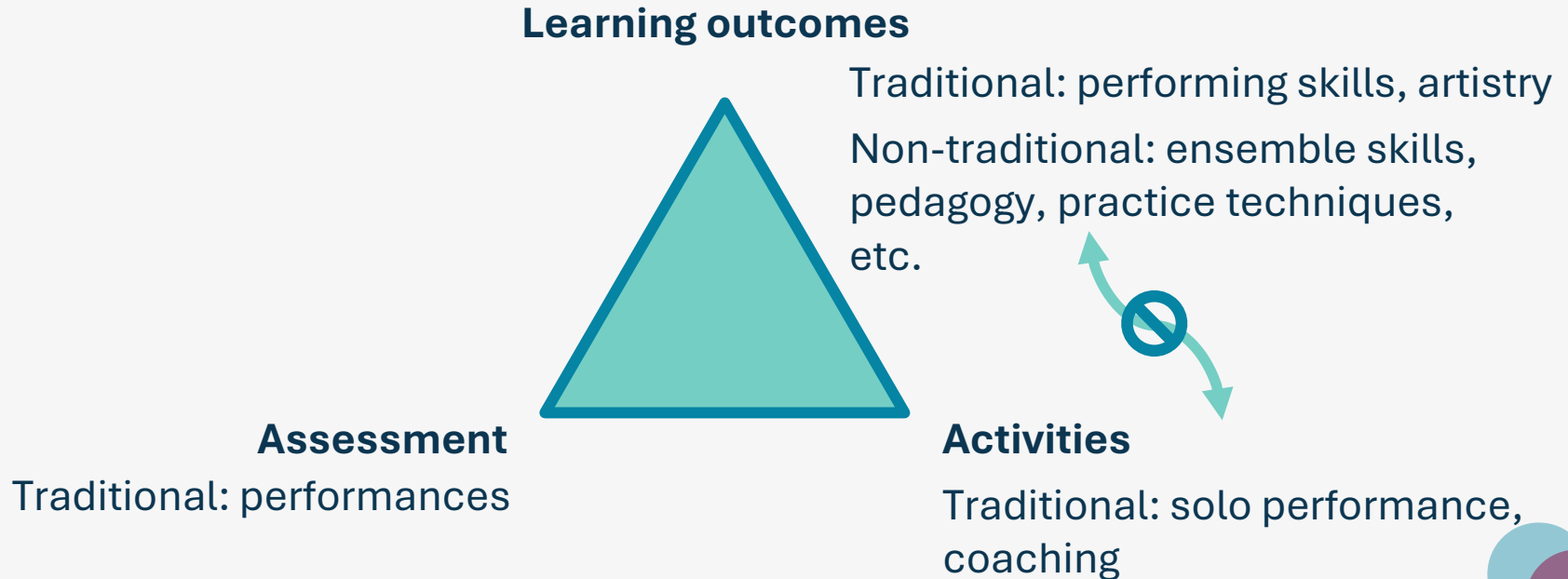
PhD Candidate
Don Wright Faculty of Music
Western University

Research context



Larger study on studio masterclasses

Framework: Constructive alignment



Framework: Communities of practice



Wenger, E., Wenger-Trayner, B., Reid, P., & Bruderlein, C. (2023). *Communities of practice within and across organizations: A guidebook*. Social Learning Lab. <https://www.wenger-trayner.com/>



Background: Calls for change in applied music



Gaunt and Westerlund, eds. (2013),
Collaborative Learning in Higher Music Education

Theoretical and practical perspectives on collaborative learning



CMS Task Force (2016),
Manifesto: *Transforming Music Study from Its Foundations*
Book: *Redefining Music Studies in an Age of Change*

Reforming undergraduate music education: creativity, diversity, integration



Background: Traditional and unconventional approaches

Outcomes (things students develop)

1. Performing skills
2. Technique
3. Collaborative performance skills
4. Expressiveness
5. Critical listening
6. Knowledge of repertoire
7. Instrument-specific pedagogy
8. Non-instrument-specific pedagogy
9. Professionalism
10. Feeling of security and belonging
11. Studio community
12. Performance standards
13. Career preparation
14. Peer learning
15. Competition between students

Strategies (things students and teachers do)

