

The Servant Conductor:  
A Case Study Examining Servant Leadership Characteristics in Large Ensemble

Conductors

by

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A Research Paper Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Musical Arts

Approved April 2023 by the  
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ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2023

## ABSTRACT

Servant leadership is a philosophy founded by Robert K. Greenleaf. It emphasizes the leader's responsibility to serve and empower their followers rather than the leader's authority or control over them. While this approach has been widely studied in various organizational settings, its application to the area of music, specifically large ensemble conducting, remains relatively underexplored.

As part of this case study, I interviewed six conductors of large ensembles whose groups perform at a high level, but who also place a premium on the needs, happiness, and empowerment of the musicians in their groups. At the same time, I surveyed published literature on the topics of conductor leadership philosophy in North America and servant-leadership principles, specifically the work of Robert K. Greenleaf.

This study has brought to light many positive aspects of servant leadership. We also identify some challenges institutions/structures in general create that make servant leadership challenging. Based on the responses participants gave, we can begin to see there is the possibility of serving our ensemble members, giving them agency in rehearsals to be artists, achieve high standards, and help everyone grow as people beyond their musical development.

## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated first, to my wife, Kristan Toczko, who supported me through this degree and this document.

Second, to my family, my mother and father, Wayne and Louanne Maddix, my brother, Logan Maddix, my uncles, David Maddix and the late, Jason Shields, my grandparents, Velma Withers, Emmet Maddix, Rook Shields and the late Caroline Shields. Without your support of my dreams none of this would have been possible.

And third, to all of my teachers, who for many years have provided me with the guidance and encouragement I needed to succeed in my professional and personal development.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research and resulting document would not have been possible without the guidance and support of each member of my Doctoral Advisory Committee: Dr. Jason Caslor, Dr. Jamal Duncan, and Dr. Jody Rockmaker. Thank you for the countless amount of time you dedicated to this process.

I also could not have completed this research without the six participants who volunteered their time to contribute to this study. The hours I spent speaking with each of you delighted, encouraged, and inspired me, and I am incredibly grateful and honored you agreed to share your thoughts with me.

Countless other individuals helped make this document possible. Thank you to my conducting studio colleagues, Dr. Phillip Vallejo, Dr. Kristen Zelenak, Anna Scott, and Kevin Joseph. You were there every step of the way while we pushed each other towards the finish line and celebrated one another.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Servant leadership is a philosophy founded by Robert K. Greenleaf. It emphasizes the leader's responsibility to serve and empower their followers rather than the leader's authority or control over them. While this approach has been widely studied in various organizational settings, its application to the area of music, specifically large ensemble conducting, remains underexplored.<sup>1</sup>

Using IRB-approved questions, I will interview six large ensemble conductors to distill their understanding and implementation of servant leadership principles. A specific emphasis will be placed on exploring how servant leadership can positively impact both the musical outcomes and the well-being of musicians under each conductor's leadership, as well as the conductor's own professional and personal growth.

#### Catalyst for the Study

I went through public school music programs that had teachers with both high standards and a belief that it was important that these standards not come at the expense of the well-being of the musicians in the group. We rehearsed daily, attended competitions and festivals, and met after class hours to improve our craft. When I became a professional musician, I realized that not all conductors and music educators thought like those with whom I had studied. Many conductors I worked with led through fear. Either fear that they would be perceived as unsuccessful by their peers, instilling in their students a fear of not achieving musical "perfection," or a combination of both. While

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<sup>1</sup> Noted exceptions are an article by Andrew Trachsel in *Teaching Music Through Performance in Band, Volume 12* and Ramona Wis' book *The Conductor as Leader*, which both apply Greenleaf's model to conducting pedagogy.

these approaches often led to improved musical/technical results, it was at the expense of the ensemble members' well-being. Repeatedly watching those in power berate musicians led me to ponder how conductors might achieve high musical standards while simultaneously caring about ensembles members' need, growth, and well-being.

### Purpose of the Study

As a way of exploring how I might best apply the principles of servant leadership to my own conducting pedagogy, I will interview six conductors of large ensembles whose groups perform at a high level, but who also place a premium on the needs, happiness, and empowerment of the musicians in their groups. At the same time, I will survey published literature on the topics of conductor leadership philosophy in North America and servant-leadership principles, specifically the work of Robert K. Greenleaf.

I hope to show that attaining high musical standards does not require a leadership model devoid of empathy, care, and understanding for ensemble members. Moreover, it is possible to apply these nurturing characteristics to large ensemble conducting leadership philosophies while still giving honest and direct feedback to ensemble members.

### Method of Inquiry

The following ensemble directors were selected based on either word of mouth from respected members of our profession or because I had personally observed them collaborating with an ensemble. Specifically, criteria for inclusion in this project included their outstanding record of performance, evidence of innovative concert presentations, and reputations from within the profession as student-centered educators. While the



initial list of possible interviewees was much longer, these are the people I could connect with given the timeline:

- Robert Taylor - Director of Bands, Chair, Wind Brass & Percussion, Professor of Conducting & Ensembles, University of British Columbia
- Jodie Blackshaw – Composer and Educator, Baranduda, Victoria, Australia
- Jonathan Grantham - Director of Bands, Amador Valley High School, Pleasanton, California
- Ramona Wis - Director of Choral Activities, North Central College, Naperville, Illinois
- Colin Clarke – Artistic Director, Toronto Youth Wind Orchestra
- Matthew Arau – Chair, Music Education Department, Associate Director of Bands, Lawrence University

I interviewed each conductor individually via Riverside.fm, a remote studio-quality audio and video recording software. The following IRB-approved questions were asked to each of the interviewees:

- Are you aware of the work of Robert K. Greenleaf and his Servant Leadership model? If so, how does it impact your work? If they are not familiar with it, I will briefly explain it to them to create a framing for our discussion.
- What or who has influenced your approach to leadership? Discuss how they shaped your approach to leadership. Please share three experiences/people that helped shape your leadership style.
- When you were a member of an ensemble, what were the different kinds of leadership style you were exposed to?
- How are the following servant leadership characteristics as defined by Greenleaf exemplified in your work as a conductor/educator?
  - Listening
  - Empathy
  - Healing
  - Awareness
  - Persuasion
  - Conceptualization
  - Foresight
  - Stewardship
  - Commitment to growing people
  - Building community

- Could you outline some of the challenges institutions/structures in general create that make servant leadership challenging?
- How would your students describe your leadership style and/or philosophy?

#### Definition of Terms

##### *Servant Leadership*

A leadership philosophy founded by Robert K. Greenleaf that emphasizes the leader's responsibility to serve and empower their followers, rather than the leader's authority or control over them.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### Wind Conductors as Leaders

Post-World War I military musicians greatly influenced wind conducting leadership as we know it today. As Edward Birge states, “after the war many of these men became instrumental directors in the public schools, and they brought to their task a knowledge of organization and teaching skill of the utmost practical value.”<sup>2</sup> They taught students who became band directors and a domino effect soon saw this top-down approach to instruction permeate public school instrumental music education across the country. The military mindset influenced everything from how rehearsals were structured to what conductors wore. Conductor and wind band historian, Sir David Whitwell said, “conductors wore military-style uniforms. Before myself, I don’t ever remember seeing a college conductor who wore a tuxedo of any kind. At the University of Illinois, the whole program was designed like a military company.”<sup>3</sup> The well-entrenched hierarchical system of the military and the authoritarian ideals were at the core of the profession. Randall Allsup and Cathy Benedict write about how these ideals were carried forward into present day instrumental music education programs. They write about modern instrumental music programs still succumbing to this traditional view of leadership, stating,

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<sup>2</sup> Edward Bailey Birge, *History of Public School Music in the United States*, Augmented ed. (Washington, D.C.: Music Educators National Conference, 1966), 202-203.

<sup>3</sup> Haithcock, Michael, and David Whitwell. *CBDNA Oral History Project: Dr. David Whitwell*. Other. Youtube, February 13, 2023. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8xWQ-dM7RCs&ab\\_channel=CBDNA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8xWQ-dM7RCs&ab_channel=CBDNA).

Leadership, or in this tradition “directorship,” is a highly prized commodity, favoring decisive action informed by extant intelligence, “best practice” professionalism, and custom. Disagreements between teacher and learner are rarely allowed to surface, and they must never come about publicly. Problems are seen as frustrating obstacles, impediments that get in the way of learning, and knowing something new is evaluated by the satisfactory conclusion of a completed work that is performed according to institutional standards.<sup>4</sup>

William D. Revelli’s approach is a well-known example of this authoritarian style of leadership. Director of Bands at the University of Michigan from 1935 to 1971, Revelli was one of the main proponents of the school band movement in the United States. Although he never served in the military, Revelli modeled his approach to conducting after John Philip Sousa, the storied conductor of the President’s Own Marine Band from 1880 to 1892. Often referred to as “The Chief,” Revelli’s demands for excellence and constant push for better musicality, rhythm, and intonation led to ensembles that played at incredibly high levels. Many students found his tough approach to musical education questionable, but there was no questioning the results these methods produced. As Joseph Dobos said, “He was a tyrant who was feared by many, and an educator revered by all.”<sup>5</sup>

Revelli began his teaching career at Hobart High School in Hobart, Indiana. After building storied bands whose performances rivaled some colleges, he took a significant pay cut to become the Director of Bands at the University of Michigan. Of his first impressions of the now well-known University of Michigan Symphony Band, Revelli

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<sup>4</sup> Randall Everett Allsup and Cathy Benedict. "The Problems of Band: An Inquiry into the Future of Instrumental Music Education." *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 16, no. 2 (Fall 2008): 156.

<sup>5</sup> Revelli, quoted in, Joseph Dobos. “The University Of Michigan Bands: The Man Behind The Legacies.” [banddirector.com](https://banddirector.com), 2017. <https://banddirector.com/history-archive/the-university-of-michigan-bands-the-man-behind-the-legacies-2/>.

said they “couldn’t turn pages for my Hobart band.”<sup>6</sup> Even worse was the attitude of the students, who would often arrive late to, and be found smoking before, during and after, rehearsals. Revelli said the students were cocky but had no reason to be, stating, “that’s the worst thing you can have: when you’re not good and you think you are—there’s nothing worse. Your receptivity to criticism is nil.”<sup>7</sup> Over his 36 years in Ann Arbor, Revelli’s military-inspired teaching, dedication to perfection, and demand for respect helped grow the University of Michigan band program into one of the finest in the country.

Only Revelli could fully explain the reasoning behind his demands for excellence, saying “I’m totally dedicated to perfection and when it’s ‘just about right,’ I’m unhappy. To me, that’s like a pilot who misses the runway by 8 feet. You’re dead; he’s almost right.”<sup>8</sup> Though it is easy to see Revelli’s leadership style as one that was strictly focused on product, we begin to see that a conductor’s leadership philosophy is not either or, but both and, with Revelli stating, “The conductor has a responsibility to create an attitude of love for music. You are not a conductor of bands, you’re a conductor of people. It’s through music that you reach them, and it’s a beautiful way to reach people.”<sup>9</sup>

Revelli’s work at both Hobart High School and the University of Michigan played a significant role in improving the performance standards of bands across the United States. However, there was still an important aspect missing: quality original repertoire. Though new works for band were being created, transcriptions of orchestral works,

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<sup>6</sup> Kim Clarke, “Revelli: The Long Note,” Heritage Project: The University of Michigan , accessed February 28, 2023, <https://heritage.umich.edu/stories/revelli-the-long-note/>.

<sup>7</sup> Kim Clarke, “Revelli: The Long Note,”.

<sup>8</sup> Kim Clarke, “Revelli: The Long Note,”.

<sup>9</sup> Kim Clarke, “Revelli: The Long Note,”.

marches and arrangements were still the main source of the band repertoire.<sup>10</sup> One of the main agents in the generation of original repertoire for band was Frederick Fennell, founder and conductor of the Eastman Wind Ensemble from 1952 to 1962. The unique one-per-part structure of the Eastman Wind Ensemble not only attracted prominent composers such as Percy Grainger, Howard Hanson, and Vincent Persichetti to write for the band, but it also afforded the musicians greater artistic license since the part they were playing was not being doubled, tripled, etc. It was Fennell's belief that many of the issues in band, both from a player contentment and composer willingness standpoint, were rooted in the idea that there were multiple people playing the same part, believing this created a much heavier and messier sound.<sup>11</sup>

With regards to repertoire, Fennell led the charge in offering the highest quality repertoire available for bands, stating:

Choosing music is the single most important thing a band director can do, and is the only thing a band director can do alone, made more important because of the substandard repertoire continuously being published. So many publishers in the business today are printers who don't care about quality, but only about what will sell. We must not allow them to give the band a bad reputation nor to make our decisions for us, since the music we choose today can affect students for ever.<sup>12</sup>

Fennell's leadership in the wind ensemble movement inspired many wind band conductors to adopt the same ensemble model and ultimately the same ideals when it came to programming.

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<sup>10</sup> Stephan L Rhodes, "Twentieth-Century Repertoire," Wind Band History, accessed March 1, 2023, [https://windbandhistory.neocities.org/rhodeswindband\\_12\\_20thcenturyrepertoire](https://windbandhistory.neocities.org/rhodeswindband_12_20thcenturyrepertoire).

<sup>11</sup> Frank L. Battisti, *The Winds of Change*, 53-64.

<sup>12</sup> T.L. Dvorak et al., *Best Music for High School Band: A Selective Repertoire Guide for High School Bands & Wind Ensembles* (Manhattan Beach Music, 1993), 7.

One of those inspired ensemble conductors was Frank Battisti, Director of Bands at the New England Conservatory from 1969 to 1999. Battisti was one of the first conducting pedagogues to speak about leadership, though it seems to be in a more organizational than inspirational way. In an article entitled “Teaching Music: The Leadership Component,” Battisti states,

Effective teachers must be strong leaders, as well. The following qualities and characteristics are necessary for every successful music teacher: A passion for music, enthusiasm for leading, vision, public relations skills, vitality, commitment, a sense of responsibility, ability to motivate others, compassion, confidence, courage, sense of community, communication skills, positive attitude, self-discipline, desire for excellence, fairness, respect, direction, political acumen and the ability to delegate.”<sup>13</sup>

When looking at these characteristics we see a mix of the inspirational and managerial aspects of being a conductor. However, Battisti’s idea of leadership is still a directorship, with one person regulating the interactions of many. And while Battisti moved the profession towards a more student-centered approach, it would not be until the 1980s that this philosophy would really pick up momentum.

During the 1980s, Tim Lautzenheiser, affectionately known as Dr. Tim, began flipping the conductor leadership paradigm from a conductor focus to an ensemble member focus, stating, “there is a shift from the authoritarian band director to the music educator who is concerned about the overall welfare of each musician while maintaining the group’s high artistic standards, both on and off the podium.”<sup>14</sup> We also see the dismantling of a leadership style that leads through fear and the move to one that fosters a

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<sup>13</sup> Battisti, Frank L. “Teaching Music the Leadership Component, *Music Educators Journal*, 85, no. 6 (1999): 38–50. Battisti, F. L. (1999). Teaching Music the Leadership Component:, *Music Educators Journal*, 85(6), 38–50.

<sup>14</sup>Tim Lautzenheiser. “The Band Director as a Leader.” Essay. In *Teaching Music through Performance in Band 3*, 3:102–12. Chicago: GIA Publications, 2000. 102 - 103.

positive learning environment. Lautzenheiser explains, “If the students assume a defensive posture to protect themselves, it becomes impossible to access their creative potential; however, if the director consistently models a forward-focused discipline, a remarkable shift in attitudes, energy, and performance can be felt.”<sup>15</sup>

Lautzenheiser's leadership ideals have inspired many present-day music educators and conductors to advocate for a more student-first leadership approach. Through their participation in the Servant Leadership Association for Music, conductors like Matthew Arau, Scott Rush, Myra Rhoden, Scott Lang and Ramona Wis continue to add their voice to this student-centered approach.<sup>16</sup>

### Leadership Models Found in Conducting Pedagogy

When we look at textbooks used at National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) accredited institutions, we can begin to grasp what skills and knowledge are emphasized in collegiate conducting courses. Christian Noon examined undergraduate conducting curricula and textbooks used at NASM accredited institutions. His findings show that almost all emphasis is put on basic conducting skills like beat patterns, gesture, rehearsal planning, score study and refinement of gesture, showing accents, dynamics, and phrasing.<sup>17</sup> While we can assume that conductor leadership philosophy is discussed

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<sup>15</sup> Tim Lautzenheiser. “The Band Director as a Leader”, 110.

<sup>16</sup> “Servant Leadership Association for Music | Board of Directors,” Servant Leadership Association for Music, accessed March 21, 2023, <https://slamleadership.org/>.

<sup>17</sup> Christian M. Noon, “Students’ and Teachers’ Perceptions of Undergraduate Conducting Curricula: A Review of Literature,” *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education* 38, no. 1 (April 2019): pp. 46-54, <https://doi.org/10.1177/8755123319857221>.



in collegiate conducting courses, it is important to note that none of these texts address it in any direct manner.

There are several supplementary resources commonly used in conducting courses that address leadership. In his book *The Winds of Change II*, Battisti states that, “a wise conductor-leader delegates responsibilities. This broadens and strengthens a group’s operational base. Organizations with committed professional and volunteer personnel are best prepared to confront challenges, especially unforeseen ones.”<sup>18</sup> While this delegation of more administrative duties is not necessarily to the benefit of the individual musicians, it is an indication that the profession is beginning to see how a more de-centralized approach might be advantageous from an organizational standpoint. It also shows that there is more room to reflect on how leadership models are taught to conducting students and that more emphasis needs to be placed on the experience we provide for the members of the ensembles with whom we collaborate.

### Servant Leadership Introduction

Servant leadership, a term coined by Robert K. Greenleaf in 1970, is a non-traditional leadership philosophy that outlines a set of behaviors and practices that place the primary emphasis of leadership on the well-being of those being served by a given leader. Servant leadership has become increasingly popular over the last two decades and has led many organizations and institutions to further research and adopt servant leadership principles within their structures. Servant leadership has been researched

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<sup>18</sup> Frank L Battisti, “Chapter 11 - Leadership,” in *On Becoming a Conductor: Lessons and Meditations on the Art of Conducting* (Galesville, MD: Meredith Music Publications, 2007), p. 82.

qualitatively and quantitatively across many different fields and areas, including business, athletics, and politics.<sup>19</sup> However, there have been very few studies that have examined servant leadership in the context of music education and conducting philosophy.<sup>20</sup>

Principles of servant leadership can be traced back to the writings of Aristotle and Confucius.<sup>21</sup> The modern idea of servant leadership, outlined in Greenleaf's essay, "The Servant as Leader", suggests that a good leader "is a servant first.... begin[ing] with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first."<sup>22</sup> He coined the servant leadership theory after thirty-eight years working in the corporate world as Director of Management Development at AT&T, from 1921 to 1964.<sup>23</sup> While working at AT&T and observing other organizations, Greenleaf took note of managers who put the needs of their followers above their own, supporting and empowering their followers, and demonstrating follower-centered leadership principles. They were highly successful in nurturing their followers as people, as well as succeeding organizationally.

Greenleaf was also inspired by reading Hermann Hesse's *Journey to the East*. In this story a band of men are on a mythical journey. The central figure of the story is Leo, who accompanies the party as the servant who does their menial chores, but who also sustains them with his spirit. He is a person of extraordinary presence. All goes well until

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<sup>19</sup> Yuliana Umanets, "Examining Servant Leadership and Burnout among Ncaa Student-Athletes" (dissertation, 2021), pp. 16-17.

<sup>20</sup> One of the only studies found was Jessica Steels dissertation. "Relationship of Servant Leadership and Emotional Intelligence among Secondary Choral Directors."

<sup>21</sup> Franco Gandolfi, & Seth Stone. "Leadership, leadership styles, and servant leadership." *Journal of Management Research*, 18, no. 4 (2018): 264.

Sen Sendjaya, & James C Sarros. "Servant leadership: Its origin, development, and application in organizations". *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 9, no. 2 (2002): 57.

<sup>22</sup> Robert K. Greenleaf. *Servant Leadership: A journey into the nature of legitimate power and greatness*. Paulist Press, 13-14.

<sup>23</sup> Don Frick. Robert K. Greenleaf biography. Robert K. Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership. <https://www.greenleaf.org/about-us/robert-k-greenleaf-biography/>

Leo disappears. Then the group falls into disarray and the journey is abandoned. They cannot make it without the servant Leo. The narrator, one of the party, after some years of wandering, finds Leo and is taken into the Order that sponsored the journey. There he discovers that Leo, whom he had known as a servant, was in fact the titular head of the Order its guiding spirit, a great and noble leader.<sup>24</sup>

Greenleaf retired in 1964, deciding to focus on a new career as a teacher, writer, and consultant to many organizations and academic institutions, including the Ford Foundation, Ohio University, the R.K. Mellon Foundation, MIT, and the American Foundation for Management Research.<sup>25</sup> Also, during this time, Greenleaf founded the Center for Applied Ethics which was renamed the Robert K. Greenleaf Center in 1985.<sup>26</sup>

In the years following the release of his essay, Greenleaf went on to write two books on how servant leadership principles could influence organizations and could be applied socially.<sup>27</sup> Greenleaf sold millions of copies of books and other written materials over the years and made a deep and long-standing impact in the world of organizational leadership and scholarship.

### Definition And Attributes of Servant Leadership

The simple idea of putting followers first is an essential principle to many modern leadership methodologies. What differentiates servant leadership from other styles is “going beyond one’s self-interest” and the leader’s genuine concern with serving their

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<sup>24</sup> Robert K. Greenleaf. *Servant Leadership*. 21

<sup>25</sup> Larry C. Spears. *Reflection on leadership: How Robert K Greenleaf’s theory of servant leadership influenced today’s top management thinkers*. Wiley, 1995.

<sup>26</sup> Larry C. Spears. *Reflection on leadership*

<sup>27</sup> Don Frick. Robert K. Greenleaf biography.

followers.<sup>28</sup> An inner calling to serve is what drives the servant leader rather than leading because it is their occupation. This attitude allows the servant leader to be part of the process, guiding their followers as they grow professionally and as individuals.

“Primus inter pares” (i.e., first among equals) is a Latin phrase Greenleaf uses to illustrate the idea of utilizing power as a source of influence, convincing, and persuading their followers to inspire positive change, rather than demanding it. A servant leader is dedicated to creating a positive learning environment, stewarding trust within an organization, and committed to the growth of their followers.<sup>29</sup> As Larry Spears highlights, servant leadership does not come with a specific manual or detailed implementation rules. He notes: “This is not a straightforward management philosophy; there are no fourteen points to follow. Instead, trustees must reflect upon their philosophies and behavior and have ongoing discussions”.<sup>30</sup>

This lack of definition is something Greenleaf did purposefully, allowing leaders the opportunity to look inwardly, reflect and grow, while being directed by the ideas and principles of servant leadership. Rather than creating an assessment tool that measures a servant leader's effectiveness, Greenleaf created questions for leaders to ask themselves and followers to ask of their leaders. These questions should inform how successful the servant leader is. Greenleaf's questions are as follows:

1. Do those served grow as persons?

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<sup>28</sup> Dirk van Dierendonck. (2011). “Servant Leadership: A review and Synthesis”. *Journal of Management*, 37, no. 4 (2011): 1228-1261.

<sup>29</sup> Robert K. Greenleaf. *Servant as leader*.

<sup>30</sup> Larry C. Spears. *Reflection on leadership*, 132

2. Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely themselves to become servants?
3. What is the effect on the least privileged of society; will they benefit, or at least not further be deprived?<sup>31</sup>

This form of assessment shows that servant leadership is an other-centered leadership philosophy meaning that it benefits the follower and greater community as its main goal. Servant leadership is not so much a switch that leaders can turn on and off, but rather a way of life. The way a servant leader chooses to lead reflects the person they truly are. As James Autry states, “you can’t separate the way you behave when you’re communicating with your spouse from the way you communicate with your co-workers or boss. It’s important to be the same person all day, every day”<sup>32</sup> Being yourself at work and at home is a main concern of the servant leader. They keep servant leadership principles close to their heart and allow them to guide them as they grow and evolve as a person and professional. As Paris and Welty-Peachey state, “servant leadership is not about self-sacrifice or self-denial. It is about self-fulfillment.”<sup>33</sup> A true servant leader is wired to first help others. That wiring results in their own fulfillment as well as the empowerment of the people they are helping.

Numerous authors have expanded on Greenleaf’s servant leadership philosophy, which led to many studies seeking to better define servant leadership and the creation of

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<sup>31</sup> Robert K. Greenleaf. *Servant Leadership*. 14.

<sup>32</sup> James A Autry. *The servant leader: How to build a creative team, develop great morale, and improve bottom-line performance*. Roseville, Calif.: Prima. 2001. 43.

<sup>33</sup> Denise Linda Paris, & Jon Welty-Peachey. “A systematic literature review of servant leadership theory in organizational contexts”. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 113, no. 3 (2013): 377-393.

easy-to-understand attributes that can be applied to organizations. None is more widely used than that of Larry C. Spears, past CEO of the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership and an individual who is recognized as one of the most influential people to translate Greenleaf's writings into descriptions and categorized attributes. As someone who worked very closely with Greenleaf, Spears was able to create digestible articles and books that further distilled the ten attributes of the servant leader:

1. *Listening*: carefully listening and clarifying follower's needs and reflecting on information collected;
2. *Empathy*: acknowledging and accepting unique qualities of the people;
3. *Healing*: refers to helping one's own and others to recover from harmful experiences and become a whole;
4. *Awareness*: self-awareness of personal strengths and weaknesses, accomplishments and shortages, and general awareness of issues related to values, power, and ethics;
5. *Persuasion*: influencing others through persuasion rather than positional authority;
6. *Conceptualization*: thinking beyond day-to-day operations;
7. *Foresight*: learning from the past, evaluating current situation, and predicting future outcomes;
8. *Stewardship*: holding organization in trust and commitment to serving the needs of others;
9. *Commitment to the growth of people*: commitment to nurture the growth of followers;
10. *Building community*: building a community among followers.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Larry C Spears, "Character and Servant Leadership: Ten Characteristics of Effective, Caring Leaders," *Journal of Virtues & Leadership* 1, no. 1 (2010), <https://doi.org/https://www.regent.edu/journal/journal-of-virtues-leadership/character-and-servant-leadership-ten-characteristics-of-effective-caring-leaders/>.

Spears states, "the preceding 10 characteristics of servant-leadership are by no means exhaustive. However, these characteristics communicate the power and promise this concept offers to those who are open to its invitation and challenge".<sup>35</sup>

### Critiques of Servant Leadership

As much as servant leadership puts people first and is made up of many positive attributes, it has come with its fair share of criticism. In Daria-Yvonne Graham's dissertation, "Intersectional Leadership: A Critical Narrative Analysis of Servant Leadership by Black Women in Student Affairs," she states historical context and inherent power structures should be considered before adopting Greenleaf's servant leadership model,

When promoting or adopting the servant leadership model, it is appropriate to ask what are the implications for a population that has been historically and socially conditioned to see servitude not as a marker of leadership, but as a requirement for livelihood and safety? The mere title of servant leadership requires a level of power that Black women may not possess depending upon their environment. The ability to decide to be a servant in any given social, political, or professional setting requires that there first be an option to assume the role of servant.<sup>36</sup> One can imagine this thought applied to other historically marginalized communities as well. Like many leadership models, servant leadership will not work for everyone. However, by being more intentional in our thought and practice we help users of the models to appreciate the broader understanding and effect of leadership styles on marginalized communities.

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<sup>35</sup> Larry C. Spears. *Reflection on leadership*, 132.

<sup>36</sup> Daria-Yvonne J Graham, "A Critical Narrative Analysis of Servant Leadership By Black Women In Student Affairs" (dissertation, 2018).

## Servant Leadership in Conducting

Ramona Wis, Director of Choral Activities at North Central College, Naperville, Illinois, was one of the first to explore the idea of conductor as servant. Wis explains the servant leader conductor is an individual that has a calling to serve others before themselves. Their responsiveness to musician needs goes beyond the musician and requires the conductor to look inwardly. Believing that musicians can perform and achieve goals creates an environment of trust. It also empowers them to take ownership of their learning and makes them accountable to themselves and the people they are collaborating with. rather than demand results such as musical perfection through authoritative power structures.<sup>37</sup>

Andrew Trachsel, Professor of Wind Studies and Chair of the Division of Conducting and Ensembles at the University of North Texas in Denton, Texas, applies Servant Leadership attributes to his conducting leadership philosophy. Trachsel speaks about the conductor not having any power in the beginning and any power the conductor does possess is connected to how much the musicians are empowered. He goes on to say a servant conductor not only serves the musicians but the music itself, fostering a collaborative rehearsal experience.<sup>38</sup>

## Conclusion

The goal of this servant leadership research is to show that obtaining high quality musical/technical results and fostering empowered, creative, musicians who are also good people does not have to be either/or, but can be both/and. William Revelli, Frederick

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<sup>37</sup> Ramona M. Wis. "The Conductor as Servant-Leader." *Music Educators Journal*, 89 (2002): 17 - 23.

<sup>38</sup> Andrew Trachsel, "The Servant Conductor," in *Teaching Music through Performance in Band*, vol. 9 (Chicago, IL: GIA, 2021), pp. 143-178.



Fennell, Frank Battisti, and Tim Lautzenheiser all used their influence to advance various aspects of the band profession. Their collective contributions have created the potential for conductors to inspire ensemble members to achieve high performance standards of quality repertoire. When going through the history and development of Robert K. Greenleaf's servant leadership model we can begin to see and imagine more of its applications to conducting pedagogy and music education in general and how it might foster musical leaders who care deeply about the growth of ensemble members as people, as well as creating empowered artists who will contribute to the world beyond that of our rehearsal spaces.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHOD

#### Research Design

I interviewed six conductors individually via Riverside.fm, a remote studio-quality audio and video recording software. They were all asked these six IRB approved questions:

- Are you aware of the work of Robert K. Greenleaf and his Servant Leadership model? If so, how does it impact your work? If they are not familiar with it, I briefly explained it to them to create a framing for our discussion.
- What or who has influenced your approach to leadership? Discuss how they shaped your approach to leadership. Please share three experiences/people that helped shape your leadership style.
- When you were a member of an ensemble, what were the different kinds of leadership style you were exposed to?
- How are the following servant leadership characteristics as defined by Greenleaf exemplified in your work as a conductor/educator?
  - Listening
  - Empathy
  - Healing
  - Awareness
  - Persuasion
  - Conceptualization
  - Foresight
  - Stewardship
  - Commitment to growth of people
  - Building community
- Could you outline some of the challenges institutions/structures in general create that make servant leadership challenging?
- How would your students describe your leadership style and/or philosophy?

After each interview, I listened to the data captured and created summaries of each question asked. These summaries are what was included in the main body of the document.

## Participants

The following ensemble directors were selected based on either word of mouth from respected members of our profession or because I had personally observed them collaborating with an ensemble. Specifically, criteria for inclusion in this project included their outstanding record of performance, evidence of innovative concert presentations, and reputations from within the profession as student-centered educators. While the initial list of possible interviewees was much longer, these are the people I could connect with given the timeline:

- Robert Taylor - Director of Bands, Chair, Wind Brass & Percussion, Professor of Conducting & Ensembles, University of British Columbia
- Jodie Blackshaw – Composer and Educator, Baranduda, Victoria, Australia
- Jonathan Grantham - Director of Bands, Amador Valley High School, Pleasanton, California
- Ramona Wis - Director of Choral Activities, North Central College, Naperville, Illinois
- Colin Clarke – Artistic Director, Toronto Youth Wind Orchestra
- Matthew Arau – Chair, Music Education Department, Associate Director of Bands, Lawrence University

## Researchers Role

I conducted all interviews and served as Co-PI on this study.

## Data Collection

Data was collected via Riverside.fm, a remote studio-quality audio and video recording software. These files were stored on Riverside.fm's password-protected cloud storage server. Data will be stored in password protected Riverside.fm Recording Cloud until the end of the 2024 calendar year.

## Data Analysis

A transcript was created for each interview and included in the appendices of the document. Interview audio files were listened back to, and a distillation of responses was provided in the body of the document.

CHAPTER 4  
SYNTHESIS OF INTERVIEWS

Robert Taylor

Biography

Robert Taylor is Professor of Music and Director of Bands at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, BC, where he conducts the Symphonic Wind Ensemble, teaches graduate and undergraduate conducting, and serves as Chair of the Woodwind Brass and Percussion Division. With a career in music education spanning over twenty-five years, previous appointments include the University of Puget Sound in the state of Washington and Eureka High School in northern California, where ensembles under his direction earned recognition by *Downbeat Magazine*, the Selmer Corporation, and Grammy Signature Schools.

Dr. Taylor maintains an active schedule as a guest conductor. Past engagements include performances with the Vancouver Brass Orchestra, Pacific Symphonic Wind Ensemble, and Chicago-based contemporary music group, the Maverick Ensemble, in addition to collaborations with a wide range of international artists—from brass virtuosos Allen Vizzutti, Gail Williams, Jeff Nelsen, and Daniel Perantoni; to composers Jodie Blackshaw, Michael Colgrass, John Corigliano, David Maslanka, Cait Nishimura, Joel Puckett, Alex Shapiro, Frank Ticheli, and Dana Wilson; to jazz and pop performers Ingrid Jensen, Manhattan Transfer, and Big Bad Voodoo Daddy. As a passionate advocate of music in the schools, Dr. Taylor is in high demand as a festival adjudicator, rehearsal clinician, and guest conductor throughout North America and internationally.

His frequent appearances with young musicians include serving as principal conductor of the Puget Sound Youth Wind Ensemble and guest conductor of numerous honor groups, such as the National Youth Band of Canada, California Orchestra Directors Association Honor Symphony, and many provincial and all-state bands across Canada and the United States.

