



**DuPage Symphony Orchestra**  
***“Our MULTI-Talented Youth”***

*“Music can be a vehicle to create a space  
for authentic connection and relationships between people.  
Musicians can stand in the gap of social, cultural and ideological differences  
and create experiences that reaffirm our connection to shared humanity.”*

Dr. Erik Elmgren  
Asst. Dean of Community Engagement & Teaching Artistry  
New England Conservatory of Music  
IPSD204 HS Graduate - Class of 2011

My name is William Jastrow and I am a retired music educator. I became a music teacher for two reasons: I love music, and I love to work with kids, because you do not know who or what they are going to become. Freshmen entered my classroom as kids with wide ranges in interests, talents, skills, and experiences. As seniors, young adults left my class room heading towards a vast array of universities and technical schools to pursue careers in every possible field. In over 40 years of secondary teaching, I never had a student denied admission to the college of their choice because they studied music as a member of the high school band or orchestra.

I believe that as parents we synthesize all of our hopes, dreams, and aspirations for our children down into three areas. First, we want our children to be well-educated, caring, and contributing members of our society. Second, we want our children to be able to make a living in a manner that best suits their needs, talents, and interests. Finally, and most importantly, we want our children to be happy; to enjoy and appreciate everything that life has to offer. With those parameters in mind, consider how proud you would be if your child became any one of the following professionals?

- Distinguished PhD Professor of Chemistry at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
- Animation artist for Walt Disney Studios
- UIC Professor of Medicine and MD with specialization in Gastroenterology and Hepatology
- 1<sup>st</sup> Responder paramedic and firefighter for a Chicago suburban Fire Department
- Distinguished Fellow ecologist and soil scientist at Argonne National Laboratory

I am sure we would agree that those positions are all respected careers, held by well-educated and highly trained individuals, most with master and several with doctoral degrees in their fields. Similarly, how would you feel if your child occupied any of the following professional positions?

- Chicago Lyric Opera Orchestra, assistant principal flute
- Collegiate professor with a Doctorate in Musical Arts in Music Performance
- Chicago Symphony Orchestra brass player and former U.S. Marine Band principal trumpet
- Composer, conductor, and technologist working internationally as a specialist in network arts
- 2023 Grammy Award Instrumental Jazz winner

All of these professionals are real people. All played in the band, and in some cases sang with the choir, through high school. I know them, some since 5th grade Beginning Band, some since high school band, and a few since college. Many others walked into my rehearsal room carrying their flutes, saxophones, or trumpets along with their science, foreign language, and history textbooks plus athletic gear, etc. as part of their daily class schedule. I do not believe that any of the individuals listed above knew for sure what directions their life would take them when they entered high school. Many probably did not know when they graduated. Fortunately for all of them, their K-12 education provided them with the academic foundation and experiences needed to consider and pursue a broad range of potential vocations and interests.

I do know that the ecologist seriously considered music education as a career. She played Principal Bassoon in all of her university's top music ensembles while completing a Bachelor of Science degree in animal science and a Master of Science degree in Agronomy. Had a career in secondary instrumental music education been more open to young women in the 1970's, Argonne Laboratory might be short one Distinguished Fellow soil scientist today.

I do know that the music professor was initially not allowed to enroll in a high school music ensemble as an entering freshman. His father believed his son needed the maximum number of Advanced Placement credits possible in order to become a chemical engineer. As a senior and winner of the Young Artists Senior Division Concerto Competition, the "to be music professor" performed the Glazunov *Concerto for Alto Saxophone* with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. The "thought to be chemical engineer" graduated in the top 10% of his high school class with multiple AP course credits along with 8 semesters of music credits, and took his CSO scholarship to Indiana University to major in music performance.

I am also very familiar with an Illinois Music Education Association State Past-President and conductor of the Illinois All-State Band. At a young age he became interested in attending Annapolis and a career in the U.S. Navy. Beginning in 7th grade and through high school he took honors level math and science classes. In 5<sup>th</sup> grade he also started band, but by January wanted to quit. His mom stepped in. In 6<sup>th</sup> grade, 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and 9<sup>th</sup> grade he wanted to quit. Each time his parents stepped in. Senior year he was on the verge of accepting an appointment to the Naval Academy when unforeseen circumstances required him to withdraw his name. Without hesitation he auditioned for admission to a Big Ten University School of Music. Had it not been for the diverse opportunities and learning experiences that his K-12 education provided and the long range vision of his parents, the DSO would be short one percussionist.

When kids are little, parents pursue every possible arts, athletic and discovery-learning activity because of the value that those experiences can make on young minds. At what point then, does playing on the team, creating a drawing, writing a poem, acting out a character, or performing music become educationally of less or no value? At what point does educating the verbal and mathematical intelligences of children outweigh educating everything else including the musical intelligence and creative voice of the whole child?

As parents and educators, we need to encourage. We need to support. We need to monitor, to advise, to push. And at times we need to say: YOU ARE GOING TO DO THIS or NO, YOU ARE NOT GOING TO QUIT. **Most importantly, we need to make sure that as many doors to future occupations and avocations stay open for as long as possible.** Music education at the junior and senior high school level keeps a door open for the next John Williams, Leonard Bernstein, Duke Ellington, or Wynton Marsalis. But that is just one door through which only a small percentage of student musicians will ever pass. For all of the rest, the future chemist, lawyer, architect, animator, business owner, physician, civil engineer, computer programmer, paramedic, etc., music education opens doors to professional success and personal fulfillment by engaging all parts of our imagining, thinking, and feeling processes in ways that no other discipline can.

**Music is a unique part of the human experience and we think about the world in all of the ways we experience it.** Sound is one of the four basic modes of communication and the act of creating music literally requires Advanced Placement thinking in sound. Language, values, and music are what distinguish humans from all other forms of life. Performing music develops our capacity to sense relationships, actions, thoughts and emotions that are not adequately expressed by words or depicted in images. If education does not address that humans evolve and share knowledge of our world in ways beyond words and numbers, we severely limit every child's potential for discovering the person she or he could become. Based on my classroom observations, even the most talented, mature and self-disciplined freshman student, be it in applied academics, athletics, or the fine arts, rarely "tracks" in the "desired" or predicted directions.

Who will be playing in the United States Marine Band for the Presidential Inauguration of 2045? Your son or daughter? Maybe! Those future professional musicians are most likely in a school band or orchestra somewhere this year. The more critical question is who will be part of the next generation responsible for preserving, transmitting and advancing our culture? ALL OF OUR DAUGHTERS AND SONS. We cannot afford to lose the imaginative talents and creative voices of any young person by boxing them into a pre-determined mold, because you do not know who or what they are going to become.

Respectfully,  
William Jastrow, DSO Principal Percussionist