1. Audio/video recording
2. Bodywork, breathing, posture, etc.
3. Ensemble playing
4. Group warm-ups
5. Improvisation and composition
6. Solo performances
7. Peer feedback
8. Unstructured/social time
9. Teacher modeling
10. Coaching of students
11. Thematic lectures/discussions
12. Supervised practicing/flipped classroom
13. Mock auditions
14. Mock teaching between students
15. Student presentations

Background: Types of masterclasses

Creech et al. (2009), four masterclasses settings:

Public

Instrument-
specific

Stylistic

Performance
classes





Background: Perspectives on masterclasses

Empirical perspectives (student point of view)

Benefits

- Performance opportunities
- Fresh ideas, networking

Challenges

- Performance anxiety
- Problematic, intimidating audiences

Practitioner perspectives (instructor point of view)

Benefits

- Building camaraderie
- Pedagogical training

Challenges

- Isolation of teachers
- Historical sites of abusive behaviour

Carey, 2010; Cosby, 2011; Creech et al., 2009; Haddon, 2014; Hanken 2015; Hanken, 2016; Holding, 2010; Knecht, 2024; Long et al., 2012; Taylor, 2010



Research questions

1. How do masterclass structure and organization develop Communities of Practice among participating musicians?
 - a. How do teachers' pedagogical choices relate to their masterclass conception?
 - b. Is there a relationship between teachers' desired learning outcomes and their teaching strategies?
2. How might masterclasses foster or contribute to behaviour patterns, professional standards, and social beliefs not explicitly related to artistic performance of repertoire performed in the class?
 - a. How might recurring studio masterclasses develop a sense of belonging and identity among music student participants?
 - b. How might recurring studio masterclasses relate to students' future musical careers?
 - c. How might behaviour patterns, professional standards, and social beliefs be influenced by students' and teachers' musical instrument and gender?