Taylor received the Master of Music and Doctor of Music degrees in conducting from Northwestern University, where he studied with Mallory Thompson, and the Bachelor of Arts degree in Trumpet and Music Education from Humboldt State University. His research on wind literature, rehearsal techniques, and the use of technology in the training of nascent conductors and performing musicians has been presented in leading wind band publications and featured in presentations at regional and national music conferences, including appearances at the Midwest Clinic and College Band Directors National Association. Recent research focuses on diversity, equity, and inclusion, through contemporary, socially-conscious programming and as co-author of *The Horizon Leans Forward*, a new resource that amplifies the talent and voices of the many underrepresented communities in the wind band field. Dr. Taylor is a Killam Laureate, Jacob K. Javits Fellow, and has served as on the executive boards of the British Columbia Music Educators Association and College Band Directors National Association (Northwest Region). He is a member of the Phi Kappa Phi and Pi Kappa Lambda National Honor Societies, World Association for Symphonic Bands and Ensembles, and National Association for Music Education.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Robert Taylor, "Robert Taylor Biography," The University of British Columbia, accessed March 18, 2023, <https://music.ubc.ca/profile/robert-taylor/>

## Synthesis of Interview

1. Are you aware of the work of Robert K. Greenleaf and his servant leadership model? If so, how does it impact your work?

Taylor was aware of Greenleaf's servant leadership model, first hearing about it in Ramona Wis's book, *The Conductor as Leader*. Taylor did not have a leadership model that fit the characteristics he already embodied until reading this book. The general idea of putting oneself in service to others really resonated with him and played a huge part in his motivation to become a musician and educator.

When speaking about the idea of Greenleaf's characteristics, Taylor notes that these are all aspects of leadership to which he tries to aspire but rarely is able to attain all at any given time. Taylor understands that following Greenleaf's characteristics is a constant process where we are consistently assessing who we are as leaders. He states if we hope to see growth in the people we are leading, we should look inwardly first. Taylor resonates with this model and sees it as a healthy balance of process vs. product, without either of them taking precedent over the other.

2. What or who has influenced your approach to leadership? Discuss how they shaped your approach to leadership. Please share three experiences/people that helped shape your leadership style.

Taylor was one of the few interviewees that spoke about what has influence him and how books have helped in his pursuit of leadership study. Books like Alfie Cohen's *No Competition* taught him how collaboration can be much more beneficial than competition. Carol Dwek's *Mindset*, Parker Palmer's *The Courage to Teach*, Ben and

Rosamund Zander's *The Art of Possibility*, and Daniel Coyle's *The Talent Code* and *Culture Code* all influenced who he is as a leader.

Taking time for reflection is another influence on Taylor—that is, setting aside time for reflection, not just time spent in transit or doing another task. Taylor says this process has been important so he can think about who he is as a leader, what is and is not working, create new ideas, and think about how he can become a better leader for his ensemble members.

Taylor has had the opportunity to make music all around the world and says this has been another “what” that influences his ideas on leadership. Meeting and observing new people, understanding the contexts they in which they live, and taking time to reflect on his privilege and how that influences his thoughts on leadership during all of these travel experiences.

Several individuals influenced Taylor's ideas of leadership, starting with his high school band director, Ted Spilman. Taylor notes that Spillman was an incredible but humble teacher. He created empowerment and agency in his students to the point that they felt like they owned everything about the music program. This empowerment was a big reason they worked so hard for Spilman. Taylor notes that he made all his students read the *One Minute Manager* by Kenneth Blanchard and Spencer Johnson. This book helped the music department's student leadership create a leadership model built around praise. If you catch someone doing something well, let them know about it. Spilman also gave students many opportunities to grow as leaders, including learning from their failures. He empowered and got out of the way.



During Taylor's graduate studies at Northwestern University, he had the pleasure of working with one of his biggest influences, Dr. Mallory Thompson. Her relentless pursuit of art and excellence showed Taylor how much further artists can go than their self-limiting selves. Thompson was about empowering the organism (ensemble) to push for their best and showing her students they could grow in ways they could not trust to grow. Other influences include his parents, who allowed him numerous opportunities to work through failures, and his Ashtanga yoga practice, which allows students to learn at their own rate and intensity.

3. When you were a member of an ensemble, what were the different kinds of leadership style you were exposed to?

Taylor is grateful that he has been able to experience many different styles of leadership in his life. And while he believes it is important for ensemble members to experience many kinds of leadership styles, he feels it is not always the case. He says it is easy to be judgmental of a top-down leadership model, but notes he tries to be more balanced in his thinking. He sees every leadership model as having some benefit in specific situations, and it is a mix of leadership styles that should influence us.

Taylor has been a member of an ensemble led by a conductor who viewed their role as a dictator. Taylor speaks about the efficiency of rehearsals and how being unified in terms of goals was relatively simple since the goals were that of the conductor. However, this approach prevented ensemble members from developing a true sense of ownership. Taylor has also experienced the opposite leadership model, a model that is so open there is no attempt at creating an organizational goal, which can be frustrating. This model often provides opportunities for ownership of the art but often requires someone

from the ensemble to take charge. For this reason, Taylor is often experimenting with aspects of these two extreme leadership models by allowing aspects of many leadership models or best practices influence who he is as a leader. He states that using a range of models is very important, letting ensemble members know this is why we need to do it this way, for the collective goal and not just the director's goal.

4. How are the following servant leadership characteristics as defined by Greenleaf exemplified in your work as a conductor/educator?

- Listening
- Empathy
- Healing
- Awareness
- Persuasion
- Conceptualization
- Foresight
- Stewardship
- Commitment to growing people
- Building community

The characteristic of listening resonated with Taylor, in a musical sense but also in a personal sense. It is what guides him most on the podium, both practically and symbolically. Empathy is another aspect that resonated with Taylor, especially after the last three years of the COVID pandemic, marked by a shift from focusing on the group's goals to those of the individuals in the ensemble. He admits to having been a leader who would often prioritize the goals of the group. Presently, Taylor has a stronger sense of leading the individual. Taylor states, everyone has a story, has needs and we should be empathetic to them.

He connects aspects of healing and awareness to recognizing our privilege and how we can use it to help people, saying "you gotta use it, to lose it". Be aware of your

privilege, empathetic to those who do not have the same privileges and consider how that leads to internal healing and ultimately communal healing.

Combining foresight, commitment to growth, and building community, Taylor feels that learning from his previous experiences has reinforced his drive to help his students achieve their goals as well as in creating a space in which all ensemble members can be engaged. If community is built, then ensemble members are able to take risks without fear of being reprimanded. Creating a space where everyone feels a sense of belonging is imperative to who he is as a leader and the foundation of building community.

Taylor closes with the idea that we all have some experience with these characteristics and that it is important to figure out which ones are your strengths. Once you establish which characteristics are your strength, you are able to dive deeper into them, and in some ways they will help supplement areas in which you might feel weaker.

5. Could you outline some of the challenges institutions/structures in general create that make servant leadership challenging?

Taylor believes that academic institutions struggle with these servant leadership ideas due to their historically hierarchical structures. He also believes there is a lack of people in administrative positions that use a servant leader mindset. Many people in these positions were trained academics, not leader. Accomplishments in their field may not translate to administration. He says the institutions in which we serve often overlook best practices when it comes to leading.

Taylor also sees the challenge of burnout in the servant leadership model, noting that we need to be careful service does not become servitude by taking the necessary steps to recharge and not overspend the energy you have.

6. How would your students describe your leadership style and/or philosophy?

Taylor decided to send an anonymous form to his students asking this question. Some of the responses described his leadership style/philosophy as firm, deliberate, invested, principled, student focused, highly collaborative and creative. They also describe someone who leads by example, has clear expectations, is consistent in their pursuit of excellence, and is not afraid to take risks and push people to grow to their full potential.

Taylor notes that this was a great exercise because he can amplify positive aspects. He also spoke about noticing the aspects that were not mentioned by students, such as empathy and how the absence of other Greenleaf characteristic offer areas of growth in his leadership ideals.

Jodie Blackshaw

## Biography

Jodie Blackshaw grew up in rural southeast Australia and formed a very personal relationship with music early in life through the creative application of her imagination to musical tone colors and movement. Today, she continues to seek creative experiences for students through her teaching and composing so they, too, may enjoy the personal relationship she discovered in her formative years. Her vision is to offer every child who participates in a school music ensemble the opportunity to voice, share and explore their creative spirit in a safe and nurturing environment. The end goal being that through this experience, each child develops a strong sense of self-love, self-worth and self-awareness that they carry with them throughout their life.

In 2020 Blackshaw completed her PhD in Composition with Australian indigenous composer Dr. Christopher Sainsbury at the Australian National University. In addition to composing and presenting music education workshops, Blackshaw is passionate about fostering equality in concert programs and music education. In 2016 she launched the Grade 1-4 'Female Band Composer' database and in 2018 she curated [www.colourfullmusic.com](http://www.colourfullmusic.com) to share diverse wind band programs created by leading conductors within the global wind music community. ColourFULL Music has now grown to include a team of enthusiastic volunteers who publish a quarterly 'Good News Guide' and spotlight under-represented composers via their YouTube channel.

In addition to her advocacy work, Blackshaw also launched a special "conservation series" in December 2021. Each work is centered around a specific

endangered species. 20% of the sales price is donated to the conservation of that particular species and additional fundraising options for schools are also made available to encourage students and their communities to bring even greater purpose to their music making endeavors.<sup>40</sup>

### Synthesis of Interview

1. Are you aware of the work of Robert K. Greenleaf and his Servant Leadership model? If so, how does it impact your work?

Blackshaw was not familiar with Greenleaf's work before partaking in this case study. She was provided with an information sheet explaining the servant leadership model and its ten characteristics.

Blackshaw resonated with many of the ideas of servant leadership and first compared its ideals to that of a constructivist educator. She describes constructivist teaching as sowing a seed of an idea with individuals adding to their knowledge and in turn growing the collective's knowledge. Blackshaw says this approach shares many characteristics with servant leadership, including building community and persuasion.

2. What or who has influenced your approach to leadership? Discuss how they shaped your approach to leadership. Please share three experiences/people that helped shape your leadership style.

Blackshaw's first statement was, "I don't think of myself as a leader," and went on to say how she attempts to remove all hierarchy from the rehearsal space, moving the

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<sup>40</sup> Jodie Blackshaw, "Jodie Blackshaw About," Jodie Blackshaw, accessed March 18, 2023, <https://www.jodieblackshaw.com/about>.

podium aside and getting on the level of her students. Blackshaw sees it as her job to create a space in which students are not afraid of failing, a space where they can be themselves.

Heavily informed and inspired by Orff Schulwerk, Blackshaw is a third-generation educator. Her father and grandmother were educators who put much more emphasis on hands-on experience as opposed to drilling information into students. Blackshaw's grandmother discovered the Orff method in her last year of teaching and was instrumental in promoting the method in New South Wales, Australia. Watching father and grandmother teach was all about fun, play, and learning how to learn by failing.

Another influence was her high school English teacher. Blackshaw struggled with writing. Her teacher was patient with her, never shut her down, and said things like "I love the wavelength you're on!" instead offering suggestions rather than demands. This experience allowed Blackshaw the opportunity to learn at her own pace and from her mistakes. One of Blackshaw's composition teachers, Larry Sitsky, was also a huge influence on the way Blackshaw leads, offering ideas rather than necessities.

Both educators never shut down Blackshaw, never demanded or dictated. They saw something in her and wanted her to flourish. They did all of this while still being honest and direct. These experiences created in her a desire to always be honest with those around her while demonstrating love and respect.

3. When you were a member of an ensemble, what were the different kinds of leadership styles you were exposed to?

Blackshaw grew up in a small country town where the local mathematics teacher started the school band program. Though he was a brilliant administrator, his knowledge on the podium was quite limited.

In 1986, Blackshaw travelled to Sydney to take part in her first music camp. She professes she was so bad that they placed her on alto clarinet. The conductor at this camp was a very serious and knowledgeable conductor who only lasted a few minutes into the rehearsal before throwing his arms up in the air and walking out of the room, due to Blackshaw's intonation. Blackshaw did not know what was going on, did not know how to follow him. In fact, she did not even know how her new alto clarinet worked.

It was not until her next music camp that she was able to experience a different kind of leadership in Steve Williams. Blackshaw describes Williams as joy, brilliant on the podium and had a way of drawing out the best in the students he worked with. He was able to achieve excellence and was able to have a really good time while doing it.

4. How are the following servant leadership characteristics as defined by Greenleaf exemplified in your work as a conductor/educator?
  - Listening
  - Empathy
  - Healing
  - Awareness
  - Persuasion
  - Conceptualization
  - Foresight
  - Stewardship
  - Commitment to growing people
  - Building community



Blackshaw is an educator, conductor, and composer. She responded to this question mainly from her perspective as a composer. She spoke about how every piece she writes has both a pedagogical goal and an ensemble goal. Pedagogically, she thinks about conceptualization, awareness, listening and empathy. For ensemble goals, she is really thinking about building community, stewardship, and a commitment to growing people. Her approach to composition is often one in which ensemble members are given a significant amount of choice. Since this ideal is very rare in much of the music being written for bands, Blackshaw finds she has to utilize persuasion, foresight and to a degree, healing. She says she can be as persuasive as she wants but if she does not get off the podium and allow her students to be creative, what is the point?

5. Could you outline some of the challenges institutions/structures in general create that make servant leadership challenging?

Blackshaw sees institutions' lack of flexibility as being one of the biggest challenges. There is a need to equate everything and add a numerical rating. She wonders how we could possibly say one student is more creative than the other?

Blackshaw also points out that requirements demanding educators show ensemble competition wins and results to administrators is a challenge. She states that in the band world, competitions once held a great deal of importance and helped the genre grow. She asks, are they still needed? Maybe competitions can change to sharing festivals where ensembles from different schools perform for each other.

Blackshaw also asks if we need to offer so many concerts. She points out that conductor Craig Kirchhoff, Professor Emeritus of Conducting at the University of

Minnesota, reached a point where he cut his season in half to provide more time to breath, experiment and make music in a more collaborative way.

6. How would your students describe your leadership style and/or philosophy?

While spending six months teaching a local high school's grade twelve class, Blackshaw was described by one student as a teacher who does not teach, at least not how everyone teaches. After this was said another student said, "No Dr. Blackshaw teaches, everyone else just tells you what to do." Blackshaw believes students know she is not afraid to be vulnerable, not afraid to be transparent, and is bluntly honest when necessary. If something is not good, she will say so but explain why, giving them a context for their growth. She closes with saying she is 100% invested in her students and they are the most important people to her in the world.

## Jonathan Grantham

### Biography

Jonathan Grantham, director of bands at Amador Valley High School in Pleasanton, California, leads a band program of 350 students involved in five concert ensembles, three jazz bands, a competitive marching band, various chamber ensembles, two winter percussion units, and two winter guards.

In his 20+ years at Amador Valley, the band program has tripled in size and the ensembles have earned consistent superior ratings and high honors. Under Mr. Grantham's guidance, Amador Valley's top wind ensemble has performed at the CBDA state conference three times and twice at The Midwest Clinic.

Jonathan received his bachelor's degree in music education/trombone performance from Central Michigan University, graduating magna cum laude, and earned his master's degree in conducting at the American Band College of Sam Houston State University, graduating magna cum laude.

Mr. Grantham is active as a clinician, guest conductor and conference presenter. Honors include twice earning the Excellence in Education Award from Pleasanton Unified School District and being chosen as Pleasanton Unified School District's Teacher of the Year in 2013. Mr. Grantham was honored by the CMEA State Association with the Don Schmeer/Byron Hoyt Band Educator Award. In 2018 Jonathan was inducted into the John Philip Sousa Foundation's Bandworld Legion of Honor. He resides in Martinez, California with his partner Ryan.

“Music, and the community it provides, offers each student a view of themselves and a world they might not have otherwise imagined possible. Creating an environment where students are seen and their voices heard gives them the keys to opportunity, expression and freedom. SEL (Social Emotional Learning) in the music classroom is the door they walk through with these keys in hand.”<sup>41</sup>

### Synthesis of Interview

1. Are you aware of the work of Robert K. Greenleaf and his servant leadership model? If so, how does it impact your work?

Grantham was familiar with the term servant leadership but did not know of its connection to Greenleaf’s model. He admits he was unaware of the degree of research, writing and discussion that existed on the topic of Greenleaf’s servant leadership model. He was grateful for the opportunity to research and learn more about the servant leadership model and now he feels he can confidently say he is a servant leader.

2. What or who has influenced your approach to leadership? Discuss how they shaped your approach to leadership. Please share three experiences/people that helped shape your leadership style.

Grantham’s first influence was his high school band teacher, Bob Parker. Grantham describes Parker as a transformational leader who was able to show him possibilities Grantham never knew were possible. Parker made each one of his students feel seen, valued, heard, and understood. Parker did all of this while maintaining a high level of artistry in all his ensembles. Grantham notes it was a good balance of affective empathy.

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<sup>41</sup> Jonathan Grantham, “Amador Valley Music - Directors,” Amador Valley Music, accessed March 18, 2023, <https://www.amadormusic.org/about/directors>.

He reiterates the misconception that many music educators believe which is, can I have results, or can I develop healthy relationships with my ensemble members? The misconception is that this is an either or option. Parker showed Grantham that both were attainable in tandem.

His second leadership influence was his student teaching supervisor, Bill Monroe. Monroe had a great sense of humor and had a natural connection to his students. He gave a great deal of his time and energy to Grantham without asking for anything in return. He was another leader in Grantham's life that had high standards and a great connection to his students.

Grantham's last influence was his colleague at Amador Valley High School, Mark Aubel. Aubel led by example and was someone who showed Grantham what longevity in the profession looks like. He kept a spark, joy, and curiosity for teaching up until his retirement. Aubel was a leader who put his students first and involved them in decision making, always asking for feedback and opinions on aspects of the music program. Before meeting Aubel, Grantham considered himself a bit of a control freak. Aubel was able to show Grantham that it was possible to give students a prominent role in the music program. Aubel was an example of a leader who had heart, purpose, and joy to the end of their career.

3. When you were a member of an ensemble, what were the different kinds of leadership style you were exposed to?

Grantham has experienced many transformational leaders during his time as an ensemble member-- leaders who have a big vision, big dreams, and involve ensemble

members in envisioning and planning. A transformational leader also creates opportunities for ensemble members and invites them to be part of the process of figuring out how the project will work, creating a big idea and believing that ensemble members are more than capable of executing the collective plan.

Grantham had a conductor who he describes as more of a transactional leader, stating this situation was probably the least comfortable and safe he felt as an ensemble member. This type of leader gives rewards or punishments for achieving or not achieving a defined standard they lay out. This environment created a sense of fear in the room. Ensemble members feared being called out, making mistakes, and not being prepared. The ensemble performed at an incredibly high level but sacrificed the relationship and trust in the room. Observing this leader, Grantham discovered it was not how he wanted to teach or lead his students.

Grantham also experienced a leader who used an authoritarian model of leadership. The leader had a very clear vision and asked ensemble members to follow them and did not create opportunity for input from members. Grantham notes that this style of leadership felt comfortable, they were not silenced but also were not involved in the process.

4. How are the following servant leadership characteristics as defined by Greenleaf exemplified in your work as a conductor/educator?
  - Listening
  - Empathy
  - Healing
  - Awareness
  - Persuasion

- Conceptualization
- Foresight
- Stewardship
- Commitment to growing people
- Building community

Grantham did not pick and choose characteristics that spoke to him but instead reflected on each characteristic and how it appears in his leadership.

*Listening:* Grantham spoke about how it is an ongoing integral part of his leadership style on and off the podium. Listening happens in the ensemble through dialogue with the students before, during and after rehearsal and truly paying attention to what is being said in conversations. To ensure that each student feels like they have been heard and have inherent value because they are there. In one-on-one meetings with students or with small groups of leaders, it is important to demonstrate the ability to ask more and talk less, to model open mindedness and accept feedback. Grantham states there is a built-in power dynamic as a teacher that needs to be acknowledged and made explicit so that students feel comfortable “pushing” back on something with which they might disagree and keeping the environment clear and safe.

*Empathy:* Walking in someone else’s shoes is critical in Grantham’s work. He says that since he is now thirty years removed from being a high school student, it is not helpful or relevant as a frame of reference. He does know what it is like to feel anxious, afraid, unsure, or worried-- all things he knows his students feel each day. He can share his experiences of those feelings in an effort to say “I understand why you would feel that

way.” He understands that being empathetic does not require him to fix or solve anything for his students.

*Healing:* is a powerful component of Grantham’s leadership style. He has done a great deal of healing work in his own life through therapy, self-help, recovery groups, and inner child healing work. He carries all this integrated awareness with him to school. He keeps healthy and clear boundaries around details of his lived experiences but is able to use the lessons and the tools he has acquired in his own healing work to help his students understand that they can sit with difficult feelings or events in their lives and come out okay. He sometimes shares personal stories that help give context for things students might be experiencing on a group level (college admissions, academic pressures and stress, grief and loss, navigating family)

*Awareness:* Grantham loves the idea that awareness, as defined by Greenleaf/Spears, is a healthy creator of disruption and not a giver of solace. He had not thought of the term that way before but realizes it rings true for him. Having an ability to read the temperature of the room, class, group, or individual can aid in bringing to light any confusion, conflict, or question. He says this “spidey sense” is important to be able to move forward in any given moment—to know when to go slower or move faster, to take a pause, or to shift gears. He states that we do not want our students to feel like music, band, or any of it is being done to them instead of by and for them.

*Persuasion:* Grantham asks, if he is not being persuasive is he even doing his job? He is an eternal optimist and wants to use persuasion as a means of always recognizing growth, effort, commitment, kindness, and connection. Grantham does this by stopping to



applaud the efforts of sections or soloists in class. On the marching band field, he will call out individuals for doing an improved job on something, often a newer member, and the whole band of three hundred will clap for them.

*Conceptualization:* Grantham loves this characteristic about himself. He says it can feel a little scattered and very spur of the moment but many of the marquee achievements his groups have earned have been a result of dreaming big and beyond what he thought was possible after setting out with the students to achieving these goals. Grantham is a dreamer by nature and loves being lost in his thoughts around new ideas, opportunities, and creativity in general. Grantham tries to keep things interesting and fresh, moving beyond simply meeting curricular objectives or skill development as the sole means of measuring progress. He remains open to the possibility of creating something different and new.

*Foresight:* Grantham says the beauty of staying in one place for 21 years has given him the gift of not just experience but institutional and organizational knowledge specific to Amador Valley High School. His longevity allows for foresight to be a strong tool in his leadership style. Grantham warns that a danger for him is not unintentionally using foresight as a means of bulldozing fresh student voices and perspectives. He gives the example of his juniors having only one junior year while he has taught for over twenty years. He has to make sure he is not being dogmatic in using foresight without asking students first their thoughts and concerns. He says the selfless application of foresight is an important permutation of this trait because it still leaves room for other voices in decisions and considering direction.

*Stewardship:* Amador Valley's band program is based on the principle of a tree with each grade serving a portion in the life cycle. Grantham explains that freshmen are the roots, sophomores the trunk, juniors the branches, and seniors the leaves. Each part is a necessary component of the ecosystem that require a special kind of care and attention. Each grade understands their role in the community helps to give each class purpose and function to the greater good.

*Commitment to growing people:* Grantham says this element is what makes band so incredible. There is a balance of celebrating the contributions of so many unique individuals, building up and commending who they are, and then combining these parts with the element of uniformity (to look, move, and sound the same.) He gives teenagers a chance to belong to a group and helps them understand that they get to arrive just as they are. Grantham thinks of the ensemble as a living, evolving organism.

*Building community:* Grantham sees this foundation as ever more critical after the time of remote learning and in the age of increasing disconnection because of social media, individualized streaming platforms, and now, AI technology. Ensemble members shared experiences have diminished significantly because of these developments. Band demands community and commitment to something beyond oneself, one's screen, one's own needs and wishes, and asks the conductor and ensemble members to see a bigger picture that they create. Grantham says community feels even more magical and

important than it did twenty-five years ago because there is a greater need to be served by the building of this identity.<sup>42</sup>

5. Could you outline some of the challenges institutions/structures in general create that make servant leadership challenging?

Grantham sees building community in today's world a big challenge. He believes the preference is to isolate, to find connection in digital spaces, to shortcut the complexities and messy joy of human relationships for the ease of scrolling, scrubbing or texting content. He says people require time and attention. The great challenge for him as an educator fighting those urges in himself to isolate or look down is to inspire the value of connection in his students. It is especially important since it is what they have known their whole lives and what he has known for a third of his life.

6. How would your students describe your leadership style and/or philosophy?

Grantham decided to send an anonymous form to his students asking this question. They described his leadership style/philosophy as one that revolves around students, cooperation, inspiration, and accountability. His students said that he takes feedback seriously, adapts methods, makes students feel comfortable to voice their opinions, and teaches with transparency, kindness, and encouragement.

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<sup>42</sup> All of Jonathan Grantham's responses can be found on his blog, "The Accidental Expert," *The Accidental Expert* (blog), February 25, 2023, [https://accidentalexperitise.wordpress.com/2023/02/25/thoughts-on-leadership/?fbclid=IwAR3GFZ6LXo0Apjp6C2q6qwoOTG7ieKWv3UnPRjVTJBdJges\\_-44qOZlleKY](https://accidentalexperitise.wordpress.com/2023/02/25/thoughts-on-leadership/?fbclid=IwAR3GFZ6LXo0Apjp6C2q6qwoOTG7ieKWv3UnPRjVTJBdJges_-44qOZlleKY).

Ramona Wis

## Biography

Dr. Ramona Wis is the Mimi Rolland Endowed Professor in the Fine Arts, Professor of Music, and Director of Choral Activities at North Central College in Naperville, Illinois. She conducts the Concert Choir, Chamber Singers, and Women's Chorale and teaches courses in conducting, music methods, servant leadership, and yoga practice and principles. Dr. Wis holds degrees from the University of Illinois, Northern Illinois University, and a PhD from Northwestern University and is an active festival conductor, clinician, writer, and public speaker. She has presented workshops and keynote addresses across the country and in Canada, including presentations for the British Columbia Music Educators Association, the International Conference of the Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership, Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic, Tennessee Arts Academy, GALA Choruses, the ACDA North Central Division conference, the 2019 Illinois ACDA Fall Conference, and the 2020 Illinois Music Educators Conference.

North Central College choral ensembles under her leadership have performed with Chicago Sinfonietta and Roosevelt University at Symphony Center in Chicago, at Carnegie Hall in New York City, with DuPage Symphony Orchestra at Wentz Concert Hall on the North Central College campus, and at IL-ACDA, IMEC, and GIA conferences. Dr. Wis has also toured with North Central ensembles regionally and internationally, to France, Germany, Austria, and Ireland.

Dr. Wis is the author of *The Conductor as Leader: Principles of Leadership Applied to Life on the Podium*. She has written for *The Choral Journal*, *Music Educators*

Journal, Teaching Music and the China Europe International Business School Review and is a contributing author to *Toward a Description of Musical Experience and The Musical Experience: Rethinking Music Teaching and Learning*. She is also a blogger for ChoralNet under "The Conductor as Yogi." Dr. Wis was the first woman President of the American Choral Directors Association in Illinois and is the 2019 recipient of the Harold Decker award "in recognition of the significant contribution made to the lives of innumerable choral singers, conductors, and audiences who have been privileged to experience the finest in choral music as presented under her direction." Dr. Wis holds the 500-hour advanced yoga teacher certification (CYT/RYT), continuing her study of the body-mind connection in choral music, conducting, and personal growth and wellness.<sup>43</sup>

#### Synthesis of Interview

1. Are you aware of the work of Robert K. Greenleaf and his Servant Leadership model? If so, how does it impact your work?

Wis was introduced to Greenleaf's work in the mid 1990's, by a colleague who was fascinated by topics of leadership. Before discovering Greenleaf's work, Wis questioned leadership models she came in contact with, which aspects worked, and which aspects did not. She also looked inwardly to who she thought she was as a leader at the time, asking the same questions. Once she discovered Greenleaf's work her thoughts on leadership began to make much more sense. Wis was so interested in Greenleaf's work, she read every book he ever wrote, books inspired by his work, attended the Greenleaf servant

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<sup>43</sup> Ramona Wis, "Ramona Wis | North Central College," North Central College, accessed March 18, 2023, <https://www.northcentralcollege.edu/profile/rmwis>.

leadership conference hosted by the Greenleaf Centre for Leadership and even presented at a couple of those conferences.

Discovering and utilizing Greenleaf's work helped Wis see everything she was doing through a different lens. She asked herself, what is my intention? What would people see if they walked into my room or rehearsal? What would they see in my actions, my speech, and my demeanor? Would they think I am focus on them? Or myself? Or the music? Or a mix of all?

2. What or who has influenced your approach to leadership? Discuss how they shaped your approach to leadership. Please share three experiences/people that helped shape your leadership style.

The first leadership influence Wis spoke about was that of Greenleaf and some of his more specific ideas. Specifically, his distinction between leadership and management, and how our position as "conductor" is a mix of the two. His work on foresight also influences Wis as a leader, with his language, roughly stating, foresight is the central ethic of leadership. She spoke about how it is well beyond planning and is about honoring the process and the people you are with, by thinking through what you are going to do based on your history and experience and what is likely to happen.

Wis considers herself to be a Christ follower and tries to model to her best human capacity the teachings and life of Jesus Christ. She points out some of Christ's leadership characteristics: person on a mission, very intentional, a great teacher, compassionate and someone who leads with love. She believes these are characteristics worth modelling

regardless of ones desire to be affiliated with a religion or not. These are larger ways of thinking about what we do.

Wis' yoga practice is her final leadership influence, specifically its ethical principles called the yamas and niyamas. Wis states that some of the ideas are basic: how you deal with people and how you deal with yourself.

3. When you were a member of an ensemble, what were the different kinds of leadership style you were exposed to?

Wis spoke about two choir directors she had as a student, both of which were fine conductors and singers, and fine teachers. The first conductor, however, was very much dictatorial and she spoke about how this was challenging to understand as a sixteen-year-old. The memory of a director getting mad because the choir did not accomplish his musical goal and the way he would leave the room out of frustration left an impression on students. Wis grew to accept and forgive that director, realizing a lot of his actions came from a love of the art and not knowing what to do when his artistic vision did not come to be. His not knowing continued in the form of belittling, emasculating the tenors and basses by calling them "twinkies" or "not manly enough to sing with good tone." She says this form of leadership was mostly a model of leadership used by older generations, but notes she still sees reminiscences of these thoughts some present-day leaders.

Her second director led with a little theatre, with bright blue eyes and a big white smile. He was an interpreter of music, focusing on details and challenging students to be more sensitive to those details.

Wis notes that she is a mix of these two directors and acted a lot like the first example, early in her career, often getting mad when her vision was not obtained by ensemble members. However, she was able to work through this by reading Greenleaf's work, her faith and by becoming more mature. One aspect she is glad people she went to university with see, is how she now leads very much like her second director. She is proud of that and feels he impacted her work in very healthy ways.

Wis went on to talk about the importance of artistry and how it is central to being a servant conductor. She spoke about how her job is to prepare her choirs to perform good concerts and teach them about music, but her mission is bigger than that. Her mission is to teach about life, about interacting with each other, and about having experiences that are other worldly. She says to her singers "That was pretty good, but I care about you too much to let you get away with less than you can do." She reiterated that servant leadership is not without the absence of quality, it is not just about making people feel good, a regular assumption that is made of the model, it is the opposite. Servant leadership is about developing a relationship with ensemble members that honors them and exploring ways we as leaders can help ensemble members live their best life. That is serving them, and it is serving the art of music.

4. How are the following servant leadership characteristics as defined by Greenleaf exemplified in your work as a conductor/educator?
  - Listening
  - Empathy
  - Healing
  - Awareness
  - Persuasion
  - Conceptualization



- Foresight
- Stewardship
- Commitment to growing people
- Building community

Before speaking directly about listening, Wis spoke about the importance of creating a space in which students feel free to give their thoughts and opinions. One-way Wis does this as a conductor and educator is by asking lots of questions of her ensemble members. She tries not to dictate but empowers her students to think for themselves. For her, it is about creating a space that teaches this is an “us” thing, not a “me” thing. This is connected to listening because it means we are involved with each other. Reacting to what someone is saying or singing, sometimes with actions, speech, or sound.

When speaking about persuasion, Wis first spoke about the history of power in the conducting profession and how often that power involved the use of coercion. She sees persuasion as the foil to coercion. She notes that many conductors do not say they are coercing their students, but it happens subconsciously. Aspects like holding back information, judgement of a positive kind, threats to have more rehearsals if the music does not get better. Persuasion for Wis is modelling and inspiring her ensemble members “to give two cents more on that crescendo”, inviting them to go on a journey with her. She says “this isn’t the used car salesman in the plaid jacket kind of persuasion “but wait there’s more!” approach. It is really more about inspiration. It’s what we do and say and how approach our work in front of other people, to help them want to come with us.”

Wis begins to speak about healing by laying out the idea that the times we live in are very challenging and full of hurt. Wis says healing is a combination of acknowledging how we feel and helping others to feel ok with their thoughts and feelings in a particular

moment. Then was compassion and understanding, bringing ensemble members on a musical journey. She also utilizes her yoga practice as a form of healing in rehearsals. Leading ensemble members through various stretches, breathing and mindfulness exercises. She also notes that you do not have to be a yoga instructor to do these kinds of things in rehearsals. You do need to have an awareness of peoples hurts and a want to help them heal, in professional and appropriate ways. We as conductors have the opportunity to help ensemble members heal their spirit through the music we are learning.

Wis sees commitment to growing people as the definition of a teacher. She says conductors are teachers, whether people believe that or not. What we do is about moving people forward. It is fundamental to having a good life, fundamental to having good mental wellness, fundamental to having a purpose and curiosity to grow and learn. This shows up practically as conductors when we make sure we are teaching beyond a concert program, it is what we program, when we program specific works, and how we help musicians to develop their skills. Wis uses the example of a concert being a snapshot in time but notes that our learning does not stop there. How does what we learn in one piece transfer to another, or how does what we learn connect to life outside of the rehearsal/concert space?

5. Could you outline some of the challenges institutions/structures in general create that make servant leadership challenging?

Wis spoke about how she was happy to see large corporations adopt the servant leadership model but in recent years, sees culture regressing back to a more autocratic model of leadership, with one person in charge, making all of the decisions for others.

She suggests focusing on the change you are able to make as a conductor. We can operate in structures not built for a servant leader by focusing on what we can have input over. This is especially true when the rehearsal room doors are shut and rehearsal begins.

Wis sees another challenge is having people understand what it is to be a servant leader. The challenge is to encourage and lovingly show conductors and educators that there is another way to obtain amazing technical/musical results while still uplifting and honoring the ensemble members in front of you. We have to give permission to conductors to explore this people-focused model of leadership, helping them understand it is more than making people happy and facilitating what the ensemble member wants. It is about inviting ensemble members to walk on this journey together and being aware of our member's needs.