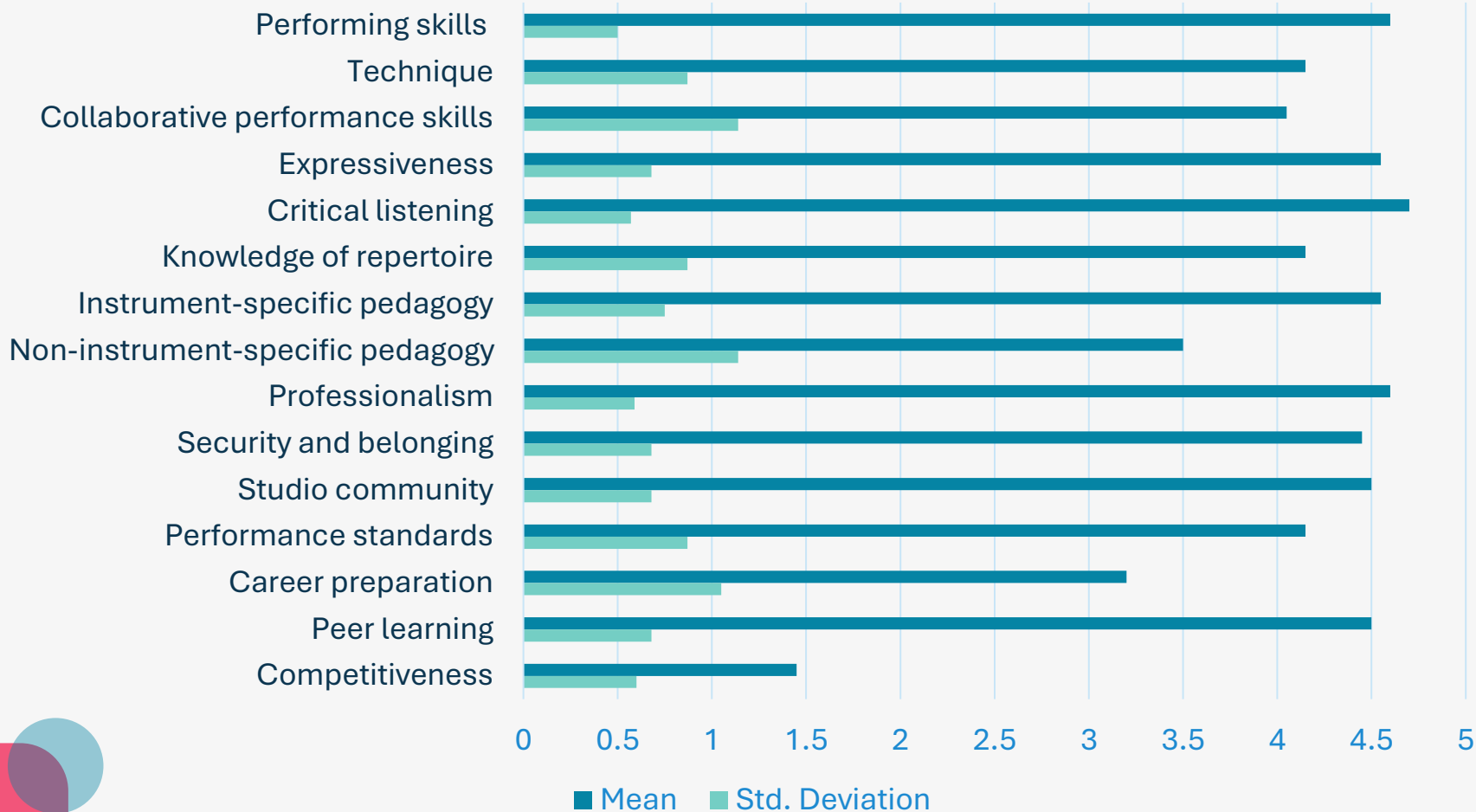
Methods: Anonymous questionnaire

- Qualtrics questionnaire based on lists from background
 - Basic information
 - Outcomes scored by *importance* on 5-point likert scale
 - Strategies scored by *frequency* on 5-point likert scale
- Recruitment by email: 243 applied faculty at 3 southern Ontario universities
- Excluded: fewer than 5 students in masterclass, masterclass less than once a month
- 25 respondents, 5 excluded, $n = 20$ total responses
- Respondents invited to participate in follow up, semi-structured interviews

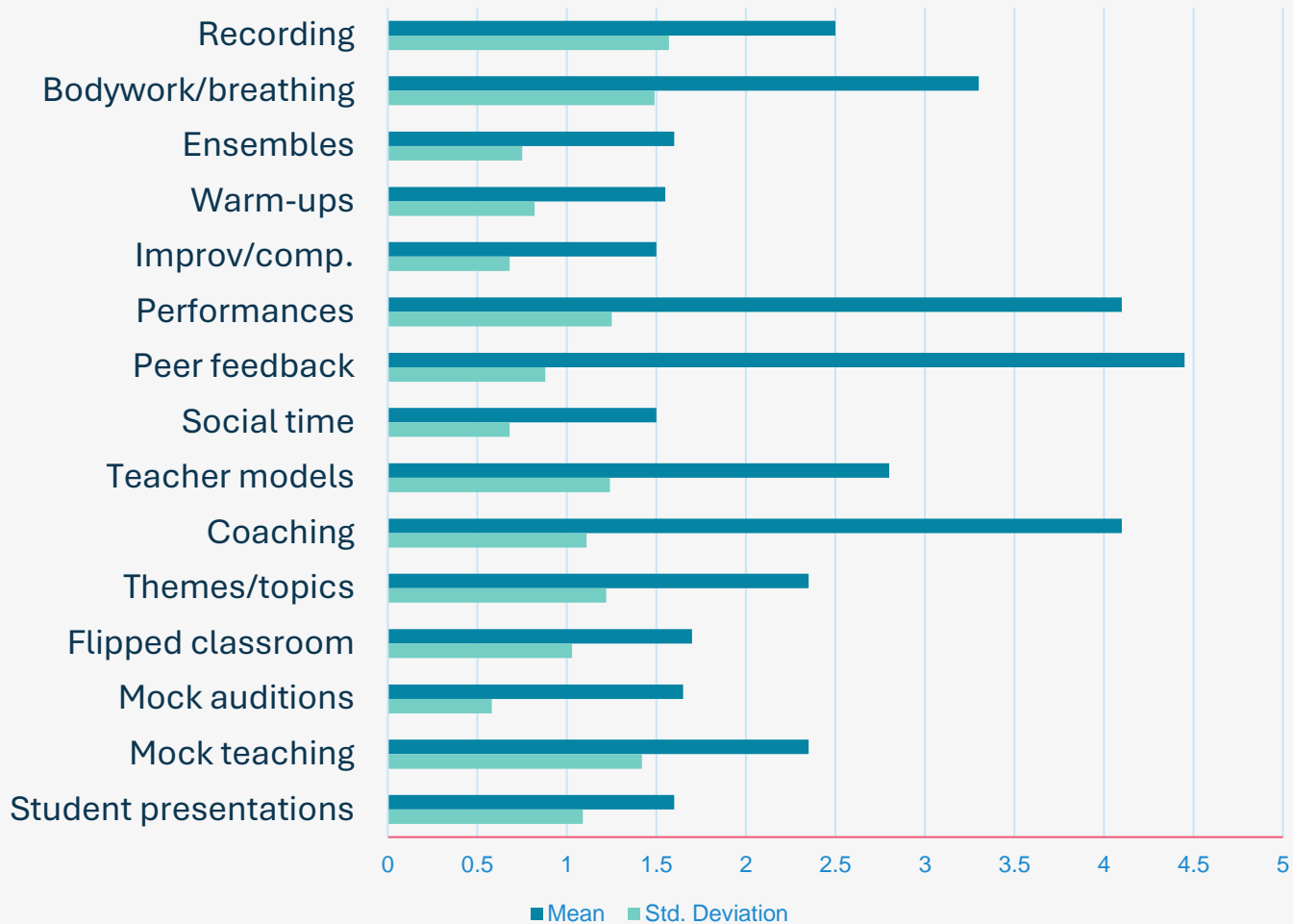
Methods: Interviews

Pseudonym	Inst. Family	Institution	Experience	Part time/full time
David	String	b	10	Part time
Jessica	Woodwind	a	28	Full time
Susan	String	a	16	Full time
Diego	Brass	a	8	Full time
Joshua	Brass	b	5	Full time
Grace	Voice	a	21	Part time
Isaac	String	b	13	Part time
Thomas	Voice	a	29	Full time
Ryan	Brass	a	46	Part time
Sylvie	Voice	a	16	Full time
Katherine	Voice	b	22	Full time
Terry	Voice	a	25	Full time
Becca	Voice	a	11	Part time
Valerie	Brass	c	11	Part time
Emma	Voice	c	17	Part time

Questionnaire results 1: Outcomes, by importance



Questionnaire results 2: Strategies, by frequency



Interviews theme 1:

Training performance as a central goal

Scaffolding performance training

“ And indeed, part of my methodology is that you've got several pieces of repertoire cycling. You're note-bashing them, then you bring it to your coach, then you bring it to a lesson, and then you perform it in performance class, and then it might sit on the shelf for a little while.

Terry, University A, voice”

Interviews theme 1:

Training performance as a central goal

“Audience” as stand-in for public

“ Well, primarily, I hope they're having an opportunity to perform in front of people, which puts a little bit extra stress on them.

Thomas, University A, voice

”

Interviews theme 1:

Training performance as a central goal

Central outcomes: artistry, managing performance anxiety

“

They need to get to know themselves, that's another learning outcome. They need to understand who they are as performers, and they need to be given space to experiment to know that.

”

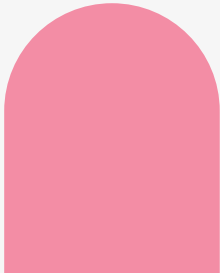
Sylvie, University A, voice



Interviews theme 1:

Training performance as a central goal

Secondary outcomes from performance:

- Critical listening skills
 - Knowledge of repertoire
 - Performance etiquette
 - Career preparation (opera, orchestra, freelancing, etc.)
- 

Interviews theme 2:

Pedagogical training – implicit vs explicit

Explicit: training peer feedback

“

So, in the way they give comments, I'll often correct their comments. ... Like sometimes they'll say, “Oh good job, I think you're playing really well.” I said, “Well, can you go a little bit more specific to what was working about that performance? What you liked about it, what really struck you about it.”

David, University B, strings

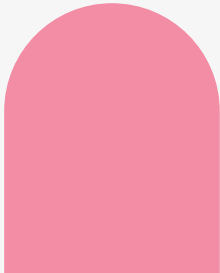
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Interviews theme 2:

Pedagogical training – implicit vs explicit

Other explicit pedagogical training strategies

- Mock teaching
 - Assigned peer commentary
 - Student reports and thematic classes
 - Relating feedback to broader concepts, addressing the “audience”
- 

Interviews theme 2:

Pedagogical training – implicit vs explicit

Implicit: learning by observation

“ I would say that would happen organically, but I don't make that an intention. I think that my example of teaching and my language of pedagogy is part of that.