6. How would your students describe your leadership style and/or philosophy?

Wis makes a point to survey her students at the end of every semester, and to adjust anything in her leadership model and teaching that will help them succeed more. The questions she asks pertain to both musical growth as well as non-musical development. Her students recognize that she is doing more than getting songs ready for concerts. They have thanked her for the times in rehearsal where they take time to breathe, center and let the rest of the world go. They thank her for diving deep into the text of songs to talk about how they can sing it socially/culturally responsibly and how the text is connected to their life.

She reminds us that this is her on her best days. Being human is full of ups and downs in leadership, she admits that someday she does get frustrated when a musical concept

did not stick from the previous rehearsal but continues to pursue Greenleaf's/others servant leadership ideals. She also states that leadership is about being honest. If something is not an ensemble member's best, let them know, let them know the context of what is wrong and the possibility of what it can be. She also reminds us that stopping in rehearsal does not always have to be critical, we can be honest with ensemble members by celebrating their successes.

Matthew Arau

## Biography

Dr. Matthew Arau, author of *Upbeat! Mindset, Mindfulness, and Leadership in Music Education and Beyond* and founder of Upbeat Global, is an Associate Professor of Music and the Chair of the Music Education Department and Symphonic Band Conductor at the Lawrence University Conservatory of Music in Appleton, Wisconsin. In addition, Dr. Arau serves as a Conn-Selmer Education Clinician and is on the graduate conducting faculty of the American Band College of Central Washington University and graduate music education faculty at VanderCook College of Music.

Dr. Arau has guest conducted and presented on student leadership, mindfulness, growth mindset, rehearsal techniques, and creating positive cultures in person in over 25 states and 4 continents in person. He has presented at the International Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic, the Western International Band Clinic, the NAFME National Conference, numerous State and Regional Music Education Association Conferences, and the Conn-Selmer Institute. He has conducted honor bands in Australia, Greece, Cyprus, and Malaysia, and All-State honor bands across the United States. Dr. Arau draws on a deep reservoir of fifteen years of experience as a successful middle school and high school band director in Loveland, Colorado, where he led his bands at Walt Clark Middle School and Loveland High School to numerous honor performances and championships and pioneered the Leadership Symposium.

Dr. Arau holds a Doctor of Musical Arts in Conducting and Literature from the University of Colorado Boulder and a Master of Science in Music Education from the

American Band College of Southern Oregon University. He graduated magna cum laude from Lawrence University, where he earned a Bachelor of Music in Instrumental Music Education, Music Performance (Classical), Music Performance (Jazz Studies), and a Bachelor of Arts in Government. He resides in Neenah, Wisconsin with his wife Merilee, their dog Olive, and two sugar gliders - Little Foot and Flash. More information about Dr. Arau can be found at [www.upbeatglobal.com](http://www.upbeatglobal.com).<sup>44</sup>

### Synthesis of Interview

1. Are you aware of the work of Robert K. Greenleaf and his Servant Leadership model? If so, how does it impact your work? If they are not familiar with it, I will briefly explain it to them to create a framing for our discussion.

Arau was aware of Greenleaf's servant leadership model and taught a course at Lawrence University that utilized some of Greenleaf's work. He first learned of the term from Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser.

He talked about how he utilized servant leadership as a high school band director, coaching his students and creating the opportunity for a paradigm shift in conducting leadership, from the dictatorial maestro method to the conductor who is more inclusive, and collaborative, thus empowering the ensemble members they lead. Though Arau's journey with servant leadership began with applying the philosophy to his students, it ended up being a major influence on not only who he is as a musical leader, but who he is as a person in the world trying his best to be a model for his students and those with whom he interacts daily.

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<sup>44</sup> <https://www.lawrence.edu/people/matthew-arau-associate-professor-of-music-education-and-associate-director-of-bands>

2. What or who has influenced your approach to leadership? Discuss how they shaped your approach to leadership. Please share three experiences/people that helped shape your leadership style.

Tim Lautzenheiser is a very significant leadership influence for Arau. Arau resonated with Lautzenheiser's idea of a paradigm shift in conducting leadership, from a focus on the conductor, to an emphasis on the student. He read everything Lautzenheiser wrote, watched every video he produced and then had the opportunity to learn from him at the American Band College. Now Arau has the pleasure of learning from Lautzenheiser often as a colleague at the American Band College.

The late Larry Wallace was another influence on Arau. Arau grew up in a band room that required pop playing quizzes, an aspect of teaching he adopted into his early teaching practice. He stated that these tests would often change his ensembles seating placements, moving someone who was playing first trumpet, down to third because they played a rhythm incorrectly. Wallace encouraged Arau to see more of the humanity in the classroom, ultimately inspiring him to change his style of leadership to honor and support students. His goal as a music educator became less about perfection and more about the process/experience. He also instilled the idea of being a leader that celebrates risk taking, not being afraid of failing, and learning how one can grow from failure.

Arau's third influence was former Director of Bands at the University of Colorado Boulder, Alan McMurray. McMurray centered on emotion, feeling, and expressing in ensemble rehearsals. Arau says that for McMurray, these ideas took precedent over ideals of perfection. Instead of focusing on how artists can serve the composer, McMurray

encouraged ensemble members to learn more about their intent and going deeper into the music. McMurray also influenced Arau's leadership by living out his leadership principles every day, such as by valuing his students as individuals and building relationships with them. He did not see his musicians as instruments for him to play but as the individuals they were and he welcomed all opportunities to collaborate with them.

3. When you were a member of an ensemble, what were the different kinds of leadership style you were exposed to?

Arau went through two very strong band programs that performed at high levels. Arau says he was performing Barnes Chance's *Variations on a Korean Folk Song* at grade seven. He spoke about the traditional dictatorial maestro model that he feels he experienced, but with the addition of kindness.

Performing in the Fort Collins Wind Symphony, Arau was able to work with a conductor named Steve McNeil. McNeil was an example of a servant leader who put ensemble members first. McNeil would always make sure to connect with Arau at rehearsals and express his gratitude for him playing in the ensemble. He had a way of making you feel like you were the only person in the room, and he did that for every single person in the room. The ensemble was able to give McNeil their best because they observed him giving his best.

Arau experienced conductors who did not fully appreciate the musicians in front of them and did not see the whole person. He could tell they had an ideal musical image in their mind that they were listening to and did not connect with the musicians. Arau had an opposite experience with Alan McMurray, quoting him as saying: "The eyes are the



gateway to the soul.” Arau felt that McMurray lived that out authentically with the musicians with whom he worked. He then spoke again about having conductors that made you feel like a cog in a machine, just another number. It is this contrast in experiences that made Arau ask, what is it about rehearsals that make you feel connected to the music and the people? How is that done? These questions are what spurred his current work in leadership study.

4. How are the following servant leadership characteristics as defined by Greenleaf exemplified in your work as a conductor/educator?
  - Listening
  - Empathy
  - Healing
  - Awareness
  - Persuasion
  - Conceptualization
  - Foresight
  - Stewardship
  - Commitment to growing people
  - Building community

Arau starts with the characteristic of listening, stating great leaders listen more than they speak. Arau says this idea of listening goes beyond musical listening, it involves listening to your ensemble members, students, and people in your life. He also says it is not just listening, it is how we listen that is important, stating that most of the time we listen to respond. He reiterates that those leaders in his life who truly listen put aside all distractions and make you feel like you are the most important person in that moment and that what you have to say has value, even if they do not agree with you. As a way of building trust and community we as leaders need to be truly listening. Listening is also about reflecting, considering feedback, and growing as leaders. Arau says that often the

best leaders are the quiet ones that are not trying to yell louder so their opinion is the only one in the room.

Arau also points out that Greenleaf's idea of listening is not just listening to other people, it is listening inwardly to our inner voice. He says it is important to set aside time to reflect and listen, which he does through a daily meditation practice. Arau also spoke about listening to the way you speak to yourself. Do you treat yourself with kindness or as you hope to treat people? He says almost every single time the answer is, no. He brings this concept back to Greenleaf's tenants by saying these are not characteristics we apply just in our interactions with ensemble members. These are characteristics we need to apply to ourselves first. Are you being empathetic to yourself? When we talk about healing, do you consider that to be self-healing? Arau says it is hard to pour into someone else when we have an empty cup. Creating spaces in our ensembles where healing can happen is a wonderful aspiration.

As a student of mindfulness, the characteristic of awareness jumps out to Arau. Being aware of your place/space in the world, your inner thoughts, and how we interact with others are all important aspects of what we do as conductors. Of course, as conductors, awareness plays a big part of what we do, the sounds coming at us, being aware of non-verbal communication both personally and what ensemble members are giving back, etc.

Stewardship resonates with Arau, especially in terms of talking about student leadership. Leaving a space better than how you found it or a legacy of community, is not about us but about everyone in the program. Commitment to the growth of people makes Arau think about being intentional as educators. What are our goals/outcomes when we are teaching? He suggests using music as a vehicle to support people and to access

ensemble members' full potential. Also, do we, as educators, believe in the unlimited potential of our students? And do our actions and thoughts reflect that?

Lastly, building community really speaks to Arau. He mentions an idea from Brené Brown: if you are in a community and you feel you are part of it, you do not need to change who you are. If you are trying to fit in, you often do have to change who you are. Arau strives to create a space where individuals are celebrated for who they are without the need to change; building community through the creation of an inclusive space.

5. Could you outline some of the challenges institutions/structures in general create that make servant leadership challenging?

Arau speaks about how our tradition and history in the band world make some of Greenleaf's ideas challenging when trying to apply the model to conductors. We must take steps to break down the potential division of hierarchy that so naturally appears in the conductor/ensemble relationship. Creating a culture of collaboration can be as easy as stepping off the podium when speaking to musicians. Being real, authentic, genuine, welcoming people as they enter the room, and building healthy/appropriate relationship with ensemble members can all significantly improve the wellbeing of the people with whom we collaborate. Another way Arau tries to combat historical conductor stereotypes is with gratitude. Gratitude to the musicians, for the space they are in, and just the idea of starting rehearsals with gratitude. Asking questions in rehearsals, getting student feedback about what they are hearing, giving time to meet as sections to discuss what they would like to improve or what they are hearing down the section are all ways Arau builds connection and community. He does all of this to show that the rehearsal is a collaborative process and he is not the one with all the answers. His last suggestion to

combat the hierarchical challenge is not to conduct! Letting the players breathe together and listening deeper will often create more expressive music than when conductors are on the podium flapping their arms.

6. How would your students describe your leadership style and/or philosophy?

As a leader, Arau strives to be encouraging and supportive, while also having high standards. Students believe he has a high standard because he cares about them and knows what they are capable of. He also helps students understand that you do not need a leadership title to be a leader. Leadership does not have to look like John Kennedy or Martin Luther King Jr. In fact, it is better if it is not. It is complimenting someone's haircut when most people will not, it is being kind when most people are not, it is showing empathy when it is easier to walk by. These are all examples of leadership decisions he hopes to exemplify to his students.

Colin Clarke

## Biography

Colin Clarke remains active as a guest conductor, clinician, adjudicator, and composer/arranger. His conducting credits include collaboration with world-renowned artists and ensembles including the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra, the New Symphony Orchestra of Sofia, Bulgaria, United States Air Force Band of Liberty, the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir, the Canadian Brass and the U.S. Army Herald Trumpets, the official fanfare ensemble for the President of the United States. He is best known for his work with the multi-award-winning Toronto Youth Wind Orchestra, a group he launched as a high school student. For three decades this ensemble has earned a reputation nationwide as one of the leading performance ensembles of its kind in Canada.

With a passion for music education and outreach, Colin maintains a commitment to working with young people and the community. He has conducted amateur and professional orchestras, bands and choirs throughout Canada and the U.S., and has led the provincial honor bands of Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec and Prince Edward Island. In the spring of 2008, he served as conductor of the prestigious National Youth Band of Canada. Abroad, Colin has given performances in the United States, the United Kingdom, Bulgaria, Spain and China.

Colin serves as Music Director of the Oakville Symphony Youth Orchestra and is the newly appointed Artistic Director of the Oscar Peterson Program at the Royal Conservatory of Music.<sup>45</sup>

### Synthesis of Interview

1. Are you aware of the work of Robert K. Greenleaf and his Servant Leadership model? If so, how does it impact your work?

Clarke was not aware of Greenleaf's work until he was recruited to take part in this case study. He was able to read the provided Greenleaf/Spears servant leadership information sheet, and even tried applying some of Greenleaf's ideas in a rehearsal that took place before the interview. He loves the idea of being an empathetic leader, using an ideology that says, I want to connect with you and figure out how we can achieve our collective goals together.

Greenleaf's idea of committing to the growth of people resonated with Clarke. He admits to sometimes negatively evaluating musicians who are not bringing their best musically to rehearsals. An example would be thinking ill of a saxophonist who comes in late to rehearsals or is unprepared musically. Instead, we should think about what circumstances might be creating these challenges in their lives and how we, as leaders, can help the growth of people, as well as great musicians.

2. What or who has influenced your approach to leadership? Discuss how they shaped your approach to leadership. Please share three experiences/people that helped shape your leadership style.

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<sup>45</sup> Colin Clarke, "Colin Clarke Biography | Wilfred Laurier University," Wilfred Laurier University, accessed March 18, 2023, <https://www.wlu.ca/academics/faculties/faculty-of-music/assets/concert-programs/2022/colin-clarke-biography.html#:~:text=Colin%20serves%20as%20Music%20Director,%C3%97>.

Clarke's first leadership influence was his high school band director. His teacher had balanced having fun in rehearsal but also instilling the fact that hard work was needed. His teacher was also the first leader in his life to show him a style of leadership that was more collaborative, often asking for student input on how they could improve sections. Clarke's teacher often asked questions that made students think critically and creatively.

Clarke's second influence was Dr. Glenn Price, Director of Performing and Visual Arts at the California Institute of Technology (Caltech). Price told Clarke, "Every rehearsal is an opportunity to inspire." Up until that point, Clarke thought of rehearsal as a place where music gets fixed. Price helped Clarke see rehearsals more reverently, demonstrating that the opportunities we have as leaders impact people beyond any given piece.

3. When you were a member of an ensemble, what were the different kinds of leadership styles you were exposed to?

Clarke was a member of the Toronto Symphony Youth Orchestra, directed by David Zafer. Zafer had more of an authoritarian style of leadership and often would get upset when musicians played music incorrectly. Instead of figuring out how he could be helpful to them, he continued to demand that the music be right. In one rehearsal with Zafer, Clarke questioned himself why Zafer was being unclear in his conducting. As rehearsal proceeded, ensemble members continued to make mistakes, but Zafer would force them to repeat the section repeatedly. After a while, Clarke and the other ensemble members realized he was encouraging them to listen. Though not communicated in the best way, Zafer was encouraging the musicians to listen to each other, rather than rely on the person on the podium.

4. How are the following servant leadership characteristics as defined by Greenleaf exemplified in your work as a conductor/educator?

- Listening
- Empathy
- Healing
- Awareness
- Persuasion
- Conceptualization
- Foresight
- Stewardship
- Commitment to growing people
- Building community

Listening was the first characteristic to resonate with Clarke. Not only how we listen musically as conductors but listening to ensemble members to learn how we can best connect with them. When speaking about building community Clarke highlights the importance that musicians place on the community he creates. For him it goes beyond being 2<sup>nd</sup> horn or 3<sup>rd</sup> viola, but to building relationships with the people in his ensembles. He also spoke about the importance of building your community through invited guests and performing at new venues in your literal community.

5. Could you outline some of the challenges institutions/structures in general create that make servant leadership challenging?

Clarke first spoke about the challenge of convincing non-musician administration of the importance/worth of the arts, specifically speaking about the importance of large ensembles. Aspects of building community, like performing concerts off campus or away from your school auditorium are a challenge to justify to non-musician administration.

He also spoke about the challenge of being a servant conductor convincing the ensemble members to discover their best selves. One aspect of finding their “best self” is helping them understand the importance of practice and how it adds to the collective



goals of an ensemble. Clarke notes that growing up in a time where technology connects but also isolates makes this goal even more challenging.

6. How would your students describe your leadership style and/or philosophy?

Clarke hopes they think of him as a collaborative leader and one that is humorous. He uses humor in rehearsals as a way of disarming ensemble members, to create a safe rehearsal space where people can be themselves. He also hopes they think of him as an enthusiastic and sympathetic leader who has high standards.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

When asked if participants knew of the work of Robert K. Greenleaf, fifty percent did not know of his work and were unfamiliar with the term servant leadership. The other fifty percent were familiar with Greenleaf's work. Two participants had experience teaching courses that used his model and authored books focused on servant leadership. In many cases the participants that did not know the work of Greenleaf learned that his model fit how they thought of themselves as leaders and began adopting characteristics they learned about through this research.

We can see several common traits of servant leadership characteristics in all the conductors interviewed. When asked about leadership influences, it was evident that several participants grew to become conductors who serve because they were led by servant leaders. This trend lines up with Greenleaf's idea that effective servant-leadership is best evidenced by the cultivation of servant-leadership in others. By being servant leaders on and off the podium, we create the opportunity to inspire others to be their authentic selves as leaders.

When asked about leadership models participants experienced as ensemble members, they spoke about having a wide range of leadership models, from the dictatorial leader to the free-spirited leader. Participants who experienced dictatorial and authoritarian leaders all became leaders who chose to move away from that model. That said, all participants spoke about adopting different leadership models and using them intentionally in the appropriate contexts. Examples of contexts offered were connected to rehearsal efficiency, directing ensemble members when a chord is out of tune, helping to

develop a shared musical goal, or fixing an incorrect rhythm when rehearsal time did not allow a more collaborative approach.

Other common points included the importance of artistry, having high standards, and being honest with ensemble members. There was an overall theme of aspiring to be a music leader who cares about ensembles members' needs, growth, and well-being as well as being a leader who persuades musicians to push for more than they knew was possible. Many participants shared this viewpoint but also cautioned that being honest and direct with musicians needs to be framed in the context of the reason to do so. The role we play as a conductor is that of someone with many different hats. A leader who leads in many different situations requires adaptability in their leadership styles. Though it is easiest to judge which leadership styles do not resonate with us, it is important to understand they can be beneficial in specific times and places.

Self-reflection was of utmost importance to participants. All mentioned the act of setting time aside to reflect on what aspects of their leadership are working and what is not working. This is also a major ideal of Greenleaf's servant leadership. Greenleaf's entire model begins with reflection. He asks people who are considering adopting servant leadership to look inwardly at what leadership ideals are important to them. A large part of Greenleaf's requirement of listening is the idea of listening to one's inner voice. Greenleaf's reflection questions are: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely will they themselves become servants? What is the effect on the least privileged of society; will they benefit, or at least not further be deprived?<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Robert K. Greenleaf. *Servant Leadership*. 14.

The importance of building community and relationships with ensemble members was an ideal all participants held. Without this ideal it is difficult to be a servant leader as we do not know who we are serving. Building community also allows us the opportunity to connect with many of Greenleaf's other characteristics, such as listening, empathy, persuasion, healing, and commitment to the growth of people. As conductors it is our opportunity to connect our music making to life and humanity. How is what I am doing in this rehearsal space or concert hall making a difference in the world?

Challenges of applying Greenleaf's model to conducting pedagogy and music education were many, though not insurmountable. One challenge mentioned by multiple participants was having people understand what it is to be a servant leader, and helping to dismantle the stereotypes and assumptions made about servant leaders: to show conductors and educators that there is another way to obtain amazing technical/musical results while still uplifting and honoring the ensemble members in front of you.

Our ever-increasing technological world makes it difficult to build community, a major ideal in Greenleaf's work. Participants spoke about the importance of combatting isolation by creating an inclusive space where all ensemble members can be their authentic selves, without a concern for being judged.

Lastly, operating in hierarchical performance/educational structures makes applying Greenleaf's model challenging. Participants spoke about the elements we can influence while operating in those structures. Teaching in our rehearsal spaces, performances, and exemplifying servant leadership principles in our own life are some aspects we can affect in these hierarchical structures.

The idea of taking time to reflect on leadership was the last question in the interview that asked participants how they think their students would describe their leadership style. Two participants, Grantham and Taylor anonymously asked their students this question and received feedback that lines up with Greenleaf’s model. They noted that it was a powerful exercise. Both discovered what was working; the absence of other responses showed how they could serve their ensemble members better.

This study has brought to light many positive aspects of servant leadership. Based on the responses participants gave, we can begin to see there is the possibility of serving our ensemble members, giving them agency in rehearsals to be artists, achieving high standards, and helping everyone grow as people beyond their musical development.

#### Future Research

Research on servant leadership’s application and effectiveness in education is in its infancy. Servant leadership, founded on the principles of trust, love, serving, and empowering others, may provide a leadership model for music education that is well-matched to meet the needs of students. Concerning this point, Michael Coetzer states that “servant leadership is similar to but also different from current leadership theories and proposes a more meaningful way of leadership to ensure sustainable results for individuals, organizations, and societies”.<sup>47</sup> Much of this research has shown some correlations between servant leadership, school culture, and student achievement.<sup>48</sup> These

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<sup>47</sup> Michael Frederick Coetzer, Mark Bussin, & Madelyn Geldenhuys. “The functions of a servant leader. *Administrative Sciences*, 7, no. 1 (2017): 5–32.

<sup>48</sup> Glenda Lee Black. “Correlational analysis of servant leadership and the school climate”. *Journal of Catholic Education*, 13, no. 4 (2010): 437–466.

Brian Clinton Herndon. “An analysis of the relationships between servant leadership, school culture, and student achievement.” Ph. D thesis, University of Missouri-Columbia, 2007

studies may provide music educators with a usable leadership framework to foster positive student outcomes. Creating quantitative research that shows the use of servant leadership in the rehearsal space would be an area worth exploring. Does applying servant leadership principles improve musical quality? Do ensemble members truly resonate with servant leadership ideals? Finally, more research needs to go into exploring how historically marginalized communities with a history of servitude can adopt Greenleaf's model, or whether in fact they should.

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APPENDIX A  
IRB APPROVAL



EXEMPTION GRANTED

Jason Caslor  
HIDA: Music, Dance and Theatre, School of (MDT)  
480/965-4392  
Jason.Caslor@asu.edu

Dear [Jason Caslor](#):

On 2/2/2023 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	The Servant Conductor: A Case Study Examining Servant Leadership Characteristics In Large Ensemble Conductors
Investigator:	<a href="#">Jason Caslor</a>
IRB ID:	STUDY00017398
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interview Questions.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);</li><li>• Maddix_Dylan_IRB Social Behavioral Protocol.pdf, Category: IRB Protocol;</li><li>• Maddix_Dylan_Model Short Consent.pdf, Category: Consent Form;</li><li>• Maddix_Dylan_Sample Email.pdf, Category: Recruitment Materials;</li></ul>

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2)(ii) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation (low risk) on 2/2/2023.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

If any changes are made to the study, the IRB must be notified at [research.integrity@asu.edu](mailto:research.integrity@asu.edu) to determine if additional reviews/approvals are required. Changes may include but not limited to revisions to data collection, survey and/or interview questions, and vulnerable populations, etc.

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Dylan Maddix  
Jason Caslor  
Dylan Maddix

APPENDIX B  
INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS



## Robert Taylor Interview

Dylan: [00:00:00] Okay, here we are for another exciting episode of the newly named , Changing Your Pattern. Finally, we have a name. And I'm really excited to be joined by someone I've been able to look up to for a long time. We were even able to hang out a little bit in October this year, which was great. That is Conductor and music educator extraordinaire, Dr. Robert Taylor from the University of British Columbia. Welcome to this newly named podcast.

Robert: Hi, Dylan. Excited to be.

Dylan: And I'm really excited to be speaking with you today because when I was choosing people to, I really wanted to talk to you're someone I've identified as that is doing really great things, not only like building community as we do just by building community, but musically, what are we doing? Doing really innovative and cool projects. So I'm excited about our discussion this morning slash afternoon.

But I guess I'll just start with the first question, which is, are you aware of the work of Robert k Greenleaf and his servant leadership model? If so, how does that impact your work?

Robert: [00:01:00] I think I first heard that term servant leadership when I read Ramona's book, the conductor as leader.

And up to that point I didn't really have a way to describe. My approach to leadership. I was a high school band director at the time actually, and I knew it wasn't quite what I had been taught or the models that I had seen. But I didn't know how to really describe what my philosophy was around leadership.

And I read that book and it was like one thing after the next that was really resonating, quite strongly. And I was like, yes, this is what I'm trying to do. This is what I aspire to. And of course we all fall short of aspiration. But I could just feel that personally I really resonated with the concept of putting oneself in service to others, I think is a big part of my motivation in being a musician.

[00:02:00] Whether that's, whether it's me as a collaborative. Player just with my trumpet or standing on the podium or, really in any setting in music. A big part of what drives me is that sort of interaction with others and this mutual facilitation of. Of the experience, the feeling of growth and that atmosphere is what drew me to music in the first place, I think.

But I didn't really know what to call it until, reading that book. and then reading the Spears summary that you sent as well, it was really interesting because there's some

aspects of those kinds of, 10 characteristics that, that he described that really resonate and pop up as wow, the, this is something that I feel deeply, personally connected to.

And then there are other things that are less like it wouldn't necessarily. Describe myself using, it wouldn't be the first word I would use to describe myself, but what's really interesting is sometimes other people would use those words to describe me. Okay. like their experience of our work might be, that I'm.

[00:03:00] Particularly empathetic and I can be an empath and empathetic. Like some of those characteristics were not like what I would consider to be my top five personality traits, they've all come with some degree of work and by choice, to explore some new aspects of maybe who I could be as a leader.

Dylan: And it, it's. It's exactly what you said. We, as we might aspire for some of these things but it's if you can think of leadership on a spectrum or I don't think at any given point are we fully this or fully that and depending on how we wake up in the morning, those kind of things.

Robert: [00:04:00] Yeah. There, there should be a leadership Kinsey scale, I think there's a lot of gray area, and. And one thing that I am, I sort of thinking through your questions, which are so thoughtful. I, I was thinking that this is all a process and if you had asked me the same questions 20 years ago versus 10 years ago versus even three years ago, I think would've very different answers, and so that in itself, that kind of evolution is evidence that this kind of leadership resonates with me. , because if you are gonna be hoping for that kind of evolution and growth in the people you're working with, then hopefully you, yourself are. experiencing it. In fact I don't think there's any way that can facilitate it without knowing what it is, yeah.

Dylan: [00:05:00] I know, and I'm always, I've, I was really interested about, Talking to all the people that I chose to talk to because I wasn't sure what, their relationship with this question would be. And it's been really interesting to hear people say, oh, I've heard of the word before, maybe through something from Dr. Tim or or maybe in, in in a corporate sense they've heard of it. And then actually I was able to sit down with Ramona wis and talk to her and as one of my interviews. So that was another thing that was great to talk to her a about the idea. Yeah, but I had a similar experience to you where I just, I didn't know what do I call this?

Cuz as being a regular old human, we just need to label everything. So I was trying to find something that would fit over the model. And then similar thing found found that book and I was like, oh yes, this is very exciting and I'm not crazy. And,

Robert: and yeah. Its impact on me has really been that I think there's a really healthy balance of process and product in the work that I do. Neither one thing takes, always

precedence and constantly flowing between those two things. And collaborate, facilitate, those are words that. I think really represent what it is I'm hoping to do all of the time. And it's it's also resulted in me. So having other thoughts like.

[00:06:00] Like that there's no carbon neutral option, like in life, that you're in action, you're in motion. It's action that matters. And so you're either contributing or detracting in some way, from maybe what is your focus or your goal or your community, and so that's my motivation is also quite personal because. I, I learned reading the book flow that I am an autotelic personality. So many musicians relate to that. I just lose myself in music, in all of its varieties. And it's that's what motivates the work.

Working with others. I just want to help. I want other people to tap into that, and I want to help them get there. And I wanna experience it together and see what happens, and it's what drives everything. It, it seems selfless to say, oh yes, I'm a servant leader.

But really there is an internal motivation for that. What I dropped from the experience is the opportunity to. Really experience, lose myself in flow with other people. And that's something that really drives me, oh my,

Dylan: oh my goodness. This is only the first question and I'm already like, pumped up and ready to go.

[00:07:00] This is exciting. Ready? Moving on to the next question is, and I'm always interested in this because, we've had discussions before. You've been on the pod, the other podcast before, but not really. I. Known this. What or who has influenced your approach to leadership? Discuss how they shaped your approach to leadership and maybe a few experiences.

Robert: Yeah, the what is really interesting because, certainly one's, one's whole totality of life experiences, if you're like, authentically representing yourself in your work. All of that informs what I do, right? And I can't escape it. And I try to embrace the things that are positive and are best practices.

And I try to learn from, the things that, that I own that maybe aren't always as, productive. You know what, what is interesting, like specifically related to leadership. A lot of reading has influenced me over the years. When I was a high school teacher I read Alfie Cohen's book, no Competition, and it, oh my gosh.

[00:08:00] It really changed my thinking about everything I was doing at that time with students of that age. And you know how collaboration can be. Such a better practice than competition. And so reading books like that Carol Dweck's Mindset Daniel Coyle's, the Talent Code and The Culture Code, and Parker Palmer, the Courage to Teach the Art of Possibility by the Zanders.

[00:09:00] Yes. Zanders, right? So much of that kind. So much of my thinking about this has been informed by reading, and it's one of those kind of experiential things where you know, you experience what you're doing, if you're reflective about it, you read something, it resonates, and you have. Some way, some canister to put it in, something to call it, or you understand it on a different level, or somebody describes it in a way that, that makes you be able to go deeper in that direction, so I think reading is one of the, what's just a lot of voracious reading on leadership. in all areas. These are mostly in music and in education, but I've read books on business leadership and many other kinds of resources. Also on just personal development. So that's one thing.

Time for reflection I think is incredibly important in this. So it I'm. I can be an all or nothing person. The, the grand challenge for me in life is finding balance between all the different things that I want to do. And but time to just be still and reflect is very important to me.

As an, as a self-professed introvert who works in an extroverted field, I, I have to have that time to recharge. And being outdoors, taking a hike, being on a tropical beach, floating in a pool, being in the sunshine, feeling sunshine on my skin that alone time, that reflection, I think it, it is.

[00:10:00] Really impacted my leadership because those are the times that I reflect on what I'm doing and how I want to do it better. And, you get so much clearer about how you're feeling, you get so much more in touch with that aspect of your work because, work does have an emotional component if you're invested.

And so I. The reading, the reflection, and travel. I've been all around the world making music in a whole bunch of different settings now. And every time I go somewhere, I gain a new perspective. I meet new people. I encounter my own bridge, and that, that makes me wanna do better and help other people.

So I think. I guess I would say reading, reflection, and travel, those would be maybe the three. What's that are most Yeah, impactful.

The who's are the, who's are difficult and I'm sure so many people would answer a question like this way, one of the most impactful. People was my high school band director. His name was Ted Spillman. He was such an [00:11:00] incredible human being, but you weren't aware of it. He was so humble. And he had this kind of, Easy way of transferring responsibility and just providing an autonomy in the young people he worked with that we felt like we owned everything, right. and, like we were running the show . So there was so much incredible ownership of the band program when I was in high school. And, marching band, assistant drum major, like all the things you might expect. But he had an, he had a really interesting approach. He, he had us all read the One Minute Manager, which was a business leadership book that came out in 1982 or so, and we read this business leadership book.

[00:12:00] And then he had Ken Blanchard author of that book actually do a talk with us, the student leaders . And then we built this whole leadership community around praise. And that, that was like the number one thing. Kept somebody doing something, make sure they know about it.

And that positivity just grew and grew. That had a big impact on me because I was, 15 at the time and we're reading a business leadership book and applying that to, my high school band. And so is this opportunity to try different things and. And grow into what it means to be a leader.

And that later impacted my own approach as a high school band director where we would have, leadership camps every summer. And, but it did change, like personally I mentioned the outdoors are really important and impactful for me. Our leadership camp, we went class four white-water rafting together.

We did ropes courses, we did we took this kind of approach. That was a little more what a personal for me as a leader, the things that I found impactful and it fit with the environment and the community I was in, which was Northern California, the redwoods. And so I would Ted Spillman, Mr.

[00:13:00] Spillman, I owe so much to, and it was mostly that he empowered and got out of the way, and that we were so invested that we poured everything into what we were doing, and it meant so much. When we accomplished something, we accomplished it, and we could own that. When we failed, we could own and learn from that.

Yeah, That's similar to my, the parenting that I received as a kid. It was very lez fair, do your own thing and there won't be consequences. I see. And so I really do appreciate that cuz I learned to self-regulate and I learned where the boundaries are and I've really screwed up a few times and learned from those situations.

[00:14:00] So that, that. That probably has formed my leadership style as well. Okay. Because I want to empower and I want to have ownership and I want the people I'm working with to feel that ownership. Another person I couldn't. Not mentioned such a huge impact on me is my mentor in graduate school Mallory Thompson from Northwestern, and this kind of relentless pursuit of art and excellence.

What I learned there was that it's there's so much further you can go than your self-limiting place, as an individual, as an ensemble. And so this idea around just finding that, that fine edge of the knife where you can push so far that you just grow in ways that you didn't even trust that you could grow.

[00:15:00] Her main philosophy was to empower the organism so that ensemble could function as a, in a healthy way on its own. But it was so driven by this kind of intensity

around the art and detail, and That also had a big impact. And like my ears grew and I realized what's possible and I always think, but we could go so much further , so that was another big influence. And you said three. So I guess , the other thing that I would mention is I've had a yoga practice since I was 19 years old and I go in and out. I read Ramona actually also, she's trained as a yoga teacher, which is Yeah, my 500 hours or something. Yes.

And this is actually one of my sabbatical goals. Is reconnecting to that practice. But I've been doing yoga for a really long time and in the last maybe 20 years I've been doing an Ashtanga yoga practice. And this is like very flow-based. But what's really interesting about it is the traditional way of teaching it my source style is that you.

You do your own practice and the teacher just goes around the room and helps individuals as they're doing their practice at their own speed, at their own rate, and That kind of self-directed, self-motivated practice. I think it's something that I'm always gonna instill in people I'm working with.