Emma, University C, voice

”

2 interviewees: pedagogy not relevant

“ My goal is to help them improve their personal skill level and whatever they may gather on that and teach on to their future students that's up to them.

Diego, University A, brass

”

Interviews theme 3:

Security is important, belonging is less clear

Security is essential for full participation

“

It's the key, it's key to everything working this way. Like it's key, if they don't feel comfortable and if they don't feel protected and supportive of each other, none of this, what I'm doing would work.

Jessica, University A, woodwind

”

Students lift one another up

“

It's kind of like people that go to boot camp together. They form such deep bonds. It's a room in which they discover that they can be so vulnerable, and yet so lifted up by their colleagues after those vulnerable moments.

Terry, University A, voice

”

Interviews theme 3:

Security is important, belonging is less clear

Belonging develops organically and is self-sustaining

“ That is actually a goal of mine, to create that synergy, to create that connection between each other. But you know I don't find that I have to work very hard to achieve it because the students just kind of develop it on their own. ”

David, University B, strings

Instructors are mixed on community within studios

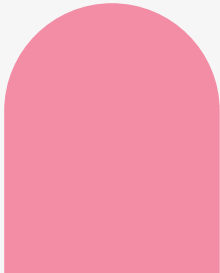
“ Studio camaraderie... I would say, that's a natural consequence, but it's not a goal. I'm not trying to, you know... It's not kindergarten class here and I'm not trying to call everybody friends. If they want to be friends, they want to be friends, that's up to them. ”

Sylvie, University A, voice



Interviews theme 4: Instruments over institutions

Strong connections to instruments' pedagogy, culture, networks

- Instrumental societies, conferences, and trade publications
 - Connections to former teachers and alumni
 - References to nature of instruments and their working conditions
- 



Interviews theme 4: Instruments over institutions

Isolation from same-institution peers

“

I find that university teaching is very insular. Like there's not that opportunity to collaborate with colleagues.

Grace, University A, voice

”





Interviews theme 4: Instruments over institutions

One same-instrument Community of Practice

“

At [University A], there's a beautiful, beautiful community of voice profs who gather as frequently as we can. I wouldn't hesitate to ask any of them a question. We have done some student swapping.

Becca, University A, voice

”



Interviews theme 4:

Instruments over institutions

Positive and negative personal experiences

“

It's heavily influenced by the student masterclasses that I participated in as a student. As a student, I got a lot out of that model.

Joshua, University B, brass

”

“

But a lot of us are really used to toxic learning environments in music, just like athletics, right? Like, they're used to being berated and humiliated. And they have thought of that as motivating. And I won't do it. I just refuse.

Katherine, University B, voice

”

Discussion: Questionnaire vs. interview

Questionnaires

Interviews

All LOs scored very high, except three	Performance skills emerges as central LO
Pedagogy an important component	Difference between implicit vs. explicit pedagogical training
Competition scored very low , seemingly undesirable	“Healthy competition” a clear theme
Relatively low frequency of in-class activities	Activities often woven into performing and coaching – e.g., introducing pieces, modeling exercises, translating feedback to pedagogical concepts, etc.

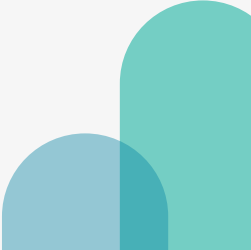
Discussion: Outcomes and strategies are complex

- “Traditional” and “non-traditional” don’t capture complexity
- Interrelationship between outcomes, e.g., second-order benefits from performing
- Strategies are also complex and interwoven, e.g., instructors connect coaching the performers and teaching the class





Implications for practice

- Meet instructors where they are: networks of colleagues, trade publications, instrument societies
 - Broadening early-career toolkits: mentoring across instruments, teaching exchanges, institutional best practices
 - Structural barriers for part-time faculty may be “penny wise, pound foolish,” e.g., pro-rating masterclass frequency by studio size
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Thank you!
Questions?

ahodgson@uwo.ca