[00:16:00] And so I think that actually has had a pretty big impact and I would say maybe my own growth journey through that. And other life experiences has probably informed my leadership as much or more than the people who I've been mentored by or been seen as modeling, I think there's always some mix of those two things.

But for me, I think my own growth journey has. And the reflection has allowed me to incorporate the things that I see as best practices in my mentors in my own personal way over time.

Dylan: No, that, thank you for that amazingly thoughtful answer. And I'll probably say that after every answer, but it's,

Robert: We're, yeah, it's we're going so long on each answer that I'll probably run out of ideas in second.

Dylan: Collaborate, community...

Robert: What's another leadership buzzword we can throw in here?

Dylan: No, but I want to, I'll go back to the beginning. Yeah, I think you were actually one of the first ones to talk about the what and someone who's, you've done that for me as well because one of my most prized resources that I still have upstairs on my desk, in my desk actually is that book, that little booklet that you would put together for your connecting workshops.

[00:17:00] Yeah. And it had a, a mix of resources, but. One of those was a giant list of every book that inspired you and Dr. Thompson and Dr. Gerard and anyone, so that I remember going and like buying, making a point to buy all of those books. Yeah. On my shelf. And it's either, it's, that's such a great way to learn and not necessarily, from our own field, but to learn from others and experts and in other fields and how we can apply that to what we're doing.

Yeah. And then the idea of reflecting and reflecting. Not while, not while in transit, not while doing something else, but really setting time to, to think and ponder. And it might, your great epiphany might not come but the moment you want, but Right. It's a really important thing to do when we're thinking about all of these things and, yeah.

[00:18:00] Yeah. And it, and I'm always just as astounded to hear about who influences someone's leadership and just the mix of characters. And characters in the most loving sense, But no it's really great to hear. And in a similar vein when you were a member of an ensemble what were the different kinds of leadership styles that you were exposed to?

Robert: This is this is really interesting. I would hope that most people in this day and age have been exposed to a variety of different leadership styles and especially in music making. But what I find is that's not necessarily true. So first I'll say that I'm just grateful that I have experienced a whole bunch of different kinds of ways of participating in an ensemble under different leaders.

[00:19:00] And I will say, in terms of best practice it's easy at this point to be judgmental of maybe somebody who is. Teacher or conductor directed. More top down in their leadership. But I really am a little more balanced in my thinking on that. I think every mode of leadership models have some benefits, some applications, some time when it can be used in a productive and healthy way. And I've been a member of a group where it was a very top down leadership and, we got things done quickly. We were pretty unified in our goals because they were our director's goals right? The sound was pretty. And we felt a sense of accomplishment. But I am not sure that I felt a sense of ownership in that scenario. I felt a little bit like a cog in the factory, and So I have experienced that type of leadership.

I've also experienced the, let's go. We talked about the scale earlier. Let's go way to the other side. I've also experienced the kind of leadership that it's just, it's so open and there's no attempt to help. Come up with some kind of collective goal that can be very frustrating as well.

And then individuals just start taking the wheel, right? And the thing, the things curving and weaving back and forth. And so I think. I've definitely experienced leadership on both extremes as a trumpet player, as a member of an ensemble. I'm sure I've, I'm sure I've, at times in my career, been on either far end of that scale at some point.

[00:20:00] But I think it's for me, it's the mix of the far end of the scale on either side and the middle. It's not just staying in the middle it's about finding ways to use best practices that are borrowed from all of that spectrum. Yeah. I have a friend, very good friend, colleague name's Karen Fannon.

I don't know if you've ever, or if you, Karen, but Karen has done several presentations on leadership models in business and how they apply to music and she would talk about over management and under management and how. How both things can be problematic, , but how both things could also be quite useful tools.

[00:21:00] And I, yeah, I think it's I feel lucky to have experienced a variety of leadership to know how iten those. Times and to be able to adopt little bits of those types of leadership when I need them. Even though they may not be. It may not be the core of who I am or my first go-to, or who I always wanna be.

It's good to be able to try on a different style and, see what its positive impacts can be. Yeah so I do feel lucky to have been exposed to a pretty wide range.

Dylan: Yeah. And I appreciate how you worded it. It's really easy to go into that judgmental space, and it's certainly something that I think how my doctoral research started, it was like, I want to take down the whole system.

I wanna and, and Jason or Gillian are like whoa, that's yeah. Yeah. What can you do that's good in the world, and not so much critique what's happening,

Robert: Dylan, sometimes a chord is outta tune. Yeah. The fastest thing is to say, this is outta tune.

Here's how to fix it, and let's all get on board on this. The great thing about using a range of styles is when you slip into that mode, everybody knows it's to serve a higher goal that you all share. Which is, Hey, we all want to feel this resonance and we want the audience to get a chill from this chord.

[00:22:00] And so that's very different if it's, if you slip into that mode when there aren't those underlying values.

Dylan: and this idea of us talking about, a top down method, doesn't necessarily mean that you are being mean, it doesn't mean that you are, you're being rude to the players.

It's just a different way of thinking about leadership and efficiencies and, all of those things.



Robert: It's efficient, it's much faster.

Dylan: And what we do, it, it is necessary. Like you are right, that third is still flat. It's still flat. I don't know what else to say.

So things like that, they need to happen occasionally. No more than occasionally, probably, yes. Yeah, most definitely Moving back into kind of servant leadership zone how are the following servant leadership characteristics as defined by green Greenleaf exemplified in your work as a conductor and educator?

And I'm just gonna list those for our listeners. That's listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to growing people and building.

Robert: [00:23:00] you don't, this is where I run outta things to say . No, I mentioned that as I was reading those words.

Those are all good words, they're all things that I think any of us would aspire to, and they're especially. I think in music and in music teaching and being a leader or facilitator in a musical environment, the first word there is listening, it doesn't get much more important than that.

I think In terms of listening, I place such a high value on. Developing my ability to listen both as a person and as a musician. And it's something that I've invested a lot of my life working on, and so I think it, it might be one of the number one values that guides my work on the podium.

[00:24:00] Both in its like practical use and in its kind of broader symbolism. But so that's definitely something that I think shows up in, in my work. Empathy. I think all leaders need to be empathetic and I don't think this has ever been stronger. That's never been clearer to me than in the last three years.

Once, once we hit this Covid, pandemic and e, everything that we expected was normal operating procedure, had just changed so drastically and we started paying a little more attention to, what each individual person needs. . And I would say that shift from focusing on the group's goals to really accommodating what every individual in the group needs.

For me, that balance has really moved since covid where I think I'm probably guilty of. Of prioritizing the group over the individual prior to that point in my career. If I'm to be totally honest about it. And then this thing happened that made us all go, oh, everybody's got a story.

[00:25:00] Everybody needs, everybody's got different needs and we all have to be empathetic and thoughtful and aware of that. So that's something that obviously it's always been there but it's so much stronger now. Yeah. And also in a time when we're looking so much at at privilege and how we can use it to help others that those concepts, empathy, also healing.

Awareness, all of those leadership words, they tie in with the idea of just, using your privilege and gotta use it to lose it. Using your privilege to help other people. I think you need to be aware of the privilege. You need to find a way to be empathetic for those that, that don't have those same privileges.

And, and you gotta do some reconciliation, internal healing and communal healing, and there's no escaping that. That, that is in every aspect of life. So you can't just walk into the music room and those things disappear. They're there. But I mentioned some of the words grab me in a stronger way.

[00:26:00] And definitely foresight was a word that really hit me. I don't know why. I'm a very intuitive person. I just, it's easy for me to see, where something is heading, and, first rehearsal, oh, no, so I think foresight is something that I really that guides me a lot in my decision making as a leader.

I think commitment to the growth of people was the second thing that really hit me. I, to me, that's probably my number one goal. And building community. I'm a bit of a I'm a bit of a closure freak. I like I'm not, we're not gonna sit around and sing Kumbaya rehearsal, but I but I want everyone to feel engaged.

I really want to do that. And I wanna do everything I can to help that happen. And I think if you've got community, people are gonna take risks. They're gonna be, they're gonna grow so much more. And if you can really build in that concept of belonging, we have really high standards here.

[00:27:00] I know you can reach them, you belong here. It's a special community. We all belong here together. That's, I, it's essential in my work as a leader. So those words that hit me the hardest were listening. Foresight, growth and community when I read that. But I have seen aspects of the other the other, yeah, the other areas, of course in my own work and demonstrated by others.

To me, like I, I know leaders who are just so persuasive. That I just the group jumps on board immediately, and I'm always like, wow. How did they do that? Yeah. Yeah so I think being aware of where your strengths are and really going after those and with more depth, I think that can be a way to even make up for some of the areas where you might not.

Have this same strength or they don't resonate as strongly with you personally. And everyone has to find that balance. Absolutely.

Dylan: [00:28:00] And it's great to hear you say all those things and even with the very brief time that I've been able to be in the same band room with your students or the same rehearsal space as your students.

That sense of community is felt as from a visitor's standpoint. And then to observe things from, from the magic of livestream. You're able to experience how you do this artistically. And cuz you came up actually in the first interview that we started for this project with Jodi Blackshaw because we were talking about the Lincolnshire Posey.

That you did earlier this year? Yes. And how it's really easy for, the University of British Columbia Symphonic Wind Ensemble to do an amazing performance of that and which you did, but you are able to empower students even further, build community even further. Someone made their own perfume like these are things you would never have known that students could even do.

Robert: [00:29:00] Yeah. I'm really glad you touched on that because I forgot to mention, I think the word that pops up is amplify. In conducting training, we're always learning about how the baton is an amplifier. If you move your wrist a little bit, the tip of the baton, I'm sure that Jason has brought this up with you on

Never, never you've never heard this. Yeah, I'm a perfect the idea that the baton amplifies any emotion Honestly, I've been thinking like, in what way can I, when I'm holding my baton on the podium, help amplify the voices of the people that are in my ensemble, the individual voices while we're also pursuing a collective.

Goal, right? And so that, that grainer project came out of that idea of wanting to really explore that and every student chose one movement and created some kind of Artifact of their own. It was wide open, to tell the story of the music or based on Granger's setting of the song or the folk singer or whatever it was.

[00:30:00] And you're right, one, one of our, she created a perfume, a scent. And it was just incredible because it smelled exactly like the third movement. I couldn't, it. It was magical, and I would never have learned that. And so if you can find a way to, to amplify individual voices while you're working on a group process that's only going to enrich the whole project.

And it might come at the expense of, we didn't have quite as much time to maybe work on some of the technical things or whatever, but everybody was so much. Invested because they all had their own personal take on a movement of the work, yeah, absolutely. So yeah, so I'm glad you brought that up.

Yeah,

Dylan: It was, I was really, I couldn't actually smell the perfume, which I, someday in the future that will. Hopefully, or hopefully not, I don't know.

Robert: I think it's got, I think it's got potential as a, yeah. A marketed product. We might have a booth in Midwest .

Dylan: [00:31:00] I would, oh, I would die. I would die . That would be great. But, and yeah, it was a really great thing to experience even here in Arizona and be able to watch it online and even beyond. Like the really creative things as you as a director, learning how you can serve your graduate students. And once again it's, who doesn't want to conduct a master work, but you were able to give that opportunity and split up the movements between your students, which was also really great to see.

And how that came together was great. We'll go into, Oh, second, last question. I was like, oh no. What's the last question? Could you could you outline some of the challenges institutions or structures in general create that make some of these servant leadership

Robert: ideas? Challenges?

Yeah. Wow. Okay. So there are the larger systems in society but there are also the systems that. We work in and, being a band conductor, most of my work is in an academic setting in some way. I do work with professionals in other settings, and I would say my leadership style actually doesn't change very much in those two environments.

[00:32:00] Academic institutions have some sort of difficulties around this because many of them are steeped in hierarchical structures. And there are very few good role models, that are serving in leadership administrative positions, few institutions that have that. And so there aren't a lot of good role models.

Kind of a systemic problem in an academia, especially in higher ed, that the people that are in leadership roles are not necessarily trained as leaders. They're as academics, right? And maybe they've accomplished a lot in their field, but it doesn't necessarily mean that they're able to work and empower other work with, and empower others that, in their charge

[00:33:00] So I think, that. It is somewhat problematic that the institutions that, that we exist in, they, they can. Sometimes overlook best practice. And I think it, there are some exceptional leaders in education. And if you're lucky enough to be somewhere where there's a collective vision that, that kind of leadership has helped create and that sense of ownership and growth and that, failure is a good thing and, all of those kinds of things.

It's, I think it's more rare than it should be, which is unfortunate. Jon, it,

Dylan: you were like, you were the first person that I ever heard say, we need to learn how to fail better. Yeah. And that really stuck with me when I ended up, becoming a collegiate band conductor and thinking about these things.

Robert: [00:34:00] Yeah, I mean that, that's a fundamental to pretty much everything I do. I, I've really fallen on my face a lot and embracing that I think is the way you get back up and, and so I think there, there are some systemic issues cuz there are very few good role models. One of, one of our administrative assistants at the university here, she once said to me, she asked if I could do something and I was like, I'd be more than happy to do it, she's you're so organized, I know you can get it to me quickly, et cetera, et cetera. Praising me to get me to go ahead and go make the extra effort. I saw what was going on there. But she said Rob, you want something done? Ask a busy person, ask the person that is committed to, doing all of this work.

And so I think that's another challenge is. We're wired as musicians to not to have trouble saying no. And taking on too much. And so service can become servitude where you have nothing left. To give, and I think that is a challenge, and, I'm on sabbatical right now.

I spent the first month of my sabbatical at a yoga retreat and a vegan, all inclusive the second month at my sabbatical, I spent with my mother traveling just the two of us. It's been never since we were able to do that, and. and I talk to so many of my colleagues who might be in a situation where they have access to, for example, taking a study leave and, I'll talk to a real experienced senior colleague or retired colleague and say, I've never taken a sabbatical.

[00:35:00] Were they an option that your institution was a part of the culture? In, in many cases, no. But in, in many also, yes. But there's this feeling of, oh, I can't leave my program, what things will fall apart without me, whatever it is, a story we've told ourselves, I think there's this push towards, Productivity, which is ununhealthy. I think social media plays into that. You see all of the highlights of when people are out doing different kinds of work that really inspires them. And you get the sense that everyone's doing that all the time.

[00:36:00] And so I think there also is this kind of overriding Culture of burnout that can occur and. I think we have to talk about it a lot more. We have to train young people to know how to deal with it and what to do, throughout one's career to continue growing in the most healthy way and find that way to continue balancing verb not state, not state of mind, but verb. And so those are some of the challenges I see. The institutions that we work within in education and the tendency to, to never say no. And you lose some of your focus on what's most important to you, just because you're exhausted,

Yeah. And that's a very privileged thing to even be able to say. Yeah, I own that, like I'm on sabbatical. A very few people in the world get to do that ever. And I'm. Every opportunity to gain from it what I can as a person so that I have something new to bring back, and I think that ties in with this concept of servant leadership for sure.

Dylan: absolutely. And I mean that last point that you made is and I don't think you'd mind me saying it, when you're the director of bands at Arizona State, it gets a little tiring and I, there was one day Jason was just like, I can't wait to see what your research comes up with when you're talking about servant leadership.

[00:37:00] Cuz how do we do it? and still say no to whatever being asked to be on the 10th committee or being involved and who knows what, and having to give results and fill a tenure file. That's not a, an issue for either you or Jason anymore. But having to show these results and and I still don't necessarily have an answer, but I can't wait to start as you as we talked about reflecting and thinking about these things and how we can do that.

And the other thing that just came to mind when you were speaking was Mary Schneider made a post the other day about. For God's sakes, could you just do your job, just do your job!

Dylan: Stop posting pictures of, you looking flashy or the selfie with the band. Which we've all done.

But I think it's just and it's getting too much at some points and a lot of the responsibility goes on us to Do our best to, as you said, not ignore it, continually investing in yourself so that you can invest in others. And but no, lots of great things to think about.

Last but not least, and I've realized over, the sixth interview, this is a difficult question to ask someone because you are not your students, but how would your students describe your leadership style and or philosophy?

Robert: [00:38:00] This question. So full disclosure, you send me the questions ahead of time, and I looked through things, but I didn't wanna, I didn't wanna program what I was gonna answer. And I saw this question and I went, oh no. Like, how can I describe what my students experience because I know what I want them to experience. , but I'm. Have the humility to know that I often fall far short of that.

[00:39:00] And last night I actually sent an anonymous Google form to a random sampling of students, you and Jonathan Grantham. I love it. Jonathan did that too. And that does not surprise me in the least. Yes. I was like why not go to the source, I will tell you the most interesting reflection on this was not too long ago, I was doing a conducting symposium and one of my former students who was a trumpet player at University of

Puget Sound was at the symposium and came up to me and And, he took some time that, that talk you get as a teacher where you hear, oh, I know.

I didn't appreciate it at the time, but thank you for, very well. Yeah. And so it was, it started off that way and I was a little worried, right? But he used the words productive intensity. To describe my approach to rehearsal. And how it was really invigorating but could also really challenge him.

And it, that it took a long time for all of that to really settle in and to be seen as very positive in that respect. And so that was really interesting to me. Like productive intensity, because either of those words on their own, I would be, Sad about like productive is so cold, and it's like when somebody describes me as organized, I'm like, yeah. Yes. Like basic personality trait of mine. But please is there anything else that maybe , I'm, putting out into the world that is more than that. It's just not a very high goal for me. Because [00:40:00] it comes easily. So productive doesn't really resonate. Intensity worries me, because if something is intense, it normally means that it sometimes pushes boundaries, beyond what you're comfortable with and not that discomfort is a bad thing, we grow from it, but too much of anything.

Is not good. So in combination I've settled that. I'm okay with that description. , long story short but so these were the words that up and reply, deliberate lead by example, invested principled, clear expectations, student focused. Constant and consistent pursuit of excellence. Highly collaborative and creative.

You cater your teaching to suit each individual. High standards, you collaborate rather than dictate. You allow me to feel safe in risk taking. , you inspire through expertise and in prioritizing [00:41:00] understanding failure as the most genuine celebration of success. love that this student mentioned that, that I do.

I have a little dance party on the podium when things going really well and the les happening, that happens in performance regularly. I just, there's just so much joy, to experience together personal. Clear vision, leading by example, putting emphasis on the growth of the community, not afraid to take risks and push us to grow to full potential, self-direction, but provides oversight and support when needed. . Now this is for me, this is great feedback because I can lean into the positive things, and try to do more of them, but you'll notice, empathetic was not. Any of the words, and so there are maybe other aspects of this style of leadership that, that I can continue [00:42:00] to explore and grow in and I think doing this kind of exercise, which I really thank you for involving me in this project. It just saying something out loud, it always helps you learn what you believe. , and you hear yourself say something and you go. Yeah, that's what I believe.

But prior to that moment, you might not really be that clear about it, so in a way, like asking my students for this kind of feedback, it provides some clarity about what I'm

doing that is supportive of them and the things that are omitted are also areas that I know I, I can continue to grow in.

I'm glad that I just did that assignment because otherwise the interview would've stopped right at that question. Oh, I dunno. I'm really sure how else I would answer that. I appreciate opportunity. Actually to learn, [00:43:00] directly from my students. So thank you for posing that.

Dylan: the least I could do.

And thank you for your willingness to, take that risk and go ask your students. Because throughout the whole interview, our conversation. We've talked about leadership, you've shared your beliefs, and we've just had a great conversation. But then to hear you walk the talk with your students is just is amazing.

And and I wanna. Also point out, and it's something like a pattern that I see and a stereotype I want to break, but when we talk about leadership in the way that you do it or the way that Jonathan Grantham does it, or Ramona wi it's not with the absence of quality and Right.

Anything we do is not it's not an either or, but a yes and so I'm just. Inspired to be able to have these conversations with people like you and people who have inspired me to even jump into thinking about these things. Because without you, I probably wouldn't have asked you to be part of it.

So I really appreciate your [00:44:00] thoughts, your wisdom just being able to catch up a little bit as well too has been really great. And especially for your time during your sabbatical I greatly appreciate you respect you. You're the best. Rob, thanks so much for taking time. Talk to me on this new podcast.

Robert: Thank you, Dylan. That's the journey and I'm really glad to be on it with you.



## Jodie Blackshaw Interview Transcript

Dylan: [00:00:00] Okay, here I am. I can't believe this day has come. This is the first interview. I don't know what order this will come out in, but this is the first interview of my doctoral research and I was telling today's guest that it's so fresh, it doesn't have a name yet. But I'm really excited to be joined by one of my favorite people in the world, composer, music educator extraordinaire, and just generally a great person.

Jodie Blackshaw, welcome to whatever this leadership podcast is called.

Jodie: I'm really glad to be part of whatever this is, and I'm very really looking forward to our conversation today and really interested in this research that you are conducting. .

Dylan: I'm really glad that you were a part of it, because you've been a part of it since the beginning, even when I had no idea, the thing had no walls.

I didn't, I wanted to take down the whole world.

Jodie: That's, we all go on.

Dylan: [00:01:00] So I'll start with the first question. First question is, are you aware of the work of Robert k Greenleaf and his servant leadership model? And if so, how does that influence your work as a music educator?

Jodie: To be perfectly honest, I hadn't heard of it until I read your question, so I went and had a quick read of it, but not until after I'd actually answered all your other. And then it really made me smile. I thought, ah, now I know where he is coming from, but I would love to hear you give me a brief explanation of your take on it, what your, what you are drawing from it so we can really contextualize what we're talking about.

Dylan: Sure it all came about. Just wondering why I was different than I thought some other leaders in which I observed. And I found this Greenleaf model and how it fit perfectly into how I thought about leadership. And that is not necessarily, a product first kind of thing, but.

As a leader that we are servants first and that we want to help people first, [00:02:00] and it's a very natural calling that comes from within. And then from there we decide to lead. And there's a lot of different characteristics that go into that. Listening is one, and listening intently to your, the people in which you are leading or are working with.

Empathy and being empathetic to people's views, people's backgrounds and adversities healing and music. That's an obvious thing for how that might come about in our, in what

we do. Awareness that involves the awareness of things around us, but also self-awareness and how we are as leaders and how we're communicating with people.

Persuasion, which is generally. The idea of inspiring and persuading rather than commanding and demanding results. Conceptualization thinking about the future, not so much the short successes that we might get in certain, this is a business model, some of the short term goals that you might get, but thinking long term about how not I can only benefit the result, but benefit the person in which you're

Jodie: I thought the sport conceptualization meant something completely different, but I clearly had my [00:03:00] educators hat when I saw that term. Interesting. Yeah.

Dylan: Foresight, learning from past mistakes or just trying to look into the future when it comes to what we're planning, stewardship, caring for the people in the organization that we are working for.

It might be an ensemble, it might be a classroom of people. Commitment to the growth of people, which is one of my most favorite ones cuz everyone has their different thing, but I the idea of. Of the person growing beyond just being a great musician and becoming a really wonderful human being who can, contribute to the world they live in.

And then building community and Greenleaf's idea of building community is just from organizations getting so big that it's difficult to have that community that we had, as before these big organizations existed. But in a nutshell, that is some servant leadership principles.

So do any of those ring

Jodie: true to you? Oh, very much it's interesting. I've just framed them in different ways. Like I just, the two words I just wrote down is, or two phrases I wrote down was one was constructivism. So I'm really looking at, so I'm [00:04:00] all about pedagogy, right? I'm all about process and the way we deliver information or new information to our students and then how we deliver that and how that impacts them.

And because it's all about inciting fascination for me and making connections. And when I think of the constructivist approach to education, and that is, you might sew a seed of an idea and someone might know a little bit and someone might know a little bit and someone might know a little bit.

And we all join together and we all share and all of our knowledge grows as a result of that experience. Then we have this building community, and we have all, and I, we, there is persuasion in there, there, there is all sorts of different elements in there and. And of course, that's all steeped in having democracy and education right.

In, in, in really having that democratic approach. And I remember when I was reading about all of that and discovering all of that myself, I thought I was thinking the same thing. Why am I so different? Why is everything that I do so different? Why are [00:05:00] all my compositions so different? Why is it that when I come out and I, I spend a week, with a school, everyone at the end of it is going, whew, cheer man I'm blown away.

I just don't know what to do with this. And I stand there and go, but you saw how the students responded, you saw what happened this week rather than be excited about. You've become almost frightened by it. And so I had to really get, step out of myself and say, what is happening here?

And what is going on. And I think your framework on it from leadership and then my framework, my, my perception of it from a pedagogical and an educational approach, I think they meet somewhere in the middle, in, in a really good way.

Dylan: Yeah. I remember, a previous conversation that we've had on podcast with Cait and things, and, but hearing you talk about your why when it comes to composition and how it is all about the people.

It, you hit me first whenever I was, thinking about who I would like to talk to on, on [00:06:00] this kind of moving on. But we will come back to it cuz it, that's what it's about. I know, I guess I know so much about you as a composer, but we haven't talked much about, as you said, the pedagogy side of it or even the leadership side.

So I'm wondering like who, what or who has influenced your approach to leadership and maybe discuss your how that influences your approach and if you have a couple of experiences or p specific people that help shape that.

Jodie: Yeah. When I, this was the first question I really considered in, in your bunch and.

the words I've actually written here is I don't think of myself as a leader. I just don't. It's when I step into the classroom or when I step into an ensemble, the first thing I wanna do is get rid of all the chairs and all the music stands and all the hierarchy and take away the podium.

My, my catch cry is get off the podium, and I want to be on an even playing field with the students. Okay. I guess this [00:07:00] is where persuasion or guide or mentoring is very much my approach. And I am not sure if your I love etymology. It's a real kind of, bit of a hobby of mine.

I love looking at the root of different words, and I remember a number of years ago now when I looked up in a, where does the word education come from? What does it mean?

And there's a number of different Latin terms that it comes from. But when I read that means to draw out that which lies within, to draw out the innate capability of the individual.

I thought that is what I want to do. I don't wanna have this external influence and say, you must do it in my image. Correct. I want to take away some of the layers, take away fear, take away all of those things. I see it as my job to create the [00:08:00] most relaxed space that I possibly can so that the student who they are in the playground, when they're hanging out with their mates, is the person they are when they're in my classroom.

Because that is when they and neuroscience proves this and all sorts of other sort of psychology has shown us that when we feel safe, we will learn more. and we will be more likely to be creative. And when we are being creative, we are making connections. And that means deep learning is happening.

So for me it's, I call it my Dr. Seuss moment, it's all about trying to make that happen, either when I'm teaching or in a composition or in an approach, and really trying to make that happen. And I guess that's my style, it's all about getting out of the way as quickly as I can. And making sure that when I'm introducing things, I'm doing so in a way that is very [00:09:00] sequential.

It's very small steps. No one's threatened along the way. And we get to a point where you can walk away, where you can release yourself and they can make it their own. And that very much comes from some of the teachers I had growing up. Okay. One in if we go back 20.

three years, I guess it was. Is when I first discovered, Orff, the pedagogy or s Schuler. And I was very lucky that shortly after I'd discovered it and I'd done one of the levels courses, I went to a national conference and met a remarkable American or s Schuler educator by the name of Doug Goodkin.

Doug was based at the San Francisco School for something like 47 years. He's only just retired. And just this past summer, I, he came back to Australia and did a conference and I went and did that conference. Oh, great. And it was the most, it was like I'd come home. . I went, oh, here are my people, here we are. [00:10:00] And the whole approach. And Doug, he has that whole West coast thing going on and he's so relaxed and he's just so laid back and he's like that whether he is working with adults or he is working with five year

Dylan: Orff. Could you tell us a kind of a base level of that ideolog.

Jodie: Of o s Schulberg. Yeah, O is very much it. It was created by Composer Karl Orff and a dance. And they, through observing children, observed that children learn so much

through play. And this was all being developed, probably started in the 1930. And this was at the same time that Dewey was doing a lot of writing.

We had Kadi was starting to be developed. At the same time Dros was happening. So there was this flurry of pedagogy that, that was happening in that first part of the [00:11:00] 20th century. Interestingly, with s Schuler, the teaching courses didn't actually really develop until the early 1970s.

But okay. With s Schuler, it's all about getting something in your body. And the key difference between ORP and all the other pedagogies is movement. Don't think of it as dance, but it is movement. For example, you might be trying to teach a rhythm, , so you're trying to teach them about quaver, rest, about upbeat and getting them to have that feel. So you might do a whole thing where there's you, it's very little talking out the front, right? And you might just be out the front. You might have some you might say something and then fill in the gap and say something and fill in the gap. You might walk around, you might do it 50 different ways that you do all these things.

And you'll be, and I've just done this at the conference. You're walking around and finally you get. to that point where you have the self discipline where students are walking around the room and they might high five [00:12:00] each other or then they might, okay, now do it differently. And then they might have to create their own other action.

And then they walk around the room and they do something else, and then they walk around, oh, they do something else. And they do this whole thing. And then you might do it with, music from Brazil and then you might do it with music from Iran. And then you might do it with music from India.

And then you might do it with, jazz. And then you might do. with something orchestral, and they're all different tempos and they're all different styles, but you are still filling in that rhythm pattern. And then you will apply that to an instrument and you might be playing something and then that might come in.

And then the very, very last thing you've done after maybe five lessons of all this wonderful movement and game. And it's so ingrained and it's been powered in through the cerebellum and the base of the brain, which is like this incredible highway into our learning structures in our brain. And we've played with it.

We've created with it. We've made it our own, we've identified it, we've used it in different tempos, different [00:13:00] styles on different instruments. We've been tactile with it. Every multiple intelligence you can possibly consider has been targeted. And only then would you even consider about saying, oh, this is what it looks like, this is how we notate it. Yeah. And with s Schuler, you wouldn't even go straight to traditional notation either. You would play around with graphic notation, you would do all sorts of

different things. So it is a fusion of movement application, and then development of that probably performing in some kind of ensemble. And you turn it into a performance piece. And then from there, really looking at, not.

Dylan: see, I'm learning things too from this. This is great.

Jodie: You would love it. It is mind blowing. Yes, it is absolutely mind blowing. And I, it's taken me a very long time to work out how I can bring some of the structures of Orff into the structures of band. Identifying some significant differences. And identifying [00:14:00] differences in culture, like how we culturally approach our music education. What is expected of the teacher. Primary school teachers don't have as many performance expectations on them as, say, middle and high school band directors do.

They don't have that utilitarian role, the bands are, it's almost it's just a, it's almost become. An unfortunate part, it was such an important part as to why bands existed in the first place. Yeah. But now for the school band director, it's just become a thorn in their side I think.

Yeah. We are really getting there and for the first time this year, I'm about to write the work, and I go to Florida next January. We are bringing together, Or Schuler teachers with middle school band directors. Okay. I'm creating a resource and they're going to work with each other.

Amazing. And they're gonna learn from each other, and we're gonna build a community. Look, here we go. Here we go. So this is me stepping in. Yeah. Providing some information, offering some persuasion, making sure there's ownership inside of there. And then stepping back and allowing them [00:15:00] to grow and develop that in their own community, in their own identity.

With their own identity. Awesome.

Dylan: thank you for that little side kind of journey.

Jodie: because yeah. Sorry

Dylan: But yeah, and I mean it because it's always been, the, or for me has always been something in my peripheral I'll be at whatever, an education conference and there'll be a performance, but I don't really know anything about it.

And I think it's, so it's, thank you for giving me and listeners more of a, an understanding of it. So that's really great. And then before I interrupted you, what were some of your other influences? Or continue?

Jodie: Oh yeah my, the other ones I think one has to be my dad. And then from there, my grandma, I'm a third generation educator. And both of them were pied pipes in the playground, like they'd be in the playground, all the kids be following them around. Both of them. Very much considered ex hands-on experience to be so much more important than drilling. How incredible is that? My grandmother in 1969, [00:16:00] she was like a kindie one, two teacher. And she discovered all Orff in the final year of her teaching. Okay. And she was one of the main reasons all s Schuler happens in New South Wales. I only found that out last year. Oh really? I didn't even know. Wow. So I love the fact that watching them and being surrounded by them and seeing them in the classroom, it was always about fun, it was always about games. It was always about, everything that they approached was to play around with it. , who doesn't love playing around with something and failing a bunch of times, before they realized, oh, this is how you do it. And that's, and I, when I think about my, one of my main clarinet teachers, a guy by the name of Mark Walton, everything about Mark is joy.

He's just this joyful, amazing guy. And then I think about my English teacher at high school, and I had terrible written skills, they just didn't make any sense to anybody. I think, just very complex brain going on behind [00:17:00] everything. and Megan, and I did the work too, but painstakingly, over the course of two years, writing hundreds of practice essays.

Slowly but surely she never shut me down and said, no, do it this way. She said, I love the wavelength that you're on. I really love that you are making this connection with this. I would never have thought of that in a million years, why don't you try this and why don't you try putting it this way?

And, but, and then I think about my composition teacher in my undergrad years, Larry Siski. Very respected composer here in Australia. He had the same approach. Oh, okay. I see. You're interested in that. Why don't you go and read this essay by Edgar Allen Poe. And why don't you go to this art exhibition by this person, and why don't you go over here and do this?

And when I think about them, the commonality between all these teachers that was so influential on me is the fact that, they never shut me [00:18:00] down, they never demanded or dictated anything to me. It was very much about, we see something in you and we want it to flourish. Yeah. Coming back to that, ed Yukari wanted to draw something out, but at the same time they were really honest and they would mark hard and they would say, these are this is the criticism that you need to hear. Yeah. But they had developed such a loving and trusted relationship that I was ready to hear it. I needed to hear it, and it just spurred me on to, to take that next. And that's very much carved, a bit like, a river carving a canyon.

All of those experiences throughout my life has really carved me into being the person that I am. Wow, that's

Dylan: amazing. And I just that last point that you brought up, they did criticize you, they did critique. And I think a lot of the time, maybe, and not you, I won't speak for you, but a lot of my thinking as an [00:19:00] educator, people assume that I'm not being direct or I'm not concerned with any degree of high quality results.

And I think it's very much the opposite. Where there's a way to do this all also, caring about the person and just like you said, how much your teachers loved and wanted to draw that out of you. So that's a really beautiful

Jodie: thing. Yeah. Just cause we are doing it differently doesn't mean that the outcome is going to be any different.

Yeah. That's what really frustrates me when people look at me. or they look at my, some of my creative stuff and say, I don't have time to do this. Yeah. I said, what? Cause you've gotta play that other piece another 57 times. Yeah. Because you're just flogging that piece another 57 times to iron out one mistake, which I bet if you did it this way, you could do that in two rehearsals.

Let me find the time for you, I can find the time for you.

Dylan: then the other thing I wanna bring up is what you said right at the beginning I don't view myself as a leader. I, and I think that's at that's at the heart of servant leadership and [00:20:00] there's a quote by Robert Greenleaf about, servant leader is a servant first.

And I think just being yourself first and being authentic to yourself that is, that's what leads people, that's what inspires people. So to hear you talk about that right at the beginning, I'm like, oh yeah. And because without that why, without being yourself, it's very hard to do anything else authentically.

Anyway, that will last.

Jodie: Yeah, I totally agree. My website the Jodi Blackshaw brand for what, for want of a better word, the phrase is where students come first, that's just a hundred percent where I am. And in terms of maintaining that authenticity, I decided I had to do something that was really hard.

When they say, you've gotta go and suck at being a beginner. Yeah. You've gotta go and go be a beginner and be really bad at something. In about October, no, August last year, I took up trying to do pottery. Oh, that's a dream of. Has been a dream of mine too. And I can [00:21:00] tell you for months I was really crap at it.



Like really bad. I couldn't even keep the clay on the wheel and it'd fly everywhere. I'd be covered in clay. Like I walk into the house and my husband would go, no, we have to hose you down first. Okay. But I have bought my own wheel and I have my own little station in the back of the garage.

And it is, in terms of being present and being grounded. And there's something, cuz it's such an ancient art form, like one of the, one of the very first art forms that homo sapiens grew and develop with. And this whole idea of just throwing the pots in the ground and burning them, there's something so rustic and Right.

Authentic and tangible about all of that, that it's. It keeps me grounded and it keeps me ke keeps me focused on what's really important, it's a really good thing to do.

Dylan: Oh, no, that's good. That's good. That's also another idea. Just learning how to learn from our failures [00:22:00] and learning that the f word failure is not really as bad as we make it out to be sometimes.

And how much,

Jodie: no, it's not at all. Yeah. And it's vital. Yeah. It's absolutely vital.

Dylan: Yeah. You talked about a little bit little clarinet and and maybe you spent some other time doing other things in ensembles, but I'm wondering, when you were a member or as a member of an ensemble, what are some of the different kinds of leadership styles that you were exposed to?

And this isn't necessarily positive or negative. It could be either.

Jodie: It's funny that this question comes up. I was just home in my hometown seeing my mum. She had a big round birthday. I won't announce in this public forum what age she was. She'd kill me. But it was a big round number and and we always call my mother's house a a time capsule, our bedrooms look the same that they did. Wow. When we lived at home as teenagers, all this stuff is still there. And my mom gave me this package and said, I thought you might find this interesting [00:23:00] and so here's something you need to know about me. I grew up in a country town, which we were very lucky that a local mathematics teacher decided to start a school band to start a band.

It wasn't attached to one particular school. Any student from any school could be part of this band. I was lucky to have that, but it was pretty basic. I think he did the absolute, he was a brilliant administrator. But on the podium and things were very limited.

Living in this country town, I just didn't have exposure to playing in anything. So my very first experience was in, I'll say the year 1986, start January, 1986, which is our summer. It was my summer camp. I went on summer camp as a clarinet player to play in this ensemble in a big music camp in Sydney.

My first drill experience of anything like that, and I was such a bad clarinet player that they put me on alto clarinet. Oh my. That's how bad I was. I never [00:24:00] had a lesson in my life, I was all completely self-taught, the whole thing. So the fact that I even got, I think they just, I think they said yes to my application simply because I was from where I was from.

And I thought, oh, let's get this, country chick a gonzi kind of thing. So I play alto clarinet. Okay. What the hell is this beast of an instrument? And then I sit in my very first wind symphony rehearsal. First time I've sat in a big full wing band, and the first piece on the stand was Colonial song.

Oh, okay. Starts with an alto clarinet Yeah. Thing. And the conductor was a guy by the name of Larry Curtis. Now, I'm not sure if you've ever heard of Larry Curtis, but very serious conductor and from the states very knowledgeable man, very firm, if you like, on the podium. And within five minutes of that very first rehearsal, he walked out.

He, threw his baton down and oh, and said [00:25:00] something and, cause I was sitting there, I had no idea what was going on. I had no idea how to follow him. I didn't know how this instrument worked. I had, I was just in this brand new, environment in every possible and conceivable way, the fact that I was even sitting in a room with 65, 70 musicians was just unheard of for me.

And I lay and all these people turned around and were patting me on the back and go, it's okay. Don't worry about it. It'll be all right. I'm thinking, what's going on? I have no idea what's going on. And you have to remember that at this point in time, my hair was like, as wide as this screen and curly and, this wild, big hair.

Anyway, he'd apparently walked out of the rehearsal because I wasn't playing in June, and I had no idea. I had absolute no idea, but my conductor in Griffith, where I grew up. He was always cranky. He was always so somebody being cranky on the podium didn't face me, he was always yelling at us, so it was oh, he's just another one of them.

[00:26:00] Yeah. And it wasn't until. I did another music camp in Sydney for public school students. Cause I went to a public high school. And I met a guy by the name of Steve Williams. He's still there, he's still teaching there. And Steve was Joy. Steve was absolute joy and absolutely brilliant on the podium.

And he has this brilliant blend of being able to get the most out of the students. You want to work for him. And he achieves that excellence. But we have a really good time doing. and I, and I think it's hard to ask me these questions because I had such a different upbringing and I, a lot of my time wasn't spent in ensembles. Yeah. A lot of it was spent on my own playing clarinet on a cassette tape to send to my teacher who lived 700 kilometers away to listen to and then send it back and give me feedback three weeks later. I've lived a lot of my life and still live a lot of my life as a musician in isolation.

And, so you'd go to a one week music camp and you try and absorb everything that you possibly [00:27:00] could and come back and that would keep you going until the next one, the fact that I became a musician is still good. A normal me. Like, why the hell do I do that?

Dylan: Yeah. No. No, that's exactly why you were the and very important person to talk to about this because we always talk to people who have the same background and have played in marching bands and all that fun stuff.

Jodie: Oh yeah. I've never, ever the only time I've ever marched has been for an event. So not at a football match, but with a community. and it was for something that we call Anzac Day. Okay. The Australian New Zealand Army call. And every year there's a big celebration here in Australia.

It's a memorial of all of our fallen soldiers, men and women who have given their lives for freedom. But it's nothing like what you would call an American marching band. We are lucky if we can actually keep dressing and keep straight lines and walk in straight lines and go around the corner.

Or if you go around a corner, it's woo.

Dylan: The more we discuss, the more I realize we're more similar than I thought, [00:28:00] this is good. Yeah. I also have very little marching experience. So much so I, I told the athletic band person here, I appreciate what you're trying to do and teach me, but I just don't think it's gonna work.

I can't. But no, that this is, it's really important to think about the first influence in which you just talked about in this question and how as educators, we never know. We don't know the people in front of us and their experience, and the fact that you didn't know what in tune or out of tune was, or, and also Colonial song, that's a hard, that's a very hard piece.

Jodie: Just trying to read it. Oh, yeah. And understand. And he's conducting with all this, Roberto, and it's all over the place, and I'm just, I'm used to having a conductor that I

don't even look at. In fact, at that age, I'm I really do think that I'm of the opinion that what is the conductor for?

I don't even know what they're for, I haven't actually made that connection yet. Yeah. Learned a great deal. at that camp. It was like going here to here. And [00:29:00] those camps, that's what they did, I would, it would be like a year's worth of learning. Yeah. E expanding from that.

But I also remember a really significant event that took place. It was about second or third year university. And every year as a composition student, you would get assigned a chamber group and you had to write a piece for the chamber group. But you organized rehearsals with them and they read your music for the first time.

Absolutely. Nerve-wracking thing to do. And I wrote this OBO Quartet, and I'd written it in a way that the score was also the parts and the players all had to listen to each other as they went. And then as parts moved, they then moved around it. But rhythm was decided by the players. There was actually no rhythm written.

It was that kind of, again, building community, having creative input, blah, blah, blah. It's been there with me forever, I think. And the OBO player said to me, what do you want me to listen to what they're doing? I don't listen to anybody. I just, [00:30:00] I only listen to myself. I don't listen to anybody else.

And she was in her third year of a performance degree. Oh my. And I thought, wow, we've really gotta do something about the way people are behaving in ensembles. If they can get all that way and not think that they have to listen, and it, I, it really sticks in my mind. It was a long time ago now, but it was something that I always wanted to make sure that my students, whenever they were playing, were aware had that awareness.

There, there's one of those words of what was going on around them and how they were connecting and. and, involving themselves with those sounds that were around them. But yeah, that's a bit off topic, but different kinds of, leadership styles come in all sorts of shapes and forms, I think.

Not just necessarily a person that's out the front.

Dylan: Yeah, no, absolutely. And they're not, this, my dissertation is mainly talking about servant leadership, but it's also the idea [00:31:00] that leadership or the way that we teach it, it exists on a spectrum. And I don't think at any point am I fully a servant leader or at any point am I fully and a thought servant leader?

And there, there are moments. I think, at least in my own teaching as it exists now that I do direct and say, there's times that I, it needs to be a little bit more efficient than maybe

what I need it to be in the moment. But just to understand that, and to hear you talk about the different those two different teachers that you had it's interesting and I'm sure like we all go in and out of what, but ideally we can stay where we should be.

Jodie: Purely because I thought in some of them, and I heard them differently to the way that you described them earlier. But I thought when I just wanted to say that when I'm composing music, I always have a music education goal as well as an ensemble goal. Okay. And then, and, and just an overall goal for the audience, what do I want the piece to be but there's always a music education goal [00:32:00] and an ensemble goal. What's, what are we trying to build in there? And I thought that in the education goals we thought about and really think about conceptualization awareness, listening and empathy, that's what I'm, those things are really falling into that kind of category.

Whereas with ensemble goals, I'm really thinking about building community stewardship and commitment to growing people, it's only for me personally, when a work is really heavy on that creative input. Do I feel like I'm bringing in. Persuasion and foresight and even to a degree, the healing depending on what you really want that healing, if that's a broad spectrum to think about what healing can be. Yeah. But it's only then do I really feel like that my persuasion can be seen, can be explored, can be, really allowed to grow within the students.

Because I can be as [00:33:00] persuasive as I like on the podium, but if I never get off the podium and let them explore it themselves then really am a, am I walking the walk or not? At some point you've gotta let go as the teacher and say, okay, now it's your turn. And I think that's why I love all Schulberg so much cuz it, it does that from day one with, with three year olds.

It's, it's doing it that trust and that ability to explore it all by yourself is there from the, right from the beginning. Yeah. I hope you don't mind, I just wanted to share.

Dylan: No. That's, it's great. And I had never really thought about it like that when you were talking about, composing and then I and maybe cuz I'm Canadian, but I'll bring up a specific piece of yours that I think checks a lot of these and be peace dancer, that starts with listening. It starts with empathizing and then it hearing you, we've talked about it before, but the healing that it, it brings to the actual, like the actual community that is involved with that piece is a really cool thing.

Jodie: [00:34:00] Yeah. It's I am working on a piece at the moment which is centered on reconciliation with our First Nations people, and it has been the most difficult piece I've ever written. Oh, wow. And in the end the answer was one, a student wrote I went and did a workshop with students and I drew an analogy between old trees.

Do you know that book? The Hidden Life of Trees? And it's it's about trees developing an underground communication with each other, and they speak to each other through their root systems. Takes. thousands of years to develop these old roots systems and they have mother trees and if you take out a mother tree you rip out.

You know that communications network between all the trees, but to the point that if one tree is sick, the other trees can feed nutrients to the sick tree. , if one tree detects that is being attacked by a particular [00:35:00] nasty bug, it can tell all the other trees and then they will release a certain toxin into their sap or they'll release an airborne something from their spores and it will stop the bug from pro and becoming, whereas when we have all these plantations where the trees don't talk to each other, they're all working as individual bodies and you get all this disease because they don't have that. And for our First Nations people, they're really ancient knowledge has come down through these elders who you can think of as old trees.

And that they pass on this incredible knowledge to the point that they really get right down, I think, to the cellular level of understanding the land. It's really quite astonishing. I've been pulling out images like this is the cross section of a Chava tree route. Oh, wow. And this looks a lot like our indigenous art you can see a lot of indigenous art in this kind of thing. And the correlations were amazing. [00:36:00] So I did this workshop with the students. We did a few different things. We did some movement, we did some thinking. And then I asked them to share their impressions of, what they took away and if they wanted to share, they shared.

And this girl, Kate on flute, wrote this incredible poem. And the poem has become the center of the whole piece. And it's all about patience because a lady said to me, reconciliation is a white person thing. And I went, oh, and my analogy is, it's like somebody, it's like your best friend sleeps with your partner, and then goes, oh yeah, sorry about that.

Can we be friends again? We figure yourself from my own game and you're just going, whoa, there's no way I'm ready for that. I just need a bit of time. It's up to me whether I wanna be friends with you again or not, yeah. And so here we've been doing all this singing and dancing around reconciliation and have we even done it in [00:37:00] consultation, with our first Nationals people?

Have we even asked them if they're ready? So there is this we're about to have a referendum here in Australia on the Uluru statement of the heart. And it's, it's a step forward in walking together is the phrase they use. And starting to build a new Australia, starting to try and leave some of the pain behind, which is a huge step forward for some of our indigenous communities who are ready to do that and for us to take many steps back.

And so this piece is all about the first half of the piece. I have actually written this material, composing material, and the students can decide which group they want to be in. And one set of material is about patience. And one set of material is about impatience. So you can just imagine and then that is interrupted by a very still hanging soundscape, Caton flute will read her poem, her reflective poem. And then the final section is me taking material from [00:38:00] patients and growing it and developing it into something that is that flourishes. That's great. That, that is that kind of thing. And it is my sincere hope that it will not only help teenage students start thinking about their own journey with reconciliation.

Cause I actually think, and I'm sure this is very for a lot of people in Canada as well, the whole idea is that it's not just about Australian First Nations, but it can be any form of reconciliation that needs to occur right around the world. And that you take that journey and that you decide what it means to you and you explore it through your music making.

and when you think about, growing people and building communities and listening and empathy and healing and awareness and persuasion and all of those, it's all of that, it's just all of that, and it has the creative elements in it as well As having really strong musical moments in it.

And it's really pushing. I'm really, it's a grade three work, but I'm really [00:39:00] pushing the ensemble cause I haven't written traditional, here's clarinet 1, 2, 3. Oh, they're all playing in sections. Clarinet. One might be joining with someone in clarinet. Two might be joining with someone in clarinet.

Three is joining with somebody else. And through, through the learning process and through everything that we do, students will develop their own independence, they'll develop connections with different people in the ensemble that perhaps they haven't known. And then all of that is then fostered right through the music at the same time.

So it's been a huge, enormous project, but I wanted to share that with you. Yeah. Cause it, it's on in line of peace answer. It takes a very hard subject to talk about. Yeah. It's a very difficult subject to talk about and says just cause it's hard to talk about, shouldn't mean we don't talk about

Dylan: absolutely. We're not even at the end of this. And I'm already like if a couple more people in the world were like, Jodi Blackshaw, the world would be a much better place.

Jodie: Oh, that's very good.

Dylan: But truly that's, it's amazing. It's amazing.

Jodie: I'm [00:40:00] very proud of where it's come. For a very long time.

I had nothing Right. For a very long time. I went and bought, look, I'll show you. I went and bought these. Look at these beautiful things. I bought these beautiful scarves. Yeah. And I listened to all sorts of different music and I moved to it and I went for long walks in nature. And I sat at my pottery wheel and I just thought, what the hell am I gonna do?

And then I found these gorgeous, this is a local image of an old tree and just the reflection and. And the mist and the wiggly shapes, the un uniformity of it and Right. But the beauty of all of that. And then there were things like this, this is a cross section of a tree fern.

Oh, wow. And looking at the gorgeous patterns and mandalas that are just, that these pieces in the earth. Yeah. It's just, yeah. It's been a very long journey, [00:41:00]. That's great.

Dylan: great. Yeah. This next question, I think is one that we've discussed before in, in a different way.

But could you outline maybe some of the challenges now that we're more knowledgeable about this whole servant leadership thing and maybe where some of your characteristics lie within that, could you align some of the challenges that institutions or structures in general create that would make servant leadership challenging?

Jodie: Yeah. Why do you think I don't, I'm not part of an institution.

Dylan: Oh, no. I

Jodie: think you're way, way too limiting. I think one of the biggest things is their lack of flexibility, the need, this obsession with having to equate everything. It's a session with obsession, with having to put a numerical value on everything.

, how can you possibly say that one student is more creative than the other? Maybe their creativity is just different. Maybe you haven't tapped it. Maybe they have a tactile creativity. Maybe they're creatives in dance. But how would you [00:42:00] possibly know if all they're doing is sitting in a chair behind a music stand in an ensemble?

What if you've never opened them up? Every time I do my workshops music teachers will have tears in their eyes and go. That kid over there who's leading that movement. He never talks in bed. He just never talks and he never says anything. And he always looks bored, but look at him and there's this kid going, doing this thing or being really out there all of a sudden, oh, let's do this.



And so invested. It's yeah, you just had ha you just don't know because you're, you restrained to one form of learning and that is rehearsing and being told what to do. We've gotta bust it apart. We've just gotta bust it apart. And in, from what I see and what my experience is, what I, the pushback I get all the time is, but I've got a concert but I've got a competition. , but I've got [00:43:00] this and sure. There are so many people out there whose jobs rely on them getting platinum ratings. That fundamentally has to change, I think it was Mitchell Robinson who said, at a time when we didn't have any mandatory testing, bands created their own mandatory testing.

Great. And that's, whilst the competition movement has had its place, it built bands, it put bands in schools. And aren't we lucky that it did? It's absolutely fantastic. But things go in cycles. We have eras, we have periods of music, we have, periods of development that's humanity.

Can't, can't escape that. Yeah. And I think we're a hundred years on from the beginning of the American school band movement. And I think the competition cycle can close, I think we can, it, it can evolve actually. I think it can evolve into creativity festivals.

I think it can evolve [00:44:00] into sharing. I think honor bands can be so much more than what they are. I just find that these structures of, every year we do this competition, every year we do this, you read articles of band teachers who break out of that. You read articles about them and they say, I decided I'm not going to do this anymore.

I went to my school principal, I went to my superintendent and this was my plan instead, we're gonna do this, we're gonna do this, we're gonna do that. They said, okay, let's see how it goes for 12 months and then never looked back and never did another competition. Doesn't mean your band's going to suffer.

Yeah. And I just, and I wrote about this in Horizon, leans forward, do something else. And, in the latter years of his career Craig Kirkoff, he haled how many concerts he was doing with his top ensemble. And he said, and everyone just relaxed. Yeah. And we could take time, we could [00:45:00] explore, we could go off on tangents in rehearsals. It wasn't quick. Do this quick. Do this, that's there, there's no humanity in that. Yeah. That's, yes. We have a military foundation. Bands have a military foundation, but I really do believe we've evolved beyond that.

And I see teachers like you and teachers like Rob Taylor, and teachers like Scott Jones and Margie Underwood and a, a lot of that Craig Kirkoff school who are out there, that's what they're doing. They're allowing room to breathe, they're just giving their students room to breathe doesn't mean that their hands aren't outstanding.

Yeah. Doesn't mean that they're not producing absolutely spectacular performances. They are. They're just approaching it differently. Yeah. And they're, yeah. They're just allowing their students to, build a community. Yeah. It takes time. Yeah, absolutely.

Dylan: Yeah. It's funny like that's a conversation we were having yesterday at Arizona State. Like maybe we should be cutting back on, some of the [00:46:00] concerts we do each semester. Cuz it's for a doctoral or a master's student, let alone an undergraduate student who doesn't know themselves yet to do, four concerts a semester, that's a lot, that's a lot of rep.

And for each one to be at a certain standard is, it's a lot to ask. And I'm also just thinking, you mentioned Rob Taylor and he did I had watched a concert his, not so long ago, but he did Lincoln Shire Posey and he could've spent so much time just doing it, rehearsing it, but he, he asked each student to what did each kind of movement inspire in them.

And then actually I believe I, I heard. The beautiful voice of Jodi Fox.

Jodie: There's a very funny story behind those recordings.

Dylan: But that's just something

Jodie: different. Yes. But Rob Taylor, one of the students created a perfume. Yeah. And it was, can you guess which character the perfume matches?

It's this is what I was talking about. If we don't open the door to [00:47:00] students to see what they're capable of or see what their loves are, or see what their real strengths are, then can we really call ourselves a teacher? are we really leading anything other than be in the shape of me?

And, if that's your style, then that's your style. But a lot of students will walk away and never play an instrument again beyond high school because they'll think that they can't do it without you, or they'll just think that, it's all being done. . Yeah. And they came, they saw, they conquered their phone, they, they don't, the whole thing about why aren't kids playing outside of school? Don't even get me started. Let's not even go.

Dylan: Let's not another. I'll copy, I'll have you back. Yeah. But also this the, you gave an answer in which I knew you. You would, because we're, we are in a results based sadly, industry that, they're easy to understand.

As humans, it's easy for us to label everything that moves or doesn't move. Just so we can understand it, to highlight what you said, how, you hear, you read [00:48:00] about teachers every now and then. Actually go talk to their administrators just about the idea

and moving past the assumption that we talked about that, that everyone cares about results.

Maybe if you start those discussions there, there is wiggle room as you already mentioned. So I encourage all just to not necessarily, quit your jobs, but, go. Don't be afraid to have that conversation.

Jodie: Don't be afraid to think differently. Yeah. Have you interviewed Nora Ty cast yet?

Dylan: No, but she is on our list for the band room.

Jodie: Yeah. She's one of those people Who is doing that Exactly. Doing that kind of thing. What are the competitions that they stopped doing in one of the schools she was at? I'm sure this is Dora. I could be quoting it incorrectly, but somebody gave me information about them pulling back on some of the competitions.

The competition only judged them on how they looked. Oh, it wasn't even about the music at all. That's very strange. And I said, so there's no music educational purpose for us to do this. Oh, [00:49:00] okay. So don't do it. Yeah. Great. Okay. And the thing is that if you're in a school district somewhere, and there's a bunch of you that think this way, you don't have to work as a lone Wolff, come together and say, we would like to do this.

We'd like to make this happen. We'd like to bring this about. And, that's why this project in Florida is so exciting to me. It's it's part of my conservation series and there are three animals that I'm gonna base this material on. And they're all native to Florida. So I did some research and I had five different creatures, and we put it out to middle school students in Florida to vote for who they wanted to write these pieces about.

And 195 schools participated. Oh, wow. In the vote. What? So we've already got in incredible investment from the students, right? From the start. , so who, who knows? But if we can possibly start to just prize the door open a little bit and say, just one competition less, why don't you replace [00:50:00] this with a festival where you all do composing pieces and you all say, you all did 13 moons North in a beginner section, and all the students were in the auditorium and listened to what each band did with it.

And then went, wow, I didn't think about doing that. What was it about, what were you trying to say? You tell, tell us where you took that and just having that investment and having that experience of sharing creativity with others. Yeah. It's there's, yeah I just I really, I don't know how it's changed, but I certainly know, in Europe there, there is a level of competition that very much exists over there. And same here in Australia. But it's not the be all and end all. It's not. It's not, oh, you're gonna lose your job if you don't get a goal grading. It's not like that.

Certainly not like that here in Australia, it's something you do if you want to. You don't.

Dylan: Yeah. And it's and you're right. Like it's different for everyone. Like thinking about academia and, applying for tenure and how much those results [00:51:00] matter for that kind of thing.

It's like a completely different conversation and but anyway, so there's lots to think about. And also, I just want to continue to echo if there's also a sea of possibilities that Jodi just gave us, to think about beyond a results based competition. Anyway, moving on to our, sadly our last question.

We talked about how you think about your leadership philosophy. And this is a difficult question, but how do you think that your students would describe your leadership style or philosophy?

Jodie: Yeah, it's virtually impossible for for me to do that cuz I haven't really. students of my own, but I thought I'll talk about my most recent example.

Sure. Because that's probably good. Last year for six months, I helped out a local high school and I went and taught their year twelves, their final years. Their high school seniors, if you like, get through their final few months of music. They'd had their music teacher leave. And so I stepped in and there was a lot of fear [00:52:00] in these students.

I actually paired everything back to the point that we would start every class with a candle meditation. Just to try and calm down the energy, because if students are stressed, then they're not open to any kind of learning. They're completely shut down, not just students, adults, anybody. So I had to try and open them.

And, they re a lot of them really flourished to the point that I really found that one student in particular was very influenced by texture. Texture was really their thing. And it, to the point that I brought in, it was a freezing cold classroom. It was one of those demountables, do you have those?

It was a yeah. Temporary classroom thing. Really thin walls, freezing cold and would have blankets for the students to wrap themselves in. These soft, those really soft. Really soft, almost yeah, hold a cat is wrapped all around you or something, blankets. And this particular student, when they were wrapped [00:53:00] in this blanket and they could just rub this texture, they were suddenly switched on this student had issues in every class from year seven right through . He'd had all sorts of issues. And I said to all these staff members, have a blanket or something in your classroom that this student can rat themselves in, and it will just allow them to focus. They're all about texture.

Nobody took me up on it. They all thought that I was some kind of woo weird, I don't know, cra crazy alternative person. But it, it was really astonishing to me even how much that influenced that particular student. And at the end of it, I had two girls in the class. We went out for lunch when they'd done their exams and everything, and they said, Dr. Blackshaw, oh, you don't actually teach you, you don't teach the way other people teach. And the one girl said this and the [00:54:00] other girl said no, actually, I think Dr. Blackshaw does teach. Everyone else just tells you what to do.

Dylan: Yeah.

Jodie: and I said, I think that's the best compliment I've ever received.

thank you so much. Yeah. So I really do think that, I would like to think that students would think that I'm not afraid to be vulnerable. With them not afraid to be transparent. I'm bluntly honest. If I think something's not good, I will tell them Yeah. And I'll, but I'll tell them why with lots of information, but I'm not gonna give them 17 outta 20 when it's only worth seven.

So I will not sugar. anything, but I'll say, this is why. This is where you are. Look at these benchmarks. Look at this student. Look at this example. Here's another example on YouTube. Look at this. Look at this. Get yourself in context. And see where you [00:55:00] are. And let's look at ourselves in the mirror and be honest about how hard we've been working.

But I'm also very much outside the box. And I know that I know that I don't conform to regular teaching pedagogy. I know that I am different. And some principals love that and some principals don't. I am 100% invested in my students and they are the most important people to me in the world when they are my students.

Dylan: No that's beautiful. And just to think about how you as a teacher and leader, just the difference it makes to go to an individual student and the time it takes to learn about them and what the simple things that we can do. To actually help them become themselves and to participate and then ultimately become part of our community.

Because you've taken the time to empathize and to listen and to learn about them is a beautiful thing. And I'm just so grateful a anytime I'm trying really hard [00:56:00] not to show my bias while I'm talking to you. But you're you get out of anyone in my life. You get me fired up whenever I speak to you.

I'm like yes. And then I'll leave this room for a month and I'll be fired up.

But I am just so grateful for the time that you've taken to, to listen and to talk and to just share all of these wonderful thoughts that you have with us. And yeah, you're the best. Thanks so much for

Jodie: doing us. Oh, it's my pleasure, Dylan. I love talking about this stuff because, it's right, right up my alley.

Yeah. And it gives me great hope for the future if I think that our future leaders. are people like you.

Dylan: Oh, stop. Thanks, Jody.

## Jonathan Grantham Interview Transcript

Dylan: [00:00:00] Here we are for another exciting leadership podcast episode. I'm getting closer, folks, to a name. It's been, this is now the fourth one. At least now I'm calling it a leadership podcast. Today I'm really excited to be joined by someone I wish I was able to speak to more. But he's always incredibly busy changing the planet and making people's lives better.

And that is conductor Educator, an all around wonderful person. Jonathan Grantham. Welcome to the Mystery Leadership Podcast.

Jonathan: Hi Dylan. It's really exciting to be here and thanks for the invitation.

Dylan: Yeah, this is great. And I'm yesterday I was talking to Ramona Wi and I was talking to her. The list of people and how honored and excited I am for everyone to that I wanted to ask to say yes.

So I'm really happy that you could have some time to chat about an important topic. And I, we were talking off record about that list of people and why I chose them. And not [00:01:00] only was it our conversation on the other podcast that made me want to talk to you about this, but also just hearing your reputation from other people.

I remember talking to John Mackey about entering your band room and just feeling love. And that was one of the other reasons I really wanted to talk to you. So we'll start right at the beginning. And with my most academic sounding question, are you aware of the work of Robert k Greenleaf and his servant leadership model?

And if so, how does that impact your work?

Jonathan: I am aware of the concept of servant leadership, it's, I would say it's a little bit buzzy. It's a little bit of a buzzword. And for many years, it's something when I think about the idea of being a servant and then also being a leader, it felt convenient to just say that was something that felt true for me.

And I'm a little embarrassed to admit that I didn't fully understand that there was of course, a whole amount of research and thinking and writing and discussing on this. So I was not familiar with Greenleaf. And [00:02:00] was really thankful actually, that you front loaded this conversation with so many really great guiding questions for our talk today, because it allowed me to actually do some research and some reading and some reflecting on the questions.

And actually feel like I can say with a good degree of integrity that I do feel like I qualify as a servant leader in music education based on understanding green league's work a bit better.

Dylan: Yeah. And that, that was my understanding of it as well. Before all of this happened, actually, it was from a joint mutual friend of ours, Phil Vallejo, that I, yes.

That I came to understand that this even existed. But the thing is, especially in music education, the term, like you said it's used quite a bit, but I don't think it's often connected to Greenleaf. So it's been interesting to have these conversations with leaders that I identified some of these characteristics in.

And it, and everything's on a spectrum anyway, so if you, some days we're a servant leader, some days we're not. Yes. And that's fine. But what, or who has influenced your approach to leadership and maybe discuss how they've shaped your [00:03:00] approach to leadership and a couple of experiences.

Jonathan: What a joyful question this was to think about. The shoulders that I've, I stand on. I think my teaching and my leadership are an amalgamation of a thousand snapshots of different moments in time. And some of those moments have lasted longer than others. And so the people that really came to the surface for me immediately, one was my high school band teacher, Mr. Bob Parker. This is over 30 years ago now, that he was my high school band director. And he was a very transformational leader in our program. And really in my mind's eye, took the figurative ceiling off of the world that I lived in and showed me some possibilities beyond what I thought I knew was gonna be true for me.

And he inspired me to wanna become a high school music teacher. It was the way that he made each one of us feel, seen, valued, accepted, heard, understood. In our band room. , [00:04:00] I would just, I wanted more of that. And in wanting more of that, I thought, I want to be able to do this. And he did all of that while producing a really good quality musical experience.

Like we got to make great music with him. And so it was this really amazing mix of the affective and the cognitive coming together. Cause I think so often there's a misperception that in as educational leaders that we, it's almost is it gotta be one or the other? Do I get results or do I get relationships?

And I actually believe that it's a longer but far more satisfying path to bring the two together. And that's what Mr. Parker gave me. A second person that was really influential for me was my supervising teacher and my student teaching placement. Bill Monroe. He recently retired Director of bands at Midland High School in Midland, Michigan.



Okay. And annoyingly I student taught in a program that. ended up being a nice preview of the kind of school that I'm teaching at now at Amateur Valley in California. [00:05:00] So aside from just being grateful to had this little blueprint of a semester of teaching in a program that would ultimately seem a bit similar to where I wound up more importantly, it was getting to work with him. That was incredible. He had a great sense of humor and a great connection with his students, but it was also the willingness that he gave so much of his time, effort, and energy to me without really getting anything out of it in return, , it was this selflessness that was really powerful to reflect on and his ability to have high standards, but to also have great connections with his students was something that was a real imprint on me.

Dylan: Yeah. This, it's, I just wanna echo what you've said because now that I've been able to have, more than one conversation, more than two conversations about this, the idea of, as you said, developing the relationship and developing quality and, making our, helping our ensemble members become better people beyond just [00:06:00] playing well is something that is, is not a, either or but a yes.

And even in my own journey, on the opposite side of the spectrum, I remember when I st I remember when I spoke to you about initially being involved in research, it was, let's define success, let's change the world. And it was this big idea. And I've lived in a either or kind of things.

I, one way of doing things is wrong. And actually, I remember talking about competition with you, and you opened my eyes to the idea that. It isn't, doesn't have to be this evil thing that we can do it with e explaining. So anyway, I just wanna echo like that. When we're talking about all of this, all of these serv servant leadership things and serving our students, it's not with the absence of quality.

Jonathan: Yeah. And I think often about, the times that I, I do a good number of presentations at conferences around the idea of culture in classroom, because it's a topic that's really important to me and near, near and dear to my heart. And you [00:07:00] can feel the skepticism that will sometimes bubble up to the surface in a room around people's maybe discomfort with something that feels, too, quote unquote touchy-feely something.

That opens up the opportunity for connection and dialogue in a way that. Slow down the process, right? Like none of us have the time that we would wish for in, preparing our groups for any performance ever. We always feel like we need one more week of rehearsal. So there can be this there.

Yeah. There can be this like, there this kind of fear, this nervousness that to intentionally carve out rehearsal time to make space for these connections and the values and the conversations around who we are before what we do, can feel like it's gonna slow things down. And I'm just here to say that like over, many years now of teaching, it just, it hasn't

and it's resulted in a really fruitful path with a lot of external indicators of success for our program.

But number one is that internally, We're happy, healthy and whole as an organization because those [00:08:00] relationships come first. Yeah,

Dylan: absolutely. Very well said. Do you have any other influences that you would like to speak

Jonathan: about? One more. So many, but one more that was really substantial. And that was actually a colleague of mine at Amador Valley who retired last year.

Mark Hubbell. Mark and I worked at Amador for 20 years, and he had been teaching in the district for many years prior to that. So he taught over 35 years if I'm remembering correctly. We worked at Amador gr together for a long time, but he was a veteran teacher when he started there.

And something that I'm so thankful to Mark for is, he was such an example to me of longevity in the profession in a way where he kept a spark, he kept a joy, he kept a connection. And a curiosity in his teaching practice that went up through his last year. . And it was like such a great role model for me to have a veteran teacher that I trusted and respected, admired.

He put kids first. He [00:09:00] really had his students involved in decision making. He asked them for a lot of feedback and he asked them for their opinions on things. And especially in, in, my teaching practice has evolved a lot in my career. And I think I was a bit more of a control freak and maybe even a little bit more of a micromanager early on.

. And he helped me to see the benefit of really giving student voice a more prominent space in the room and in the program. So there was that part of it with the kids, but also this part of him just role modeling for me what it means to have heart and purpose and joy. To the finish line.

And really thankful to have had that because I know that's not always the case for me. Yeah. Many people at the ends of their careers.

Dylan: Yeah, no that's great. And it's been interesting for me, thinking about all of this and hearing the little response that I have cuz we've been just sharing a little bit of the research and on Facebook and stuff.

But to think about when we're thinking about topics like this [00:10:00] and leadership and our whys I would assume that is part of what kind of gave your colleagues some

longevity because in those really tough moments that we just want to give up whenever the administrative side and just the emotion of it all hits us.

We have something to lean back on and to get through. And it's really, , great to hear about all your different influences and I think about how lucky we are to have those kind of people in our lives and to have like your first teacher being someone you've identified as a transformational leader is great.

Cuz being a transformational leader and a servant leader, they've, there's a lot of shared parallels. And I think the only thing that's different in the definition is it's about the part of the, there's a much bigger push on the goal of being a transformation leader and kind of the outcome opposed to if you're a servant leader you're a servant first and those kind of ideas.

But yeah, no, it's, and it's evident now that whenever you, we look at your program to see those characteristics in [00:11:00] there, This is I really enjoy this question because it's it's a mixed bag for some people. But when you were an ensemble member, what were the different kinds of leadership styles that you were exposed to?

Jonathan: This was a really cool question because in reflecting on this, of course names and ensembles came to the surface, because I had immediate memories of what I felt like in those groups. And that was the thing, like, how did I feel in those groups? And that led me to understand I know that there's more than one style of leadership.

So I just looked up what different styles were. And so I actually had some vocabulary, and I love that you said as we were speaking, I think before the recording about maybe we're not always just one thing. And it was cool to see that I think I can have different.

Different labels attached to different parts of my leadership style and Right. So some memories that I had, one was is having some transformational leaders in front of me on the podium, and this idea of feeling like big vision, big dream, but it's something that we're all envisioning and dreaming [00:12:00] together.

Yeah. So with this transformational leader, it's like he's opening the door and inviting us to walk through first, and then we'll sort it out together. And there's something, especially as a young person that feels cool and insane. What? We're gonna do this thing and we've never done it before and you think we can do it.

And when I really drop back into being 16 year old John, and whoa, like this adult thinks that we can do this. , there was just something really exciting and inspiring about that. And I think that was part of the energy that kept me coming back to the band room day in and day out for three years of high school, was that transformational energy that was brought.

I had some different conductors in other parts of my life that were, I had different styles. I had a conductor who demonstrated what I, I learned as considered more of a transactional leadership style. , and this was probably the, maybe the least socially safe or comfortable ensemble that I was in because it was very clear [00:13:00] that there were rewards and there were rewards and punishments for achieving or not achieving at the standard that this conductor thought was appropriate.

And so there was a lot of fear. In the room about being called out, about making mistakes, about not being prepared. and that was, and the group performed at an incredibly high level, but that was such a difference. From what I experienced from my high school director. So it was almost like, keep your head down.

Don't don't stand out. Just, do your job to the best of your ability and hope that you don't get called. And that helped me to understand gosh, this is definitely not how I want to teach. This is not how I wanna lead when I'm in front of my own students. And then this was interesting.

There was another, a leadership style that I would've, in hearing the word would've thought, meant something different. Authoritative, which I think I might've confused with authoritarian . An authoritative is not authoritarian for anybody following along at home that like me maybe didn't, wouldn't have parsed out the nuance between those two words.

But had a director in [00:14:00] college, another director who had very much a follow me approach. Like a very clear vision for where things were going, but it didn't feel like it was being done to us. And it was just very much follow me and we're gonna do some pretty great things. And that felt safe and it felt okay.

There was a clear direction. We maybe weren't asked a whole lot, like what our opinions or thoughts were, but it also didn't feel like we were like silenced or afraid. So it was a, an interesting. Reflection exercise to consider these three very different leadership styles I had as a performer in different ensembles.

Dylan: Yeah. And it's always interesting to, I like this question because it, I don't like to be a big negative talk guy, but it's interesting to hear how, maybe not even negative, just a different approach maybe has influenced us as educators and as leaders and directors and all that. Cuz I, I think back you were talking about earlier on in your career being, micromanaging and those kind of things and who knows what, what those influences may have been.

But I remember just going to a conducting [00:15:00] workshop and working with a very famous conducting pedagogue and watching them work with the group and kind of my analysis of it and what went into that. And it was a lot of, that's not good enough. and like

that was where it led. I remember coming back to my little college, my little band, my little covid band, and trying this isn't good enough.

Oh, and let alone like the wonders of the plague that we live through me. Also instilling fear in my students wasn't helping. And it also wasn't who I was as a, as an educator. So it's really good to do what that, how you just did it to really reflect and think about how and why some of these things work and why they don't work and oh my gosh.

Jonathan: sorry. No. I was gonna say you inspired this funny memory of in 2007, so this would've been maybe like my fifth year at Amador and I had gone to the Allstate conference and I had sat in hours and hours of rehearsal watching a legend in our profession rehearse the top Allstate [00:16:00] band in California.

And of course, listening to them get these incredible results with the top musicians in the state. And took notes and then I came back to rehearsal the next. The next Monday and was trying to almost in some ways similar to you be this person who I am not. And, that's the kind of the fancy of youth is if I just change everything about myself, then I'll be more successful.

Okay. Probably some other things to unpack there. But what was funny is that my principal flute player raised her hand and was like just straight up. Mr. Grantham, were you like at a conference this weekend? Because your teaching is totally different. And I was like, oh. Rewind. I, it was very funny.

I was really appreciative of that moment of truth from my student because I went back to, I went back to regularly scheduled programming the next day and just figured out how to be a better version of myself rather than somebody else.

Dylan: Yeah. And I feel we can talk after. I feel like it might be the same person.

I think it's names to protect the innocent . Yes.

Dylan: [00:17:00] Yes. But no and jokes aside from that little story, but like you create a space in which your students feel comfortable enough to be able to say something like that to you. Yeah. which is

Jonathan: great. Instagram, I'm, I'll like straight up this.

Who are you? What is happening right now?

Dylan: No, that's great. And one thing I wanted to say, it was way back in the last question actually, about your colleague. And just the importance of the pattern that has

arisen during these conversations is the importance of empowering and creating agency within our students.

Because at some time, as much as we don't want it to happen, they will leave our presence and they need to be able to be creative and be able to make choices on their own. Yeah. So to hear your colleague and you cultivating that within your students is really great. Moving on back to more specific, Servant leadership things.

How are the following servant leadership characteristics as defined by Greenleaf exemplified in your work as a conductor slash educator? And I'll just reread [00:18:00] those for our listeners. Those are listening, empathy, healing awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, stewardship, commitment to growing people and building community.

And I hope I sent you the right list because I found out yesterday I sent someone else a different list.

Jonathan: We're good? Yes. I was like, yep. That looks like the list I looked at

So this not to sound like a broken record here repeating my gratefulness for you sharing these with me as I was reflecting on each of these characteristics. , it's a long list. . And I definitely had as I was writing and reflecting on each of the characteristics, I was feeling this resistance of oh, I don't wanna do this.

Because it's honestly I'll just it just felt like too much work. I don't wanna, I didn't like, just like real truth was like, I [00:19:00] probably know enough about this, but I don't really wanna think about it, and I push myself to, to go through it and to actually reflect on each one.

And I share that because what came out of it was an incredible amount of insight in just understanding the components and the characteristics of servant leadership and really feeling how resonant they were. And I love that listening is the first one that's, that comes up because certainly as music teachers, we have to be listening because.

In many ways, our bands will only play as well as we can hear them, so having an attuned ear to, the specificity of like flute pitch and balance within the low reed choir and, the choice of a percussion mallet, like we have to have a so many finely tuned opinions about everything we're hearing.

Acoustically from our ensemble. And I think if we're willing to just build a bridge in our mind, we can have that same level of attunement with the actual interactions with our students in rehearsal. As well. And when I think about listening, there's like certainly the listening that [00:20:00] happens when a student comes into the office and says, Mr.

Grantham, can I talk to you for a minute? I need some help on something. Just as a, just as a decent human, that's a skillset that I possessed without having to think about it through the lens specifically of servant leadership. . But when I think about what it means to stand in front of a group of 50 to 70 students at a time, or if I'm in front of the marching band, 300 students at a time, how does listening show up in those moments?

And it's the ability to have. The understanding of the environment and the energy in the room and to offer space for students to give their feedback, which can only happen if they feel safe to have their voices heard in front of the group and with one another. . And and I think something that's really important for us as educators to understand is, different than perhaps in certain corporate cultures, certainly than in relationships.

There's a power structure between teacher and student. And at the high school level, it's certainly an age difference. And so that's something I have to front load. I have to front load my privilege with my position just as the teacher in the room, as an older [00:21:00] person, I have to explicitly create a framework where the students feel that they can push back against that power dynamic by offering a different or contrary opinion so that the end goal is not to just quote unquote, make the teacher happy. And that is a nuance to listening that I think has gotten stronger for me as a characteristic of servant leadership. I think the next piece that came up was empathy and being an empathic person. , there's a great little short video that's set to animation. And it's a, an audio of Brene Brown doing a, it's maybe a three or four minute clip on the difference between empathy versus sympathy.

, I showed this to my student leaders every year, and it really helped me to understand the, just the, honestly, the terminology and the truth of what that word means. . And it's the ability to take a perspective that's the perspective of another person. And, when I was a younger teacher and I was much closer in age to the students, there was the [00:22:00] like cool uncle energy of oh, Mr.

G gets us he's 27 and he, there was more in the Venn diagram of our shared lived experiences that was certainly, I was not a teenager as a young teacher, but I was closer to them. In my, just where I was at in my world. And now I'm 48. . And so referring back to like high school from 30 years ago is just not a helpful empathic framework to have with the students, right?

Because it doesn't land for them. It feels novel and funny to talk about 1993. It doesn't feel relevant to them, . And but what I can do is I can say, I understand that you're anxious, you're afraid, you're worried, you're scared, you're stressed out. And while I don't know the exact reasons why all of those things are true for you right now, I know what it feels like for me to be in those feelings.

And so I can just understand where you're coming from. Tell me a little bit about why you're feeling that way. And then also understanding and empathy as a servant leader to

our students, like that we don't have to fix things for them unless they [00:23:00] explicitly ask for feedback or advice, right? That being a good empathic listener just means listening.

It just means hearing what they have to say and being there for them. .

Dylan: Yeah. And that can just it can mean the world of difference to a student whenever we do that. And we've continually had these conversations over the past couple of days while doing these interviews that like, we just never know.

We may think we know what our students are going through, but we have no freaking idea, , what's happening, or, why the student, when we go into a insecure conductor mode and why did that student look at me that way? And it's usually not a it's always not about us, but to think about and empathize.

It's above and beyond. And I think a major aspect of what a leader can do that is, it does take a little bit out of us each time we do it, but I think it's definitely worth it.

Jonathan: Yeah. And I think just this idea that, reflecting a bit on what you just said, that I think oftentimes when I get to see the very best of my students that may be a wonderful byproduct of the [00:24:00] environment or atmosphere that's created on the whole by the other students in the room and the teachers in the room. But then when I'm seeing students really struggle or have problems, that is oftentimes how they're showing up in almost every other part of their day.

If a student is, withdrawn or is maybe acting out a little bit or suddenly disruptive in a way that's different . I've found with some experience, it's helpful to recognize that's probably not being reserved specifically for me or my class.

And you're right. To be able to detach healthy detachment and to realize that it's not personal . And even if for some reason upon further kind of discussion, you discovered that maybe it is personal, that you don't have to react to it. Remembering Yeah. Like at least as a public school teacher, like you're the adult in the room, so you have to be managing yourself as an adult.

Yeah. The next thing that was on the list that was, is healing. And I just, I wanna share this was a really powerful one to think about because I have spent a long time in my career. [00:25:00] I'm a gay teacher. I'm out in my work. I'm out in my community. I'm out to my students and, but I was not for a long time.

And, I led a very compartmentalized life in a way that actually I think, hindered some connection, both personally and artistically. . And in the last 11 years of my life, I've



done a lot of slow study work around integrating and being whole more wholehearted in how I show up in my personal life and my work life.

And this is always tricky territory to get into because I don't wanna mislead your listeners into thinking that I don't have appropriate boundaries and healthy, there is healthy compartmentalization, but as creatives, as conductors, as people who need to inspire artistry and musicianship for me I found that com compartmentalization, that kind of living in, one part of my life segmented from the other was actually hindering my ability to be as effective as I could be. And in reflecting back on the last decade or so? That healing component has been really [00:26:00] helpful because I've been able to model I think more transparency.

I've been able to demonstrate like what it means to show up as your whole self, and that I am willing and able to accept students exactly as they are when they walk in the door, because I'm able to accept exactly who is who I am when I walk in the door. And that's just been a necessary bridge for me.

And the ability, I don't think of my, myself, I don't have a savior complex, so I don't walk into the room every day thinking you're gonna save kids. But there is this idea that you just never know what it means to show up as yourself. And then how that might just be a mirror that a kid can hold back up to themselves and say, all right, I think I can do this today.

Yeah. And I know that's true because I've had the gift of students come back time and again. To share with me the difference that just being fully integrated, present, and wholeheartedly available as a teacher has made in their lives. Yeah.

Dylan: No ab Absolutely. And thank you for talking about that compartmentalization.

I can't say the word this morning. It's [00:27:00] a mouthful. Yeah. Cause it's really important cuz I think when we talk about being vulnerable a lot of the time people just assume that's I'm sharing every aspect of Yes. My life. Yeah. And it's very much not that professional boundaries, as you say are there and must be there.

But and to think about, you talked about the gift of hearing from your students whenever your authentic self. We've talked about it and every time I see someone from that chapter of Horizon lean forward that, that you were part of, I like hugged them and I thank them because it, it like being your authentic self and sharing that with the world has gone even beyond your classroom.

I think. And it's certainly impacted me and who I am as a, as an artist and a conductor now. an educator and the list could go on. But yeah, no the healing part is I know

everyone has it in every field, but I love what we can, what the possibilities that we have as a music educators and what we can do in

Jonathan: that.

And the ability to connect through the music to build those relationships, right? Yeah. To be a leader through the art that we get to create.[00:28:00] I just finished a rather powerful rehearsal cycle on give us the stay. By David Maslanka and what a story of catharsis through music that, that music brings.

And I don't I may, this won't be the last time I referenced Brene Brown, but Right. She has this term that she I learned from her, which is called flood lighting. Because people will, that to be vulnerable means that you're just oversharing, that you're putting people in an uncomfortable spot because you're being truthful.

Truthful. , I'm putting that in quotes. And what you're doing is just making people uncomfortable because you're oversharing. And so I love what you said about like how you can be whole and integrated and still have boundaries and that you can share in a general way around the empathy of feelings or maybe how, what the music moves in me when I'm talking about maslanka.

I can talk about the catharsis of healing. I can talk about the, the tension and the discord that can happen in our lives sometimes without needing to go into like the details of, different parts of my [00:29:00] life that inspired those thoughts. , there's a way that you can put those conversations back on the students and make it about them.

And how they might have a point of understanding to, to enter their own space around feeling in the music. and you're the, you're the springboard. But the details don't have to be, you don't have to involve the details for that to be a helpful

Dylan: path. Yeah, absolutely.

Yeah. Cuz so often, I find myself in these situations sometimes where, , those famous quotes of old conductors being like, you won't understand until you go through it yourself. Yeah. But there's usually something that a student can connect to in some way. And maybe it's not someone cheated on someone and my whole life's, but it, there's probably some feeling there and it's a, it's good to explore.

Yeah. What are your thoughts on awareness?

Jonathan: Spidey sense, right? can you have a spidey sense in a . . . And are you able to take the temperature of a moment with a student with your group, with a small group of [00:30:00] students? and I love in, in reading Greenleaf's thinking on awareness.

This idea of it being a healthy creator of disruption and not a giver of solace. Like I had never thought about it in those terms. That awareness, when we're aware, it gives us information to then disrupt what's happening potentially. And I think as educators, like there's this literal music educators, there's this little literal awareness of, wow, like the woodwinds aren't in tune right now.

Like now I'm aware I need to disrupt what's happening in order to fix that. Because when you know it you respond to it hopefully. But there's also this more significant relational component, I think, many of us as music teachers have been in these rehearsals where we're like, we're really digging in on something and it feels like the law of diminishing returns perhaps, the, maybe there's something, for my students, I'll always ask are college admissions coming out this week? Or do you all have an AP gov test today? Is everything all right? Is something going on? Because you'll just feel when you're with, when you're in front of people regularly, you can feel those shifts and it's [00:31:00] this ability that, that awareness takes you out of your own bubble, and offers you the ability to serve and lead your students by just having a temperature on where things are at in a rehearsal. . . And again, I think I, I'm really focused a bit more on kind of the standing in front of the group element of that, because I think in conversations one-on-one, that's just being a good listener and being observant when you're with another person.

. . . But this awareness when you're in front of the group is really pivotal because it lets you know when to dig deeper, when to move on, when to throw out the plan and start over. When to lean in, when to lean back. . .

Dylan: Yeah. There, there was a moment a couple weeks ago where I had felt. I had felt something in the room, but someone else in the room didn't feel it and felt the need to say it, and that, the musician ended up being offended and all of these things.

So that those spidey senses, whenever you feel them are, they're moments of not only awareness, but self-awareness that what you feel [00:32:00] with within yourself and anyway.

Jonathan: Yeah. I and you're helping me to remember even how many times I have a lot of felt love and respect from my students.

, that I sense when I step onto the podium, and that's a responsibility and a feeling from them that I take great care with. But a challenge with that is they sometimes don't want to. contradict me or they don't want to right there. And as, as I spoke earlier, that ability

to make sure that you've got the boundaries of that, that the communication and the, with your students is clear enough that they feel like that they could raise the question or ask.

But the kids I teach are so polite. And sometimes they'll just let, they'll let it be wrong because they're like he must have a reason, so we're just gonna follow him. And there have been many times where I have actually learned not to quote Taylor Swift, but it's me.

It's me. I'm the problem. It's me where when something's not going well, my awareness, my [00:33:00] spy sense is to stop and say, what did I just tell you? And they were like, you said measure two 19, but we're supposed to be at 2 24. I was like, oh, okay. So that was my error. It's that awareness to actually understand okay.

The kids are so trusting that they're even willing to go with you to the mistake and to try to be such good like students. So you again have to have that awareness to stop and say, something's not right here. Did I give you bad information? Yeah. And like literally four times out of five deal. And they're like, yeah you told us the wrong thing.

I was like, okay.

Dylan: Yeah. And it goes back to that power dynamic that we were talking about at the beginning, setting up that space, but the fun of it all. Yes. And speaking of power dynamics, thoughts on persuasion.

Jonathan: I read that and I was like, if I'm not being persuasive, am I even doing my job right?

And I was kinda laughing about that a little bit because I think the power of persuasion can lean a little culty if we're not wielding that tool, in a really [00:34:00] healthy way. And when I think about persuasion, I think about how that gets to influence the culture of the room when you're able to.

Be this like pebble in the river that allows the water to flow in a slightly different direction as opposed to a dam blocking all of the water. Like you don't get to go to the next place until I open everything up. And persuasion is being the pebble, not the dam. And I love this notion of creating an environment where we're going to celebrate these victories in class on a daily basis.

I, I lovingly call my students the am adorable because they are, they're so sweet. And we make opportunities in every class period to find ways to celebrate individual and section accomplishments, it's interesting having taught now two generations of students. Teaching all, I'm a, I'm Gen Xer and so teaching a whole generation of millennials and now, many years into Gen Z, something I'm really noticing with the kids I'm teaching

now is they don't [00:35:00] really wanna get ahead on an individual level unless the group's getting ahead together.

, like there is very much a protection of it's not about me, it's about us. And I think to tap into that general generational zeitgeist is really helpful because band is hardwired in that we, not me, paradigm. And so this idea that I would stop in a class and say, oh my gosh, has Tyler ever played his solo that well before?

And everybody's yeah, Tyler clapping up for Tyler. We'll be on the marching band field and I'll call out like a freshman flute player who nailed a set for the first time. And I'll just say can we clap it up for the, so and so in the flute section. Like she totally crushed it and 300 kids on the field will start clapping for that student.

This is the positive persuasion of being the pebble in the river where you get to help shape where the waters flow. By, by reflecting back to the students what's actually important. And that is celebrating those daily victories. Music can be a grind, it can be hard to know if we're getting better at something.

And there is such a need to always be focused on like shorter, longer, faster, louder, quieter, like all of [00:36:00] these. And we need to do that. Yeah. That's a part of the job. But if you're not balancing that with this persuasive energy of can you believe how well she did that? Listen to how well they just played that and the kids get a chance to support and grow together with that persuasive energy.

I think that's really at the heart of a lot of what makes our classrooms feel special. , that's

Dylan: beautiful. I love that pebble analogy. That's great. I'm gonna steal that. Thank you.

Jonathan: I like full disclosure first time I've ever used it, so I'm gonna steal it. Oh, really?

Myself. Yes. Wow.

Dylan: Tm. Okay. That's great. Maybe can it be possible to put conceptualization and foresight into a similar vein?

Jonathan: Yeah. I think so I like this idea of as a servant leader, if we're able to conceptualize it means we're able to dream. And this is something that was a very clear gift from my high school band teacher, Mr.

Parker. And I am a dreamer and I. It's funny, like I'm a planner and I can be very careful, but I also have this [00:37:00] very kind of spontaneous and tempestuous energy that's oh, let's do the thing. And really leaning into this ability to be spontaneous in a moment.

But I think where conceptualization is really important as leaders for our programs is especially like working with young students, is if we don't show them that something big might be possible, who will. And I think because we have so many years of relationships with the kids, I teach them over so many years there's this really cool and unique ability to really help them to dream about what we could do.

Whether it's reaching for a piece of music that didn't seem like it would be possible for us, it's maybe the opportunity to have some of these marquee performances. When we got ready to do the first Midwest, I just jumped into the process. Had I had, had I, quote unquote done everything by the books I probably skipped several steps that I should have taken in that process.

But I just was like I wanna make this happen and I wanna see if we can do this and get the kids excited and on board and we did it. And I think that's like [00:38:00] the ability to dream big. And when you can share that energy with your students, they're gonna be there dreaming along with you. And then even cooler is when you say, what else could we dream about?

And then you ask them what they think is possible. . That's

Dylan: great. I love, and then in a lot of your answers, the, your willingness to go to your students and ask, and for their honesty and what their dreams are. Yeah, I'm a big dreamer too, almost to my own chagrin, but No.

Jonathan: that's great.

And I think that brings the foresight part, this idea of, and one of the, one of the blessings and curses of being at Amador so long is that I feel like I have this foresight to say, okay, I've done this before. I know where the pitfalls are. I understand whether it's a piece I'm doing for an additional time or a trip we've taken or a venue we've performed at even like maybe a conflict or a moment of tension that I encounter with a student.

But the permutation on foresight as a teacher in one place for so long is that I have to remember that while I have taught 23 years of high schoolers, A [00:39:00] kid's only having one junior year in the program. And so even though I have the foresight for how everything could possibly go and probably in that choose my own adventure situation, one of those possible things is what will happen because that's experience.

What I need to do first is stop and say to my upperclassmen leaders like, Hey, we're at this crossroads. What do you think could go wrong here? What do you think are possible outcomes? What do you think are unintended consequences of decisions that we might make? And even though I could just give them all of those answers because I've lived it.

, that's foresight. The ability to let the kids go first with their thinking and their ideas. One, almost always, I'm gonna, they're gonna see something that I'm not. even with the gift of foresight. But two, it lets them know that their voices matter. And I'm not just saying, this is why that won't work, or this is where that could go wrong, or this is what we need to be thinking about.

And more often than not, in those moments of foresight, the student leaders and the students are able to predict or broadcast the thing that probably would [00:40:00] come up. And then we're able to talk about solutions. And if for some reason they go left and I was thinking they would go right, we can get back on the same path, but it's always starting from where they thought we were at.

Which I think is really helpful when you're thinking about leadership with your kids.

Dylan: Yeah. That's great. And cuz I was thinking at the beginning of this, the foresight conversation like how do younger educator. Develop that, but to hear how you're how you utilize it with students and not just dictating and not just managing, but but, , being a teacher and allowing that that those errors to happen if they do happen.

Yeah. Or maybe, and then correcting and being a bit of a pebble .

Jonathan: I I will tell the kids, I'm like, I am not a helicopter band director. Yeah. I am gonna let you fall flat on your face. I'm gonna let, we're gonna play this past where it's comfortable. If we're site reading a piece and it's falling apart it's certainly, we know when to bail and to stop.

But I am willing to let them experience safe discomfort as a part of the process, because I want them to know that in those moments of safe discomfort, like they can make it [00:41:00] through. Okay. And and that's the foresight to say, I know that this will be okay in the end, and this is healthy failure.

Yeah,

Dylan: absolutely. How about stewardship?

Jonathan: I think stewardship. Looks for me like this analogy of a tree. In our program, we talk about the tree and the life cycle of the tree. And stewardship is the ability to have

people understand through some direction what purpose or function they serve to the greater good and the larger organism.

And I tell our students that the ninth graders are like the roots. And if we don't tend to the roots, if we don't fertilize the soil and take good care of nurturing the roots, the tree won't grow. The sophomores serve as the trunk. They've grown out of the ground. They're sturdy and they provide support for the branches.

The juniors are the branches. They provide the reach and the and the blanket and the seniors are the. And they provide the coverage and the shelter for the root base. And then when the students graduate, the leaves fall to the [00:42:00] ground to nurture and grow the root system. So there's this really cool metaphor of the tree as the life cycle of stewardship in our program.

And so the students understand that when you're a ninth grader, you just need to soak up the nutrients you need to take in everything that's being given to you so that you can grow into the next portion. And and that metaphor really helps the students to understand in a very like, physical way, what it looks like to be a steward of their time in the program.

, no.

Dylan: So many great analogies today, and it's really important to do what you're saying and let students know that what they're doing isn't for nothing and they're not just a cog in a machine. I love the organicness of the tree. That's great. Yeah. Yeah. One of my favorite ones commitment to growing people,

Jonathan: this is one of my.

I think one of the most fun parts about being in music education is this balancing act of students showing up perfectly whole, exactly [00:43:00] as they are walking through the door, broken parts, messiness, all of it. And we celebrate and we honor and we grow that individual. But then also, how do we come together with a degree of uniformity?

Band for me is this really beautiful mix of like individualism and conformity, right? Sound the same, be the same, sit the same march, the same tongue, the same finger the same. Everything the same. And also tending to. The wild and beautiful uniqueness that, particularly that is the teenage brain, right?

where they're just, they're trying to learn so much about who they are and how they fit in and how they don't wanna fit in. And one of the most explicit things I do in helping this commitment to growing people is letting them know that the band room is a bubble and it's a bubble that travels with us wherever we go.



It's this idea that when they walk through the band room door, I want them to feel that they can take down their teenage armor. , they can leave that at the door. They can show up exactly as they are. They can [00:44:00] take a breath. And that they don't have to hide or pretend to be something they're not, they don't have to be defensive.

They don't have to be worried about judgment or rolling eyes or sneaking comments around them. And so that for me is growing people. It's growing people by making sure that they have the tools to know how to just show up as themselves. That it's a space where they can walk through the door and be who they are.

, those band room walls that we all teach in they hold a lot of stories of each one of our kids. And I think those stories are in the DNA of the buildings that we teach in.

Dylan: Yeah. That's great. The bubble comes with us cuz I'm a I with a lot of. Come coming up with an idea for research.

It was, it, a lot of it led to this idea that a lot of the students we have, even at the collegiate level, not necessarily gonna go on to be professional musicians or music educators or things to, to think about what we can, the lessons and the safety and what we can give to our students, as you said is really important.

I love that. I'm gonna say this after every time you answer anything [00:45:00] I love that. I love that. That's great. That's great. And then last but not least building community.

Jonathan: I see this as an even more, I'm feeling really charged up about this as a clear directive for this next iteration of my teaching.

, post remote learning. I'm clear about saying post remote learning rather than like post pandemic or post covid, because we're just living with those realities now. So it's post remote learning, and. in, we are living in an age of an increased disconnection.

And this is not gonna turn into old man ranting, get off my lawn energy here, because I don't think as adults, we're living in a completely connected world that is different from the disconnected world. Sometimes we'll talk about students being in. I live in a disconnected world just like my students.

I'm not navigating the pressures and realities of adolescents in that disconnected world. . So that's where the big difference is at. So I'm not coming at this through the lens of I've got something figured out, but I want my students to catch up too. [00:46:00] It's like we're all figuring it out together and in.

Increasingly disconnected world, we create more and more individualized paths for ourselves. And this is something I've noticed tangentially, just even asking the students like, how many of you watched this show? Or How many of you have heard this song? Or, and maybe 20 years ago, there was more of literally just a shared cultural experience around things happening because there were fewer things to individualize.

Fewer platforms, fewer apps, fewer sources and I don't even think that customization is in and of itself inherently problematic. But it really brings to the surface the importance of band, bringing communities together because it forces you to deal with the messy joy of people. , you can't, when you're talking with a person, you can't like scrub 40 seconds ahead.

This part of the conversation's boring. I need to go to the, okay, something's happening now. You can't just close out the app on a person when you're done with them and move on to the next person. There's these ways that we're really having to remember post remote learning with our students.[00:47:00]

What it means to like, literally just be connected and with other people. And it's interesting because. Since, in the year and a half since we've been back fully in person, at least in California, I have found a healthy return to the students being able to talk and engage with one another. That feels on the whole pretty normal, but the level of kind of connection and engagement and sustained concentration being in like a large group setting, that's a muscle that's a little atrophied. And so that building of community is something that I'm going after with even greater fervor post remote learning because I'm seeing that there's a need for us to just intentionally have more shared experiences that we can draw on and that's baked into the recipe of a band rehearsal.

Yeah,

Dylan: absolutely. And it's, I hadn't thought of, what you mentioned about the pandemic and how that kind of has grown our, grown in a way, grown our community in, in a way that, as you said, we can turn off and on and scrub through. And this was something that Greenleaf was talking about way back in the seventies.

That was the, this whole [00:48:00] point of building communities, he noticed organizations getting so big that we were losing that sense of community that we've had since the, literally the beginning of time. Yes. When we lived in, in, in smaller groups and things. So it's important that and I'm so happy to hear like your willingness to want to create those situations and experiences for students to, to have that.

It's really nice. Here's some more negative, could you outline some of the challenges institutions, structures in general create that make ideas of servant leadership challenging.

Jonathan: I think it piggybacks on the conversation we were just having about building community, and that is the inherent inclination for people to isolate.

, when I think about the number of times in a day that I'll just like go inward to look at my phone or maybe make a choice to do something that is not connecting with another person whether that's a partner [00:49:00] or a student or a colleague, it's something that I'm tracking in myself as an adult.

And so I think this, I think one of these big challenges that we face right now is just very intentionally working to build greater connection in a time when there's such a natural inclination to isolate and individualize. And I think when I consider. , the stresses that young people are facing.

There's understandably not a lot for them to maybe inherently be optimistic about. , when you think about, pressing issues of our time, climate change and climate crises and geopolitical things and the prevalence of, misinformation and it's just, there's, there are a lot of things battering at their walls that say, I'm just gonna just zoom in here on this thing that I know can bring me some moment of sanity, serenity.

Of happiness. And so because music and band are a place where people have to literally be off their isolation [00:50:00] track and they have to be aware of something that's happening around them. I've always talked about awareness and building these sensitivity to the thing that's happening around you.

But even this last month in my classes has been a reinforcement of the act of breathing for the people around you. That's not a new concept to my teaching. , but it feels like some of these things have taken on a fresh lens because it's about doing the thing together. And so I think that for me is the challenge.

It's coming back to this idea that we need to move away from isolation into connection. And I'll just wrap up that thought by saying the joy of being in education is, it's a teachable skill. , we don't have to just like, sit with our arms crossed and grumble kids these days. And we don't have to just think this is just how it is now.

And I know that I'm not I'm not trying to be grandiose here. Like I'm not trying to say I'm like saving humanity with this concept, but I do think in the little corner of the universe that I occupy with my students, there's a chance to just create connection in a way that feels like a healthy draw away from the desire [00:51:00] to isolate.

And that, for me, I think is one of our biggest challenges that we face right now.

Dylan: Yeah. It's funny you say you don't, I'm not claiming I'm saving humanity, but you are , that domino effect that we have with a student and how that goes to another student,

how that goes to their students, if they ever have students and the people that interact, like it's a, it's an amazing thought that that a couple conversations ago I talked to Matthew Arou about and cuz you know he's very inspirational when he speaks.

But anyway, there was this idea of that, and. Yeah. This idea of isolation. I think about it even when I go home, like the, as soon as I open the door, as much as I love my partner, it's not necessarily the first thing. I'm just like, okay, I need to, I just need to zone out. Leave me alone. And and how we can do that and build community and foster those ideas is really great.

I guess going to the last question, which is a difficult question, I've discovered for the individuals that I'm asking, but I'm gonna ask it anyway. How would your students describe your leadership [00:52:00] style and or philosophy?

Jonathan: Being an annoying overachiever, I actually asked my students. I actually yesterday sent an email to my three drum majors, okay.

And explained that I was doing this podcast, and I said, I promise I'm not just fishing for false praise here. And because I was curious to know how they would describe it, and it was really affirming to know that I'm not full of BS. That what the students reflected back to me was in line with the things that I believe are true.

And I'll just share a few key adjectives that came up. Revolves around the students taking feedback seriously. Adapting methods, making students feel comfortable voicing their opinions, cooperation, inspiration, accountability, values, bringing personal connections. And building community teaches with transparency, kindness, and encouragement.[00:53:00]

Wow. And to know like that for me is the greatest affirmation that the things that I hold as true. are also clear to my students when they reflect it back to me. . And that's not that's not something I'm like asking my students on the regular, like, how do you see me? But this afforded an opportunity to just ask.

So I wasn't guessing because I didn't wanna just presume or assume or hope how they saw me. And so this was just the best affirmation that like the commitment to this work is something that is noticed by the students. And it's appreciated.

Dylan: Oh, that's great. That's great. Absolutely. You're, you joked about being overachiever.

You are the first guest that actually served, did a little survey. But no, that's great. And. I want to thank you for taking the first of all, for just taking the time to have these, this conversation. And one thing I wanna point out is when we were going through those list

of characteristics and how when you started, you said, I really didn't want to do [00:54:00] this.

And that's exactly the feeling that. Whenever we're doing this kind of work, we need to push against what you did. Yes. Yes. And the way that you talked about it is the exact way I think that we should all consider looking inwardly. Cuz that's probably one of the biggest points of this whole servant leadership thing.

And I don't really care if it's servant leadership or not, but just being able to look in inwardly and be honest with your authentic self of what you're doing is true to you. Is it honoring your students and all these things. So just that alone is, was an inspiration to me to hear you talk about that and be so transparent and honest about it.

But thank you so much once again for taking the time to have this conversation. I can't wait. I can't wait. I'm so excited to share these conversations with the world with a gift because you are giving. No, I'm not giving anything. My, my wonderful guests and interviewees are giving it. But this is the opportunity, cuz this isn't going to die on some dusty old dissertation, but it will hopefully be able to be heard by lots of people.

Yeah. So thank you so much for your inspiration, your [00:55:00] wisdom and everything that you've been able to offer today and continue to offer to the world that we live in.

Jonathan: Thanks for the opportunity and the invitation, Dylan. It means a whole lot.

## Ramona Wis Interview Transcript

Dylan: [00:00:00] Okay, here we are for another installment of yet again a podcast I don't have a name for yet, but it will come to me folks. Don't worry. , it will come to me. I might talk to our guest today after and see if we can come up with some, but good. I am really excited today to be joined by conductor, educator, author, and someone who probably has at least a thousand other hats.

Dr. Ramona Wis, welcome to whatever this podcast is.

Ramona: Thank you for inviting me. I'm really excited to talk about a lot of these topics.

Dylan: Yeah. No I'm really excited. And as we were talking off off record sometimes when you're putting the list of people together for these things there's there's a list, but then there's the list.

And you were on the list where I was like, oh I don't know. Okay. I don't know if she's gonna say yes or not, but I'm so grateful you have just a little context for the listener. Dr. Whis has written a book that is well known. The conductor is Leader, [00:01:00] principles of Leadership applied to Life on the Podium.

And it is one of the books that kind of inspired me, lit the spark to everything that we're doing right now for this doctoral work. That's why I'm really excited to be speaking with you today. , I know part of the answer of the first question. , but I'll ask it anyway because I'm propagated too.

Sure. Are you aware of the work of Robert k Greenleaf and his servant leadership model? And if so, how does that impact your work?

Ramona: It's a, it was a wonderful first question when you sent these to me in our email communication. Absolutely. I know about Robert k Greenleaf. I was directed to his work in the mid nineties, and it was by a colleague of mine who was actually my next direct boss, so to speak.

But he was not a music person. He was in speech and communication, but he was fascinated with leadership and he was fascinated with the idea that conductors are leaders because he , he was, he [00:02:00] loved the arts and so forth. And he would send me news articles and so forth. And at one point he said, I don't know if you know about.

Greenleaf writings and I didn't. And I will show you visual aid. This is probably the first book I read this this little monograph. And I was fascinated by it because I think, like you, when we talked a little before this official interview began, I was seeing things

around me that worked and didn't work. And I was seeing things in my own teaching and conducting that worked and didn't work. And I was trying to figure all that out. And when I began to read Greenleaf's writings, it made complete sense to me because , it was very practical on one hand, and it was very much of the spirit.

And I, we'll talk about that I'm sure through our time today, but when I use the word spiritual, I don't necessarily mean religious. And I wanna make that distinction straight out.[00:03:00] I read everything I could by Greenleaf, and at that time there were emerging other authors who were using his work to write their own.

I attended the Greenleaf conferences that were held annually at that time in Indianapolis every year. I wound presenting a couple of years, which was Oh, wow. Really interesting. Because you'd have a, I had a room full of people attending and I was really the only musician there. . . But it was really interesting to be in that environment of people thinking about some concept of servant leadership.

And so how does it impact my work? It really made me see everything I was doing through a slightly different lens, and I had to keep asking myself, what's my intention? What would people see if they walked into my rehearsal? , what would they see? See in my [00:04:00] actions, my speech, my demeanor, would they think that I'm thinking about them or myself or the music or some of both.

So it really just changed the way I saw everything. That I did, the teacher conductor and human. Yeah. And really, as cuz you've, excuse me, read the book, it's really based on this idea of servant leadership. And I didn't call it servant leader for a lot of reasons. One because I thought leader was broader and would grab more people.

But I also think, and this is probably a side discussion as well the phrase servant leader is misunderstood often and can really put people at arms distance when they don't understand what it. .

Dylan: Yeah, no, absolutely. Yeah. No, those are, that's a side conversation. Uhhuh, , the conversations I've had with Coral faculty here, actually with Jaylan talking about the term servant leadership and what that might mean if it's not understood, like you just said, to [00:05:00] different maybe historic groups that have, maybe the word servant has different meanings than what we're speaking about here. . So it's certainly something to be aware of.

And also something that is in my I made sure to put a section in my literature review to talk about that.

Ramona: And I'm sure that you've, read lots of leadership books and I can show you visual a here in my home studio. Yes. So this bottom row , get my light on is all leadership.

Oh, wow. And the next row is mostly leadership books and some have music to do with them. So there are a lot of really fine books. And I think it's Jim Collins's book, good to Grade, I think he calls it Level Five Leaders. So there are other ways to phrase this idea, and I think that might be part of the work that you're doing as well.

So we could talk about that.

Dylan: Yeah. And yeah it's, I'm always interested. to talk about this. Yesterday, the conversation I had with the guests they also knew of it. And they were known for applying greenleaf's ideas to their [00:06:00] teaching. . But for the most part, the, when I speak to people about it they have never heard of it and, or at least not Greenleaf.

. Which I always find interesting because it's just, it's, when I read it I know he already said this, but it's just like, why? This is amazing, this is great. And and it's really, it's fun to hear you talk about, it not being a kind, it's not a musical leadership model by, by any means, but And I think that's a good thing.

I think it's important to bring clear ideas before we start applying it to to what we do. Sure. One, one thing I want to hear about is maybe what or who has influenced your approach to leadership and maybe discuss how they have shaped your approach and maybe some experiences if you've had them.

Ramona: Sure. We'll stay on Greenleaf. This is not an order of preference, but because because we've been talking about Greenleaf and his ideas in terms of the big picture, what servant leadership is and isn't, but some of his very specific ideas, his distinction between [00:07:00] leadership and management, which when I speak to people and when I teach classes or workshops, is one of the things that really opens people's eyes because we don't think of our lives as conductors.

with that division, but they're also very melded. So those ideas of greenleaf, one of the things that has become almost more important than anything else of his writings for me has been his work on foresight. And I believe his languaging is foresight is the central ethic of leadership. I think that's his direct way of phrasing that.

And I have been very much impacted by that because I think it's well beyond planning. . And it's really about honoring the process and the people that you're with by spending the time to think through what you're going to do, based on what [00:08:00] your history and experience are and what is likely to happen so that when things happen that you cannot predict.



, like a global pandemic that you still have done a lot of work that will continue to honor the way in which you work with people. . So again, I could talk about Greenleaf and all of that for a long time, and I know we'll come back to 'em. But I consider myself a price follower, and I say it that way rather than Christian, because I think Christian becomes a religious statement to many people.

I have always wanted to model to my best human capacity the teaching and the life of Christ because again, big picture person on a mission on this planet, very intentional. A great teacher and compassionate and leading with love, and I think all of [00:09:00] those things, Are worth modeling after, regardless of a person's, desire to be affiliated with a religion or not. Those are larger, really spiritual meaning, again, of the spirit ways of thinking about what we do. And lastly, and probably most recently, in the last 12 or so years, all of these, by the way, in my thinking, overlap and are connected.

I'm really different versions of all the same thing. And that is to say my work in yoga I'm a certified yoga instructor at the 200 hour and the 500 hour level, which is the advanced certification. And in those trainings, which were very rigorous and took over about a five year period for me you deal with history and philosophy and Sanskrit and the obvious things like alignment and so forth but you spend time understanding what is fundamentally [00:10:00] a part of yoga. Cuz it's an eight limbed practice. . And it's these ethical principles called the yamas and the niyamas. And there are 10 of them together. And they're, again, they're really pretty basic. They talk about just how you deal with other people and how you deal with yourself and Right.

All of these overlap. And so those three areas work for me in concert as I live my life.

Dylan: Ah, I know. That's great. And you were actually, I think, the first person to speak about not necessarily your grade six teacher who is an influencer, which I'm sure you have . But to think about

I, I guess what I'm trying to say is it's a really great thing to go outside of what we are used to. So going outside of our music bubble and reading more and exploring more, and bringing the humanity [00:11:00] of the world into what we do, rather than trying to just read it through our filter that we've already been trying to read through.

And they, people have read through it and they have their own understandings of it. But no that's really beautiful. Every

Ramona: one of these, to me, takes me down another path. So I'm purposely trying to end in timely ways because I could just, I could take every one of these talk for

Dylan: 20 minutes.

If you wanna talk more you're more than welcome, .

Ramona: This is probably gonna come up cuz I know the questions you're gonna be asking, but I'll just say this much so that because you raised it, your less common. Two things. One is I think I have learned about myself that I am a connector.

, and actually this was brought to my attention a couple of years ago when I started blogging for Coral Net. Okay. Which is the online resource resource for A C D A. And I blog under the conductor as Yogi with the intent at that time because it was June of 2020 and we all know how that was at that point in time.

, trying to bring larger [00:12:00] vision to what we were trying to do and continuing to do and to encourage and so forth. And I was on a podcast interview with the people from Coral Net and the interviewer said, you're a person who makes connections. . And I thought, yeah, I guess I am.

Because even in my dissertation work, I was making connections between what we did in teaching and learning. And metaphor and physical metaphor, which is what I did my work on. And then these connections between what we do as conductors and leadership, and then the connections with yoga. So that appears to be something that's hard wired into me.

The other thing that came to mind as you were just speaking is this idea that we go through our school years, including our college years and our post-college years, with a lot of pressure on me. I have to show what I can do. [00:13:00] I have to take tests, I have juries, I have to show people I know how to conduct.

And it's always me focused. And I think the challenge becomes when do you just magically flip a switch and say, oh, it's not about me, and now I'm going to be a servant leader, And that's, I think, the challenge. So unless you get people in the educational system, who are teaching with an other's mindset and have a, have an ability to show people how it's a both and.

Is what I'd like to say. Not an either or. It's a both. And then people are never going to experience it, which means they're never going to understand it, which means the old model is gonna continue.

Dylan: Yeah. And this was way back in your first answer, but, and you just mentioned it now, but the idea that this servant leadership thing is not, it's not a switch.

And nor is it a switch that you turn on when you're on a podium or when you are in front of a classroom. It is a, as [00:14:00] cheesy as it sounds, it's a way of life. It's how I am

when I go home to my family at the end of the day. And then it's how I am when I come back in to the building at the beginning of the day.

So it, yeah, it is I've found. I found it in my own process to think about, how I can spread the gospel, so to speak about this. One question I wanted to ask, cuz you brought up your faith. Yeah, did you have do you think maybe even before you knew Greenleaf was servant leadership just the idea of Jesus as servant, a servant leader in your mind?

Ramona: Actually, no. Okay. I think I've had people in my life who demonstrated that. . I've been fortunate that way. But, I was raised in a religion, and followed that and just did the stuff that you do because you don't know any different. And I think in let's see, I have to think about the timing of all.

I think actually about the same time I learned about Greenleaf, I was always, I was also going through a kind of an [00:15:00] awareness of what my Christian faith really was supposed to be. , in other words, I had been living a religious life and then I finally understood what was really at the core right.

Of being a Christ follower. And I think that, and my understanding of greenleaf came at the same time. I don't know that one caused the other, but I think just in my personal narrative, they came about the same time maybe in my early thirties. Mid thirties. Okay. And so there was just an understanding a broadening of what all of this means. Okay. And actually a kind of relief because it was this big aha experience, oh, this is really what. , it means to be a Christ follower and this is really what it means to live a life that is consistent, as you said, from the moment you walk in the door, going to your teaching to when you walk in another door going to your home.

, [00:16:00] and I don't know who said it, but I know I read at one point, there's nothing more exhausting than living an inauthentic life. , when you feel like, oh, I'm here now I have to be this person, and oh, I'm over here and now I have to be this person. We change roles, but the foundation of who we are and how we go through life, I think.

should be the same. Yeah,

Dylan: absolutely. Yeah. No I'm always just, I'm very, I'm always interested to, to hear about that side of it, because personally, like that's, I think that's where I heard of it from cuz my, one of my colleagues last year was a devote Catholic, and he would always be talking about servant leadership and I assumed that's where it came from.

And then when I read that little book that you held up the Greenleaf essays , I, and he doesn't talk about it too much. He was a Quaker himself, but Right. And talks about the, that Herman Hesse story that, that kind of inspired him. But yeah, so it's, I'm just interested to hear about the, those connections.

Ramona: I just, let me just to, to finish that. [00:17:00] This is one of the things that was to me also really. I'll use a very academic word. It was really cool when I started to do yoga training and I came into that only because I had started to practice yoga and I wanted to learn more as an, as an academician I was kinda like, I just wanna know more.

, I didn't have any big desire to even be a yoga teacher or doing it. It has really also influenced my life, but because I saw the exact same principles of understanding showing up in yoga teachings, and again, when you say yoga to people, they go either, oh, it's a cult, or I'm not in shape and don't have a bendy body, or it's a cult.

Or, there's all these kind of strange awarenesses that are really not true. There. at this point in my life. What's exciting is that I think that things that are good are universally good. And people [00:18:00] frame them in different words or different ways, but good is good, right? And how you get there enjoy it. Yeah. But I think it all comes back to the same place.

Dylan: Oh yeah. Absolutely. I had mentioned it that you hadn't talked about your previous inspirations, but I guess this is an opportunity maybe to when you when you were a member of an ensemble what were some of the different kinds of leadership styles that you were exposed to?

Ramona: I've thought about this again, looking at your questions. I think I would talk about two directors who I spent a lot of time with. One in high school, one in at university, and. what they had in common. They were both men, which I just mentioned. , just for commonalities.

They were both really fine conductors, really fine singers, really fine teachers. [00:19:00] The first conductor, however, was very much dictatorial. I wouldn't even say just autocratic. I would say dictatorial. Okay. And that was challenging at the time, of course. Because if you're 16, 17 years old and your director gets really mad because the choir didn't do something, and they throw a baton and they walk out of the room that's a deep imprint.

And I still get uncomfortable even thinking about it. Yeah. And it's a very long time ago. And I grew to try to understand and accept and, forgive, I guess in some way that director, because I think at, at his fundamental level, he just loved the art so much that he didn't know what to do when he couldn't get to what he had envisioned in his head.

And so his way of responding to that was to get mad and to belittle [00:20:00] people with his speech. , he would try to emasculate the tenders in the bases by calling them Twinkies. That was his word for being, not manly enough to sing a good tone and stuff like this.

Which I know a lot of people in that generation and still today, we, we have that in our bloodstream as conductors. And that's one of the things that fuels my work. The other director seemed to lead with. A little bit of theater. He had a theatrical background. He'd been a professional dancer at one point.

He had, I can still see him. He's passed on now, but I can still see his shining blue eyes and his , big white teeth smile and even an interpreter of music. And he taught us through the interpretations that he would have and the subtleties and tongue in cheek almost challenging us to be just that much more sensitive to the end of a phrase and so forth.

And [00:21:00] I think I absorbed both of those directors in some way. I think early in my career I could see some of those tendencies to wanna get angry about something and frustrated. That the first director head model, thankfully I was able to work through that. And, people at Greenleaf and my own, faith base certainly helped me through that as well as maturity.

But one of the things I'm really glad about now is that many people who were in university with me and see me conduct and teach will say, you are so much like Bill Olson, who was this conductor. . And I take that as a huge compliment. Because, , I do think it did impact me in very healthy ways.

And I do think that I bring that

Dylan: to my work. . Yeah. And I it's great how you just spoke about that and, sure. 1, 1, 1 of them was maybe a little bit more of a dictator. But that is one aspect of [00:22:00] leadership. And I think also this idea, you talk about in the book a lot as well.

You talk about the importance of being a really great artist and a really great musician, and how sometimes with what we're talking about, the assumption is that's not there. But it's interesting to hear you talk about the different aspects of your influences and how they have impacted

Ramona: you.

And I want to talk a little bit about this idea, because I did raise it in these two conductor cameos, but the idea of being a really great artist, it's like, it's fundamental to understanding what servant leadership is. , if I. and in front of an ensemble. I had a job, but I also have a mission, and I just said this probably a month ago to my choirs.

I said, look, my job is to prepare you to have good concerts and to teach you about music, but my mission is much bigger. , it's about life and it's about interacting with each other, and it's about having experiences that are [00:23:00] otherworldly. And, I just went on a little bit of a journey with them there.

And I think to myself, something I will say to students, to my own singers, my collegiate students, sometimes exactly in these words or very close, is I'll say, that was pretty good, but I care about you too much to let you get away with less than you can do. . And I always laugh because then they look at me and they're not sure if they were just yelled at , should I feel bad about that?

I don't feel bad. Yeah. But it's really just my way of reinforcing that I'm here to do something really powerful with you. Through music. So the artistry level is gonna be the highest you can achieve. . And I say that because your recent comments sparked that in me, that people again think it's an either or.

Servant leadership is about making people feel happy and I can't really push them, cuz then they won't be, it's [00:24:00] not that it's actually the exact opposite. , it's about saying, I'm gonna develop a relationship and I'm gonna teach in a way that honors you and is compassionate, but I'm about helping you live.

your best life in any way. I can do in this hour I have with you three times a week. That's serving them and it's serving the art of music. Let's be sure we understand that as well.

Dylan: Yeah, no there's many different aspects to what we're serving. And yeah, that's something that I think it was James Autry, he talks about it at the beginning of his at the beginning of his servant leadership book about, about that kind of misunderstanding and how it's actually not to, maybe I'm not selling it very well, but it's actually more difficult often to be a servant leader but those kind of things. One thing, one side conversation because you were the only coral conductor on my list, and, but one thing that I've. I found interesting whenever,[00:25:00] doing research and looking for articles and dissertations, a lot of these leadership topics are led by the coral community.

And I was wondering have you ever thought of that? It seems to me that the coral conductors are like a step ahead when it comes to thinking of leadership models and applying them.

Ramona: Yeah, I hadn't thought about that, but I think there's, I think there's a way to understand that and without offending anybody , but I think, and I'm sure I will offend somebody, the band world has been and still is to a large degree, a male dominated world. And you know how, however you wanna frame it, men generally have , you no fault of their own. They've grown up in a sort of cultural set of expectations that they're supposed to act in a certain way.

And they need to be strong and they need to be this and that and the other. And that [00:26:00] leads to developing an understanding of leadership as at least autocratic, but often it goes beyond that to dictatorial. There is that line. I think that's probably a lot of it.

I also think that, historically, if you look at the band world coming out of the military  
Yeah.

Kind of environment and so I think all of this is in the bloodstream, right? And it needs to be understood in that way. But I do know a lot of band directors cuz I've been asked to do zooms with them on this topic. , who are really embracing this idea and understanding.

We're trying to understand how do I. How do I move this very large boat ? Try to maybe in a little different direction. All right. I also think with a coral, with the coral field, again, maybe a larger percentage of women conductors, people who identify that way, [00:27:00] and also because we don't have the, sometimes it's an impediment to have instruments and stands and all of the things that go with being in a band environment.

, it's it's a little more organic, that relationship. As a matter of fact, for many years when I was teaching at another institution, I coordinated music education. I did all the supervision, including the orchestral and wind band student teachers, and I remember a student that I had who was primarily an instrumentalist.

but he had, in his student teaching, he was given a choir he also was going to conduct and he said to me, I remember he, he was like, the first time I got in front of them and there were no stands and there were no instruments. He said it was just all these eyes looking at me, and what do I do about that?

Yeah. So I think that's also part of the coral experience. . , you're right there [00:28:00] and there's nothing to separate you. And you have to get that much more connected. So yeah, that might be a part of it.

Dylan: And everyone has the score, so you gotta really figure out what you're gonna do.

they all have the map. Yeah. Yeah. No, those are really good points to, to bring up and yeah. The history of wind band. I've been talk writing a lot about wind band leadership and. It. Very interesting to think about how that military background made its way into post-secondary programs. Yeah.

Know the University of Illinois was run like a military, like troop, , and not just a little bit like a lot. . And when it comes down to uniforms and mindsets, ways we think of things and then that. gets fed through their teachers and they make teachers and they make teachers. And then, at some point there's a paradigm shift, but it's really

Ramona: easy.

And that's where I got my undergraduate degree. Oh, okay. at University Illinois .

Dylan: So I understand that. Yep. My teacher's teacher was a student of Harry Bein, so he, oh my gosh. He always talk. Yeah I've heard lots of exciting stories. But [00:29:00] anyways I digress. , this next, this next question is similar to the first question but maybe a little more specific.

And it, it also helps listeners, I think so I'll how are the following servant character surf leadership characteristics as defined by green? Exemplified in your work as a conductor and educator, and I'll just read those just for our listeners. That's listening. , empathy, healing awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to growing people and building community.

Ramona: I'd like to think that I'm creating an environment where people would be willing to share their thoughts and I'll share two elements of that. One is our choir mission. Choir mission statement at North Central College where I've been now for 29 years, is Singing for the Greater Good. . We talk about that it's not only a cool thing to put on a t-shirt it's something that we talk about [00:30:00] in terms of, how singing impacts us and how it impacts other people and so forth.

So I hope that by starting with something like that, as they come into the program, they understand that this is an US thing and not just a me thing, not, I'm here to follow what the conductor says. And that's the traditional model. . So I'm hoping that they feel more willing to talk to me and share their ideas.

And I think I teach that way by asking questions. And I go back to what I was talking about earlier in terms of my dissertation. My dissertation really was about using. Gesture and body movement in rehearsal with singers. So we're both, we're all moving, we're all gesturing, we're all conducting in order to help understand the music and enhance experience.

And the reason I bring that up [00:31:00] now is that this is essentially collaboration at its musical best. And though I wasn't thinking about leadership per se, when I was in my doctoral program and writing and so forth, the day that I started to de decide that what I was hearing the choir do was good, but there was a better place that they could be.

And I just said, Hey. Is me and I gestured and we sang this phrase and everybody gestured the phrase, and the entire room changed. The sound changed. The faces changed. The eyes lit up. Everybody went, what was that? That was a way for me, that was probably a shift in my thinking and my teaching in that very moment in the rehearsal that said, this is an US thing and this is a collaboration.

So this is now a long way of [00:32:00] saying how does that apply to listening? And it applies to listening because listening means we're involved with each other and we're connecting, and I have to respond to what they're saying sometimes in words and



sometimes just in action or in sound. in order for me to really help them move forward, which I think is the core of servant leadership.

Yeah, absolutely. Help people move forward.

Dylan: And it's interesting to hear, how you led up to what you just said, because it really says that listening is different than hearing because the way that the way that you've defined, it's, I listen to react or I do something to react.

So that's a really important thing to define whenever we're thinking about some of these characteristics. One thing I re some, because the word is also another misunderstood word, but the word persuasion as a leader, what does what were some, maybe some [00:33:00] of your thoughts on that?

Ramona: Persuasion was a word that I got from some of the other books when I was thinking about this issue of power.

and the way we use it as conductors or the way our profession historically has used it. That was a big part of my motivation for writing the book. It was obviously in the story I explained to you earlier about one of my influential conductors and how he was using his power in ways that were very coercive.

. I don't remember which of the authors used the word persuasion to be the foil to coercion. . So just to clarify that for the listeners. But nobody thinks they're coercing their students or their singers or their players and Yeah, it happens all the time. It happens very obviously.

It happens [00:34:00] very subtly. Yeah. Holding back. Judgment of a positive kind, threats to have more rehearsals if we don't get things right. It's all of this kind of stuff. So when I had to think through that, and I read a lot of other people's writings about that, I it really became clear to me that what we do when we teach and we model and we try to inspire people, like it could be really good, but get me two, 2 cents more on this crescendo or, all of the ways that we get in front of people.

If we do it with skill and with foresight and with passion and with compassion. And clarity and all of the other things that you want to do, we're persuading them. to join us on this journey. That's [00:35:00] really what it is. This isn't the used car salesperson, in the plaid jacket kind of persuasion, but wait, there's more , if you order by tonight, you get, it's not that it is, it's really more inspiration. . But inspiration can also be thought of as fleeting. Like when you go see a motivational speaker and you're all charged and that lasts three hours and then you go back to doing the same thing.

So I think persuasion has more teeth in it because it really is a combination of what we do and say and how we approach our work in front of other people to help them want to come with us. , that's really the goal. Yeah.

Dylan: And I. , I want to talk about what we were talking about at the beginning of the difference in between persuasion and coercion.

, you, there was, it's very early on in your book that you write about not being [00:36:00] sarcastic as a leader on the podium. . And that's something that I know for a long time I was people think I'm so funny when I'm sarcastic up there. And it's been, as everything with this journey of servant leadership it's a lot of looking inward and thinking about, oh, what would happen if someone did that to me?

How would that make me feel as a player or as a singer, or as a whatever. So it, and it, we might not think of it as coercion, but it is a form of that. But. Because I, I remember when I first read the word persuasion, I'm like I did, I thought of the used car salesman right away.

The used cars salesman. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. That's funny. What other ones do I want to ask you about? I wanna ask you about the whole list. Actually, maybe I wanna ask you about healing. What does greenleaf's idea of healing mean to you?

Ramona: I love that one. It was actually the first one I thought about because really the era we're in has a whole other set of healing challenges. Honestly. I'm trying to remember Greenleaf's particular thinking about healing. [00:37:00] But I'll say that this is probably where my yoga work has been really influential and important in these last few years. In particular , there's a lot of trauma. We know that even before the pandemic, we know that it's a, it's just a very challenging world for all of us.

, whether you've got high school students, college students, professional singers, or just, you're just human . And so for me, healing is a combination of acknowledging how we feel, first of all, and helping others to be okay with their thoughts and their feelings and that moment, and then gently, and with compassion and with love.

And I say that kind of in quotes because, this is appropriate love, right? , when I'm talking about [00:38:00] relational lines that we're crossing, but with that kind of demeanor, bringing them with us on this musical journey and on this life journey. So in my teaching just as an aside we do yoga every day and every rehearsal we stand, we start to breathe, which is fundamental to life, of course, but also to singing and to a yoga practice. And I've taught them half sun salutations, which for those who don't know what those are, they're really just a series of movements that are guided by breath. So you inhale, as you raise your arms, you exhale as you pull forward toward the ground and so forth. And so we do these kinds of physical breathing, centering kinds of activities.

And sometimes we will do a little bit more time on mindfulness where we just, I guide them through just a little bit of time seated [00:39:00] to. Allow them to become aware of their thoughts and to encourage them to not identify with them. So if they're thinking about something that just happened, they don't have to think of themselves as a bad person because they didn't turn something in on time or this kind of thing.

, there's a lot of opportunity to fold this into our teaching and our conducting in appropriate ways. You don't have to be a yoga teacher, you don't have to have any kind of special tools. You have to really come with an awareness that everybody is hurting in some way, and at any moment somebody could be hurting in a big way.

. So if you understand that and you show up in a rehearsal, you're gonna be less likely to think about your own conductor to-do list. , oh my gosh. It's a week from a concert and I have to get all these things done. And if they didn't [00:40:00] learn their music or they didn't practice, then we're gonna ha it.

It gives us as conductors a moment of breath to say, I've got the tools, they have the skills, we'll get this done. But there are probably a lot bigger things happening in everyone's life. . And I want this thing that I'm doing with them, this rehearsal, this music making journey together. I want this to be a healing experience of their spirit.

We're not doctors, we're not therapists. We're not trying to go out of scope of practice here. But understanding as we all believe that music is healing. , and sometimes this is where I think coral folk have it easier to some degree is that we have text, we have words.

And last year, as an example, just before we finish this point, in 2021, in the fall of 2021, it was our first year back in person. After virtual year, [00:41:00] we do a concert, we call Explore the Sound, which is a very fluid, theatrically, lit, staged concert. We did a modest version of that last year because people had been gone and Right.

We had to understand where we were at. But the entire concert theme was called Emergence, and it was about emerging from this pandemic cocoon. . So the first piece was about awakening from a dream. and we went through other pieces and the final piece was Flight Song by Arnan, which really has, music is my refuge is one of the significant lines that was a healing concert.

. So I, that's why I see all of these things coming together. All of these strands come together if we allow it to in our servant leadership. .

Dylan: Yeah. There's, oh, there's too much good in there to unpack . I, [00:42:00] yeah, I think, yeah, that the idea of awareness and it's been fun having these conversations and hearing the patterns that arise amongst people who maybe identify as servant leaders, but also people who don't.

And how we just don't know. what the people in front of us are going through on a day-to-day basis. And the power that we have to influence any amount of good into that or healing we're talking about. And then the other thing I wanted to bring up is I love that idea of that concert and the idea of emerging from all of the fun we have gone through with this plague , because I've just.

I haven't thought about it till right now, but there's, at least here at asu, and I don't think he'll mind me mentioning it. We went right back to band full on band , and especially for me coming from Canada where it was like, it was a little more wrapped up, shall we say. And it was a lot.

It was like, oh I'm really excited to be back. But it was a lot. And then by the end of the year, like [00:43:00] people were burning out very quickly because we didn't use that cocoon technique or we did, and maybe we just smashed open the cocoon and said, okay, you're free. Go . But no it's really important to, to think about healing, but also healing in a way that works for everyone.

And that involves listening. That involves all a bunch of different empathy characteristics that we're talking about as well. Sure. Maybe I'll ask you about one more and if you want to talk about any of them specifically. Feel free, but I'm sure I'm wondering about commitment to growing people.

Ramona: I think that's the definition of a teacher, right? If you think about it, the re the reason I, I've never been in corporate America, and again, I'm not trying to offend anybody. It's just not my fit. And though I have worked in professional music organizations, I've done some professional theater, I've done, the reason I'm still in an academic environment is because I think it's the best hope for [00:44:00] everybody.

Because even though the schools are not perfect, teaching is not perfect. There's no perfect. The idea behind teaching and conductors are teachers, whether we recognize that or not, is about moving people forward. . And that's fundamental to having a good life. That's fundamental to having a good mental wellness, to having a long life.

The people who live long tend to have a sense that they have a reason to get up in the morning. Because there's something they haven't yet done. There's someplace they can grow, there's something they can learn. So as conductors, I think one of the ways it shows up in a practical way is to be sure you're not just teaching for the next concert.

. That the way we teach, the way we program, what we program, when, how we [00:45:00] help musicians to develop their skills. All of that I think is better done. In the context of we're continuing to grow and move forward. So at some point in time, this concert we had talked about a little bit via email, last Wednesday, two days ago at seven

o'clock was a point at which we had to show what we know at that moment in time, right?

But the learning doesn't end there. Those pieces in some way, in some ways don't end there, even if we never perform them again. There's an ongoing awareness to, oh, those ideas and that piece, I get that better now. , or two years from now I'm gonna remember that piece and the singers will go, oh, I get that.

That's so important. Now as I go into my job and I have to think about. Challenging things, and I remember that piece that we did. [00:46:00] So I think that's fundamental to everything that we do as leaders, frankly. Leaders of any kind. Yeah. But certainly conductors

Dylan: who lead. Yeah, absolutely. And yeah, because I actually I was just rereading your chapter on the, your teaching chapter and this comes up a lot just not preparing for that concert and then having to redo everything again for the next concert.

And but this idea of growing commitment to growing people was what really got me super interested in all this greenleaf excitement. And and and I'm not, I won't answer the questions for myself, but the idea that I've experienced conductors that have been their number one priority was developing the technical person in front of them.

and that was it. Beyond that, there's no growth, I don't think . Of the students or the ensemble members that are in front of them. So to hear, Greenleaf and other leaders and yourself talk about it it's, it gives me hope for the future in a world that, goes, leaves our music bubble as well.[00:47:00]

Ramona: Again, a little side trip here, but I think you've heard me say a few times now in this interview, the idea of a both and or connecting and so forth. One of the things that I developed since I wrote the book, and it was just because I was doing a workshop at one point with some area teachers, and I can even send this to.

after the interview. But it's something I, a little pdf. It's really about collaboration and what it looks like because I'm a very, I love thinking philosophically and big picture, but I'm really practical. All right. And I think people who know me know that I will work, a diagnostic prescriptive rehearsal with the best of them.

, stop, start boom, let's get it done. No, it's out of tune, blah, blah, blah. So we have to do that. That's part of our life. But what I developed on this PDF was what I call the collaboration continuum. And I think this is a way to talk to those directors who think that they just have to drill, drill, drill that technique.

, because that's gonna get them [00:48:00] to a good performance at the end. So in this continuum, I say, look, on the one side of this continuum is the diagnostic prescriptive model, which we've all been trained in and need to do. . It's not bad. We need to do this. It's like the management versus leadership, dichotomy or pairing I should say, that I talk about in the book. And then on the other end of the continuum is completely collaborative in its approach. So when we're on the podium, we can say, and I give these, I don't know, six or seven steps, I can stop an ensemble and say, base in that measure you're flat.

Change the vow to a ready, let's do this again. , that's very diagnostic prescriptive. Okay. So now I invite people. To think what if we wanted to move into a little bit more of a collaborative environment? How do we do that? My husband, I remember when he was working with a university band [00:49:00] many years ago, and he's very much of a servant leadership mindset as well.

And he stood in the podium, they were rehearsing and he stopped and he asked them for some input and they looked at him like he was crazy. . Yeah, because they had no, they were like, wait, what are you asking me? What? They had never been asked to be involved. And he told 'em at that time, look, you may never be asked again what you think , but I wanna know what you think.

So this continuum, think about this. We can just do that sort of far into the continu. Stop, start, stop, start, diagnose the problem, so to speak. Prescribe a solution and move on. Or what if we started in little steps? To bases you're flat. Change the volatile A because that will focus it and tune it more.

So now we've add a little piece of information about why, and we can keep continuing to add where we stop and start. And then we can say, bases you're flat. Change that A, because [00:50:00] finish my sentence. And they respond because it will focus and blah, blah, blah. And you can continue to do that. And I have an 11 second rule that I teach my conductors and my method students and I say, okay, I want you to look at the clock time me.

And I go through and I will say what I might say to an ensemble and I make sure I can do it in 11 seconds. You'd be surprised how much you can tell in 11 seconds, right? And it's not just fix this, start again. It could be bases. You're flat there. Change that ball to a, because it's going to tune you better.

that still leaves us plenty of time. . And then you can continue now to ask them, Hey, last week basis, when we did that, we were flat. What did we do? Why did we do that? That's teaching for the long term. , that's investing in the process and that can be done and still stay very high standard on all the [00:51:00] technical stuff we wanna do.

Dylan: .

Absolutely. And you're creating, you talked about long term, you're creating musicians that aren't relying on you after they leave. . Because as much as we want to keep all of our students with us forever, it, that's not what happens. Creating people going and

Ramona: Greenleaf writes about autonomy.

, right? Isn't that his most quoted statement about, asking yourself these questions. Yes. How autonomous are these people that I've led after they have worked with me? And so if we want autonomous musicians, , they have to have more than I know how to finger this. , or I know how to read this note.

They have to have an understanding of artistic process. And I know that this can happen with five year olds in church choir. Because I've done it. Yeah. I've done it with little littles, those little kiddos and say, okay, now that was good. [00:52:00] What else could we do? , or if I do this or I do this, which one sounds better?

And I'm using my five year old box , but that five year old brain can get it. And so we can't think that this is just an exclusive club for professional musicians. .

Dylan: Oh, absolutely. . Ah, I wanna keep going on this list, but I, we must move on. We must . Yeah. Wondering if, could you outline some of the challenges institutions, structures in general create that make servant leadership challenging?

Ramona: Yeah. I think we've actually opened that discussion a little bit earlier. , when we talked about the cultural models. And, you look actually, and this is another reason I really admire Greenleaf, because you look at, the mid 20th century, everybody was really in a corporate structure.

We had a boss and the boss had a boss and the boss at another boss. And men earned money and they were the leaders of the [00:53:00] family. And, there were these sort of straight line authoritative structures that we just understood. doesn't mean they were good, it was just, we just did that.

And then of course we had lots of cultural changes and we continued to have those cultural changes. What I find unfortunately in my own thinking is that in recent years though, a lot had opened up in terms of more people in organizations and even some very large businesses understanding servant leadership and trying to model more that, that style and everything that they were doing in the last few years, I think we have regressed in that the top down , autocratic, dictatorial structures that we have lived through and in some cases still are living through, have been [00:54:00] fueled in ways where people have, unfortunately, I think regressed back to this kind of, I'm in charge.

and, kind of scarcity mentality, right? So if I'm going to get something that means you can't get it to . And so I see this as an overriding cultural wind that's happened. But as always, and in history as always, there are people who understand that this is maybe not serving all of us at our highest level.

And there are always people doing good work. . So I, I think when I've had these conversations with my husband, as I've mentioned, who's also a musician, educator, conductor, sometimes he's just reminded me that, model those things where you can. And I've said this to other people in different ways.

When the rehearsal room doors close, [00:55:00] that's when I'm really able to do work in the way that I think it should be done. . So I maybe can't control things around me. And that can be very frustrating to just live in an institution, a church, a college, a university, whatever. And that's where we need to do our personal work.

But when I'm in front of that ensemble, I have a lot of control about how I share this process of making music. And that's where I do the work that I feel, is on mission.

Dylan: Yeah. And that's a really important thing to remember, like how much. I don't wanna use no. How much power we have within our own lives.

Beyond, beyond the structures that we are put in. But and thinking how, when you're right, when those doors shut. We are making change. Like it or not, we are. If you're doing good work, you're doing good work. Yeah. No, and there's, and I don't know if it's the same in the coral world, cuz I've just been I must admit to [00:56:00] you, I started my life as a coral person.

My high school band director is now a collegiate chor professor. Okay. But. I'm just so far removed from it. But I find with and within our world still, it's very results based in, especially in high school education and solely, but surely you see some people breaking off from, maybe it's not going to a competition, but doing something else that might be a little more creative.

But those kind of things is it, do you find these structures in your world as well?

Ramona: I do. And honestly, as you were talking, I just thought I just had an aha moment. So thank you Dylan, for this. But I just, something went off in the inside that said to me, reminded me, this is my mission right now.

Because I think it's always been my mission. I just didn't maybe always know it, but it's like you can have the results. You can have a phenomenal choir, you can have a great band and do it in a way. [00:57:00] that maybe you haven't personally experienced. And that's the leap of faith people have to take.



. But it's there. When I talk to people about who's, who have been influential in their lives, and I talk to students about their high school directors and so forth, and I ask them, how did you learn? And what was the people who talk with shining eyes to me about this had directors who were servant leaders.

, whether anybody ever used that word. Whether the directors ever knew that they were servant leaders, that's what they were doing. . So I think the biggest challenge, and I'm excited about your work, your podcast, your dissertation, the challenge is to encourage and then nicely, lovingly push people to understand.

that there is a better way and you can get all the musical satisfaction you want. If you want a really [00:58:00] great band. Is that band only technically excellent or is it something else? , we've all been to, to, national conferences. Go to Midwest, right? Yeah. And see really technically solid bands who were very much lacking music.

, and you think how's that possible? And I say this to students all the time, nobody goes to a concert generally and says What a note runs. I was so moved. It's not gonna happen. Yeah. Now our intellectual technician side of our conductor brainer, we will certainly go, wow, that was really clean.

, that was hard to do. But that's not what gets us up in the morning. Or shouldn't be. And so th that mission that I think you're on as well, and many people are on to [00:59:00] just say, Hey, there is another way. I think we have to give permission to other people to, to dare to think about this because, we talk about corporate structures or structures and things that get in our way.

Yes. I think there probably are places where a conductor is under some other person who will be very critical if you don't do just strict diagnostic prescriptive award competition focused kind of work. I th there are definitely people who are in those settings and I think that's challenging.

I think they can work to move away from there. But at some point, if that's what it is, , then they're probably gonna have to leave. I will tell you this, I started out as a high school qual director. And I interviewed for a job after four years of teaching. I was tenured. I was set in the first school that I was at, but there was another job that I thought had better feeder system, [01:00:00] would have more opportunities to do other things musically.

And I went into that interview and I was still very young. Didn't really get a lot of this. I should have known something was a red flag when the principal brought me in to walk through the school when no other faculty were there. It was after school. Okay. I wasn't gonna meet anybody. I wasn't gonna talk to anybody, so I shouldn't have thought.

That's kinda weird. But he walked me through the choir room and he pointed to the wall with all of the award plaques, . And then he who himself, his brother was actually a professional coach. , and he was very much into competition. He pointed to all those things and then he looked me right in the eye and he said, and I know you'll continue this tradition.

Oh my. And I thought, okay. Message received. . And I was okay with that because I had done that , but I only stayed there [01:01:00] two years. And it was musically very satisfying. But many days I went home crying. Cuz it was some of the most intense, inter political stuff that I had ever experienced.

And I had no concept of all this. I was pretty shell shocked. It was a tough couple of years. So we have to give permission to people. and say there is another way. , please do not continue something that, in your heart of hearts is not doing anybody real good.

Dylan: Yeah. No, absolutely. And it's been fun thinking of the themes that have come through our conversation, but this idea of not and or not, but yes. And yes, it's certainly, and I, we were talking off record before, but whenever I started thinking of ideas for my doctoral work, I was just like, no, it [01:02:00] has to be this way.

It must be, and then it's this big. And it's interesting to see how things change, but yeah, absolutely. And so we have come to the last question of of our conversation, . And it's a difficult question I realize because. Truly to do this question, I need to survey your students or something, but

Yeah. How would you say that your students describe your leadership style and or philosophy?

Ramona: I feel pretty good about saying that much of what we've talked about. , I think that the students would be able to verbalize and I do I do ask them for reflection at the end of every semester and I ask them, what have you learned musically?

, what have you learned beyond the music? And give me other, any other input you'd like me to have. . And when they write their reflections, some of 'em are, pretty basic. Oh, I learned how to do this better. And, I start reading and so forth. But [01:03:00] they're more often than not pretty deep.

And they talk about. , a lot of the things we've talked about that they recognize that I'm trying to do more than just crank out songs for concerts. , and they have sank me for the times and rehearsals to just breathe and center and let the rest of the world go. They thank me for talking deeply about text and how that applies, not only to, Hey, let's sing this piece culturally or socially responsibly, but what does it mean to the rest of your life?

What does it mean to the things that are happening out in the world? , and they, . I don't, this happened, this started a couple of years ago and I don't even know how, but they applaud at the end of rehearsal , and I don't think it's cause they're excited to leave. Because I, thank you is a very common phrase and our rehearsal, and I'd like to think that I helped set that in motion, [01:04:00] but I'll say, okay, we'll see you, on a Wednesday and I get a lot of people thank you.

And some people will specifically come to me face to face and say, thank you, Dr. This. And I'm like, and I remember when that started happened, I was like, you're welcome. Did I do something different? ? So I think on our best days, we experience everything we've talked about. And I say on our best days, because you know what? , this is all human nature. Yeah. There are days when I'm just like frustrated that something that we've covered seems to be, evaporated. And this is part of life. And I think one of the things Greenleaf and others in that mind thinking talk about too, is being honest.

. And I think being honest with yourself and with our ensembles as conductors is, is something that I tried to do. Yeah. But in a way that is not baton throwing, running out of the office or the [01:05:00] rehearsal or whatever. It's a way of, and I think, again, I read it somewhere, I've read so much, I don't know where all these things necessarily come from, but some in a book somewhere, not Green Leaf, I don't think, but in a book somewhere.

, somebody said, the most important thing, this might even be a non-leadership writer. , but, the most important thing for a leader is to be honest. And I think that's powerful. Yeah. And honest is not necessarily negative. , how much time do we spend stopping for things we wanna fix?

So I try every once in a while very specifically to say, stop. And they're all waiting for, okay, what do we have to fix? Our vow isn't where is, and I'll say, we always stop to fix something. I just wanna stop and tell you that was unbelievably artistic. . And then I'll go, oh, . It's always sort I dunno how to respond to that.

Like relief one. Two giggles cuz that's really [01:06:00] funny to Oh man. Thanks. Just this response, but that's honesty too. , that really was good. Concert choir corral. You really did what we've talked about. Congratulations on that. You are artists and I am a very big fan of talking about us as makers of art.

And matter of fact, one, one time this em s last semester, I'm really good about letting people out on time, if not early cuz they have to walk on campus and whatever. But I kept them like a minute late. It wasn't even that much, still, I said, tell your next teachers you were just being artists and they all laughed,

And then they went on to their next class. But, sometimes you just, you need that extra minute, sorry, English faculty member down the campus. But . Anyway, I don't know if that was, that really answered your question. I do think because I've had enough response from students and completely un [01:07:00] uncoerced, people stayed after the concert the other day that we had and just said, just thanked me.

My own students waited, hung around and thanked me for the experience. . So I've gotta think it's reading somehow. ,

Dylan: something's working here. No, he beautifully answered the question and I love how it started. , you listening, you it started with those, Benjamin Xander White Sheets or, and I really encourage anyone who's listening to, to put yourself out there. And it is, it will feel very uncomfortable at first. I used to do something called Stop start and continue for the little forms, and it'd be something maybe you gonna stop doing something you want me to continue doing and something you want me to maybe start doing. But it, yeah. It does feel,

Ramona: oh, sorry. No, I was gonna say, I just, my mind was thinking about those ways of doing white sheet kind of practice. I will have post-it note pads and every once in a while, and I taught a yoga, an honors [01:08:00] seminar for students who were not necessarily music students last year.

And one of the things that I would do is I would give them, I gave them a whole pad of Post-its. And I would, every once in a while, just encourage 'em is as they leave, If they had anything they wanted to share, they could do it anonymously, no name, whatever. And I asked them to write on the back of the Post-It so that they could stick it on the outside of the door.

So I couldn't see who was putting anything up or not. And that whatever was showing, the suggestions they had, the comments they had wouldn't be showing. . So I've had to peel it off and turn it around. And I've done this sometimes with the choirs and it's really healthy. Now when I'm peeling those off the wall, am I getting a little knot in my stomach?

Sure. Uhoh, am I gonna find out that I'm the worst human on the planet? Because someone can't tell that to me, to my.[01:09:00] And like Ben Zander, I find, almost complete support and complete understanding and a lot of gratitude. , but every once in a while they'll say, it would be nice if, and they even phrase it in a human way, it would be good if we could do more. . And I think that's important that we have to have the guts to do that. Yeah. There,

Dylan: there was a time in my life I had to teach upper level music theory courses and Okay. , they weren't

Ramona: as, I'm sorry. Yeah,

Dylan: it's okay. It's okay. I've moved on. But yeah, there, there was some tough love there for sure.

But no, it's there's just so much to, to think about and I love how you talk about the artistry of it and reminding us. That we're not in a room full of students that are becoming artists. We are in a room of artists. And that we can, that hopefully within our rehearsals, we can all add something to the process.

But I just want to thank you. So there's not enough sos in the world Oh. For the time that you've taken [01:10:00] today amongst your very busy schedule. And then also, I want to thank you for being an inspiration from afar. And I know you probably have lots of people telling you I love the book.

I love the book, but it's really great. And I want you to know that you've reached me and you were one of the sparks that kind of led me on this exciting journey. So I wanna thank you for all the work that you're doing and just being a light in the world that we live in. So thank you so much Dr.

Wiss for spending the time today.

Ramona: Thank you. And thank you for your kind words and for the work you're doing, and I'm excited to see where it leads you. And I'm excited to see where you're thinking and your practice will also impact others. We're all trying to impact somebody for the better.

And you'll have your way and you've already had your way. So good luck to you, Dylan. Thank you.

## Matthew Arau Interview Transcript

Dylan: [00:00:00] And here we are for the second edition of, once again, whatever this is called, cuz I still have yet to come up with a name for it. I had a name. Turns out the name was already taken. I'll maybe my guest and I can brainstorm after I don't know . But today is a really special day because I'm joined by someone, as I mentioned, off off record, someone I've admired from afar for a very long time.

I even have his book in my hand right now. That is Conductor educator, author extraordinaire, Dr. Matthew Arau. Welcome to this leadership podcast,

Matthew: Dylan. It's a thrill and pleasure and honor to spend some time with you today.

Dylan: Thank you very much. The pleasure is all mine, but I'm super appreciative of you doing this especially because you are one of the busiest people in the business.

It seems every day I see you somewhere else changing lives, and I'm just really glad that we could find some time to sit down and talk about servant leadership and your model of leadership and all of those cool things. I guess we'll start right at the beginning.  
[00:01:00] As I mentioned this, Doctoral work is on servant leadership.

So I'll start right at the guy who started the modern version of it. Are you aware of the work of Robert k Greenleaf and his servant leadership model, and if so, how does that impact your work?

Matthew: And Dylan? Yes. I'm aware of Robert Greenleaf's work on servant leadership and one of, one of the.

Opportunities that I've had while I've been teaching at Lawrence University is to team teach a leadership course with an anthropology professor. And the at the time she was the director of athletics at Lawrence. Okay. And so we explored many of the different leadership models. . So I actually remember teaching classes on Greenleaf model of servant leadership.

But I should share that I was aware of the term and the idea and the concept of servant leadership before I read Greenleaf's work. . And I think the first time I ran into the term servant leadership was through the work of Tim Watson. He. [00:02:00] Of Dr. Tim and it was really, through different conference presentations, his videos on student leadership.

or he talked about this idea of a paradigm shift and how we think of student leadership at the time, and maybe before he started talking about the importance of serving others

through leadership, he shared that oftentimes it was about, the authority or the glory or the power of being a student leader.

Correct. You get to tell others what to do. You. It's a resume builder, , and it's about the leaders. And Tim lifted on its head and said, oh, it's actually about serving and helping and lifting others up. And you need to do what others don't wanna do, in order to make the organization better.

And that was my first exposure. to the concept of servant leadership. I do remember when I first shared the idea with my students when I was a high school band director. , at first, it was this foreign concept because it was [00:03:00] different, than what they had experienced before. . But what was fascinating is that they really took to it.

, they could see how this was an effective way to lead. And there must have been something about the goodness of the human spirit within them that it resonated with them. And they start, they started saying, I wanna learn more about this. .

Dylan: I find it interesting, but knowing you, you're a leadership expert but it's interesting to, to hear talking to different conductors about how, like they, they've never heard of this term and I'm, and even whenever I read the Greenleaf model, it.

There, we were talking before there, there's pad, there's has been little application to music education. So it's always interesting to hear people who

Matthew: have Yeah, no, it's a, and I think it's something that is necessary. In our band world. And I at first thought about applications of servant leadership.

towards coaching my own students as a high school band director. . But I think what's really valuable about servant leadership is application to ourselves. As music educators and [00:04:00] conductors, and perhaps a paradigm shift of how we view the role of the conductor and the, even the term myro, you might think of the traditional idea.

Yeah. And servant leadership provides a fresh perspective. A point of view of leadership that is, I think it's more inclusive. , collaborative, shared, and empowering for those that we lead and necessary and a and timely. for the times that we live in today. . Absolutely. So I think servant leadership began as part of my coaching and training of my own students to prepare them to be supportive, lifting, encouraging student leaders.

But in the end, it's transformed. the way I lead. . And that's important because many of my role models were the traditional band director on the podium in [00:05:00] charge. . I'm leading the way, and over time the principles of servant leadership have become part. who I am as a person and how I hope to lead, and how I hope to role model, for my students

Dylan: now. Yeah. And then especially the idea of , whenever you, we talk about applying these to ourselves. It's not just, Matthew or Dylan, the conductor. When they're on the podium, it's Matthew and Dylan as they are when they're off the podium, when they're at home with their family, when you know it's all the time.

And that's one of the, yeah. Very cool things. I think about servant leadership. It's not just for the .

Matthew: I, if we only become that person, as you say on the job, then it's not authentic. , it's becomes almost an act, or I should be doing this , but when it becomes integrated into your identity, it becomes part of like your [00:06:00] daily habits and routine, your way of thinking, and it ends up.

Affecting how we behave, how we act, and how, and it also affects our intentions for the day. Of how we wanna make a difference in the world.

Dylan: , you talked about for a, just for a second, some of the past kind of band directors that you had, but I'm wondering what or who has influenced your approach to leadership and maybe discuss how they've how that's inspired you, your approach to leadership and maybe some examples.

Matthew: For sure. And when it comes to leadership there's leaders that I've had the opportunity to work with and collaborate with and meet or, and study with in person. But then of course there's leaders that I've learned from through their books, through the works they've created to teach leadership.

In terms of individuals that have impacted me in. in, in person. Tim Watson Heiser is very significant for me, [00:07:00] and I would say he, he became a crusader, for changing the paradigm of leadership in the music education world and, It caught fire with me. It resonated with me and I always wanted to learn more.

Of course, I, read everything that he wrote, I would, watch every video that he had and I had the opportunity to learn from him as a student at the American Band College in Ashland, Oregon. And as a staff member of later of the American Band College and the Western International Band Clinic in Seattle had, constant opportunities to continue to learn from Tim in person.

and now as a faculty member of abc, as a part of the conducting faculty , I continually get to, to learn from Tim. But so he's been very significant, not just for me, but for my students that I've taught along the way, sharing many of Tim's principles. I've been very fortunate in my life to have incredible mentors.



And I think that's so important for us from the beginning of our career [00:08:00] to seek out mentors to ask questions and not be afraid to, bring people into our programs to ask for help. And I've, I always ask for help . And so one of my important mentors he's passed away, but he took me under his wing and he was a former band director of Wheat Ridge High.

in the Denver, Colorado area. His name's Larry Wallace and I would drive from Loveland or Fort Collins to Denver almost every weekend, just spend time with him to learn to be a better music teacher. And he was really important in centering, I'll say centering humanity. In music education. And I would, I grew up with the model of pop challenges where, you'd go down the line and change the setup.

I, it sounds cruel now, but for the listeners, this was in the nineties. It was a different [00:09:00] time, . And so I remember sharing, you know what just happened And my first trumpet player got moved down to fourth chair because of one rhythm exercise. . And Larry said, Matthew, you gotta change like this.

We gotta change the system. And he was right. Yeah. And I remember once he's you need to go to school the next day. You need to, apologize, and honor the humanity of your students. And so I started making a shift and in how I led, and it became a lot, much, much more encouraging and much more supportive.

And less about perfection. And more about the process and the experience and the celebration of, the courage to go for it in music. And I think the idea of creating a safe, brave space where students could take risks and be celebrated for taking risks became much more important to me.

So Larry Wallace comes to mind is another, important mentor. Alan McMurray, the former wind ensemble conductor of a University of Colorado.[00:10:00] Made a huge impact on me as well, cuz I did teach music a, a top middle school band and high school band for a total of 15 years in Colorado. Okay. And Alan spent a lot of time coming up to me to work with my middle school band and my high school band.

And then I eventually started my doctorate in conducting with Alan for his final year of teaching. . And what I loved about Alan as a. was how he centered emotion and feeling an expression in musical rehearsals. . And in fact, I would say that took precedent. over would you use the phrase perfection?

It was more about what is the, what's the inspiration of the composer? And I found that personally very inspiring and motivating to go to those deeper levels of what's the intention of this phrase? What are we trying to create here? And thinking about music on that. I would say that higher.[00:11:00]

Really resonated with me. , but I also saw Alan living those principles in life. I felt like he valued the members of his ensemble as individuals and got to know them. And when he looked you in the eyes a conductor, he wasn't just looking at you as a, the third clarinet or the first trumpet, or in my case I play the saxophone.

He really saw us as, , the person that we are, the whole person. . And that's how I always felt in rehearsals with him. And that's something I've tried to emulate and integrate into who I am as a conductor as well. Oh,

Dylan: that's beautiful. And it's been interesting. This is only the second conversation I've been able to have for this, but it's been interesting to talk about music making at that, in that upper echelon of post-secondary land.

And there's there's certain stereotypes that have existed in the past and to hear. About people like Alan McMurray, who I've never been able to meet. I've tried to watch everything I can on YouTube and to hear [00:12:00] about people like him and Craig Koff and the way that, yes, the way that they taught it's really inspirational.

And I just want to echo one thing that you mentioned before about. , I ask for help a lot . And I think it's really important to understand that, whenever I'm at Midwest and I'm walking down and I see Dr. Matthew around with the GIA booth, like he, he is someone to sure that I've looked up to for a long time.

But you are someone who asked for help too. And that's something that we all need to do, especially. In the terms of what you're talking about in mentorship, have people come in and watch you teach and people that you trust and respect. Of course. But no, it's just a wonderful thing.

So folks, don't be afraid. That's what we're saying. Don't be afraid. , take the leap. And I could talk to about Dr. Tim all day. He was I'm once again, someone I've not had much interaction with, except when I was a grade 10 student. We went on one of those New York, band trips and then the adjudicator comes up on stage.

And I didn't know who this man was. I knew I couldn't pronounce his last name. . And we were [00:13:00] doing OHMA, new Mysterium the Reynolds trans. . And and it got to the big moment and he stopped us. And, he fixed some things, but he also was, he just said, at this moment, I want you all to think about someone you love, who's either with us or who's no longer with us.

And we did. And the whole ensemble, at that moment when he conducted us, we all just broke down. And I've been able to, Think about it since becoming like professional, what that did for us, sure. We played in tune. There was more phrase, there was all those musical elements, but for the first time, someone connected what's going on in here and

in here to what's coming out of the instrument, and it was ever since then, I was like, I want to do what he's doing.

Yeah. So Doc he's a it's really great to hear you talk about him and how much of an influence he's been on your leadership because just from that little, moment, not even talking really, he's been a great influence on my path.

Matthew: It's a, it's remarkable when a conductor like Tim or Alan or Larry Wallace, as I shared, connects to the [00:14:00] human heart.

, how it truly can be transformation. And in the end affect every aspect musically, but the experience of tapping into our emotions and feelings, it's the way it makes us feel. And re And you're talking about this experience you had in, in grade 10 still today. Yeah. Because cuz it tapped into a memory and a feeling.

It was someone you loved or lost and that makes music come to life. And I think Why are people drawn to music? We're drawn to music for many, reasons, what is one of the reasons we stay in music, it's when we have that connection. Yeah. I think we're all aspiring for that.

Dylan: Absolutely. And you mentioned you you were, you are a saxophonist. Nu no , although personally in my life, the trumpet is moving further and further away and I'm like come back. But you mentioned you played the saxophone, so I'm wondering when you were an ensemble member, what were some of the [00:15:00] different kinds of leadership styles that you were exposed to?

And these might not necessarily be ones that affected you. For the better .

Matthew: That's really neat to think of. And I do think in many ways I was, I know for a fact I was very fortunate. , I was very fortunate to have some phenomenal music teachers growing up. In junior high, my teacher was Wayne Reimers.

And we played at extremely high level. I remember in seventh grade actually playing variations on a Korean folk song, by John Barnes, chance as a seventh grader. And that was later on I was like, oh, that was really advanced, , that's wonder, that's wonderful. Buns. Yeah. And the jazz ensemble was real.

I was learning to improvise in junior high. And then the high school I went to was Rio Americano High School in Sacramento, California. I grew up in California and it was an unbelievable jazz program. . It was crazy. . And so the opportunities I had, played the Monterey Jazz Festival.

I toured Japan two summers and stuff Oh [00:16:00] wow. With the Monte Jazz Festival, high school, all star jazz band. Amazing opportunities. So I know I talk about the traditional model of the maestro, that, that kind of thing. And I think there definitely was that, still that model, but I think it was done with kindness and I really appreci.

I, I feel fortunate that I wasn't like scarred . I don't think my directors led through fear. The thing is that you hear about leading through fear a lot in the history of band and I know that's ingrained into the tradition and every once in a while it can kinda rear its say rear its ugly head, it can kinda frustration.

We're not able to like emotionally regulate it. Can, the conductors can snap, that kind of thing. . But I'm really grateful for that. And then I've, playing in community bands and stuff. I had a Fort Collins Wind Symphony. There was a conductor named Steve McNeil. I'll just share a story about him cause I think he isn't, I is an example of a servant leader.

Who really put the people first, which is I think is important and. , I had a busy schedule [00:17:00] as a band director, and so he knew that for me to come to rehearsal, was a commitment. . And so I'd be putting together my saxophone and he would sometimes stop on over and he would start talking to me and he would say, Matthew, it's so good to see you.

How have you been? I'm so grateful that you've play. In this group. , it's just so wonderful to have you And Steve made me feel like I was the most important person in the room. And I have to say that I continued to go to rehearsals for as long as I played in that group because of Steve, because of how he made me feel as a person.

But what was neat about Steve is if you could observe him, I think he made everybody in that room feel like the most important. Because he might come to talk to me and then I know he was going to, he would move on and talk to somebody else and, but authentically really care. How they were.

So when he got onto the podium and he conducted, I think we were all ready to be vulnerable and open and really give our best. [00:18:00] Because he was giving his best to us. So that was a really great model. I have had conductors that I felt didn't see us as whole people that almost looked over my head right.

When they conducted kind of conductor who hears the ideal image in their mind, and that's what they're listening to. , but they're not connecting. The actual musicians. Alan McMurray, who was one of my role models, always said, the eyes are the window to the soul. And I think Alan has lived that, that eye contact is real and authentic and deep.

And he al also said, where your heart goes, energy flows. And I think, I love that idea. Like our nonverbal, what it expresses. . I've had conductors that led that way, but I've

also had conductors where you felt like you were just a part, like just a number, and there wasn't that human connection.

And having that contrast between conductors that [00:19:00] treasured each individual and conductors that, like the ensemble was their organ to play. . . Created a contrast that made. Wonder, what is it? How, why do some rehearsals have this great level of human connection and others don't? And that's one of the things that got me really excited to dive deep into the work that I have done.

. , for example, the work of Brene Brown and her her work on the power of vulnerability and how when we're vulnerable, I can open up a pathway to communication and building trust. . So I thought what are. , what are the tenants or the principles that need to be achieved in a rehearsal to create a rehearsal of trust and community and belonging?

because I've had the contrast. .

Dylan: Okay. No, that it's there. Oh, let's just, , there's so many great things to unpack and it but the idea of what you said at the beginning is how, how grateful you are and how lucky you are to have the teachers that [00:20:00] you did when growing up. And the idea that, of what we're talking about being a servant leader, about being an upbeat leader.

These are all things that we, I think kind of leadership lives on a spectrum and we we try our best to be this, but every once in a while, maybe there is a time in our life, believe it or not, , that we do have to be maybe just a little bit more efficient and be direct and say it as, But to hear Oh, yeah hear your early educators. You. certainly leading from a place of love, but it does live on that spectrum and I, it might not be serving exactly in the way that, that we're talking about or being idealistic as we are. . And certainly the same is for me.

And the other thing I wanna mention is the pattern that I'm seeing arise is the leaders that I've chosen to talk to, done the, for these case studies are people that I respect their work. And I think that they're probably wonderful people I, we've just officially met today. But it's interesting to hear how.

The people before you have [00:21:00] impacted you. And that's another kind of thing of servant leadership is the idea that if we are servants first, we are the possibility that we will create more servants. And to hear that you are, that is what you are. You had people who were wonderful to you and now you are doing that for others.

So it's a really beautiful thing. So yeah we talked about The first question about how has greenleaf's work influenced you, but this one's maybe a little bit more specific. But how have the following servant leadership characteristics as defined by Greenleaf exemplified in your work as a conductor and educator?

And just for our listeners I'll read those. That's listening. Empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to growing people. And last but not least, building community. . , you don't have to answer all of them. , each one of those

Matthew: I love this list that Greenleaf compiled and I'm sure, we could add to this list of other things, but there, there's really so much here [00:22:00] and as educators, as leaders, as conductors for me, I think it's great that the first one is listen. I actually just submitted my monthly article.

I get to write a leadership tips article for SB and o Magazine every month, and just coincidentally, my articles on. listening. And how great leaders listen more than they speak. . Yeah. The articles, the short articles is called Listen Up. Okay. But I do think that it is so important that we emphasize the importance of listening, not just because we're musicians and it's important to, to listen deeply, to music to perform well, and to rehearse.

But when we take a step back and listen to folks in our ensemble, in our classes, the people in our life, and we, it's not just listening. It's how we listen. That makes a difference. And maybe there's a distinction between hearing and [00:23:00] listening, but I think that oftentimes most of the time, maybe when we listen, we're listening to.

And if we think about it, that's probably true. Most of the time when somebody else is speaking, we're thinking, oh, what am I gonna say? And in fact, we might be formulating our response while they're continue continuing to speak. and since it's been shown that we actually can't multitask as human beings, what ,

Dylan: what

Matthew: I know that's a big revelation by the way that we actually can't multitask.

So in order to fully listen, we have to set aside all distractions, set aside our phone, our tablet our computer, and be fully present in that moment. And in my mind, I think the leaders that have resonated with me are those folks. , when they listen, they do make you feel like you're the most important person to them in that moment.

Like what you have to say has value, even if they don't agree with you. And I think that's what's so important is that sometimes we only wanna listen to people that we agree [00:24:00] with. And leadership isn't that easy. . Yeah. And leadership is about, having an honoring. Folks with different thoughts, feelings, opinions, backgrounds, and I love the, it's in the seven habits of Highly Effective People, but I think it actually dates all the way back to St.

Francis, which is the idea of seek first to understand, then to be understood. . And so often we just want to shout our point of view and if we're louder than somebody else and we're gonna convince them or we're more charismatic, everybody will just believe us. But a pathway towards building trust, community and belonging is to truly listen.

And so as a leader myself, when if a student comes up at the end of rehearsal, before rehearsal and they need to share something, I just put everything down. I just look at them, and I'm just. And taking in what they're saying. And that non-verbal communication [00:25:00] sends a message that I value you and that is a reminder that every person, has needs and we all want to be seen, heard, valued and feel like we make a difference.

Yeah. And listening is one of the pathways to show people that we do value. . . And also when we listen deeply and we're open, we may change our mind too. And one of the roles of the leader is to take in feedback and ideas from everybody in our organization and then reflect deeply. So I'm really glad that listening, is the first one.

Yes. And it's, so I. . Yeah. Leadership isn't always about speaking. Sometimes the quiet leaders are the most effective . Yeah. Oh,

Dylan: absolutely. And I think the idea of listening which you so eloquently put goes, it certainly goes beyond it goes beyond music. Cuz I think when we think listening it's oh yeah, we as conductors, but to actually hear.

[00:26:00] Hear are the concerns. Hear the joys, the celebrations of the ensemble people that are in your, I'm laughing because one of my dear colleagues is in the room with me trying to be quiet. .

Matthew: It's not working.

This just makes it more real. . I'm gonna

Dylan: leave this in .

Matthew: It's great. Shaky.

Dylan: Sergio. Okay. Thank you.

Matthew: My sign didn't.

Okay. This is gonna be the best, this is gonna be the most listened to part of the podcast, . Okay.

Dylan: I'm really just trying to rub it in you. What was I, but No, but that idea of of like really getting to know the people in your ensemble beyond, as you said, like the conductor, just playing the organ kind of thing.

But really getting to know. . And you mentioned the idea . Oh, sorry folks. I've got No, nevermind. I won't go there. , that was one of my orchestral connecting colleagues. He [00:27:00] forgot his clarinet in here. So either. That'll be So anyway , you mentioned listening, but also the idea of kind of, Accepting the fact that we don't get to necessarily lead people that have share the same ideals as us.

And that kind of leads to the next one empathizing and understanding everyone and accepting them as they are which is a cool thing. There any other any other of these characteristics that kind of jump out to. .

Matthew: Oh yeah. One thing that Greenleaf talks about with listening, it's not just listening to other people it's also listening to our inner voice. Yeah. And listening within. And I think that's so key. And I think this world is so fast and so loud that we have to be intentional to create space. To actually create space for silence. To self-reflect . And I think we need to invest in ourselves for that.

So for example, I have a I meditate every morning. And even if it's only five minutes it's giving myself that [00:28:00] time for just quietude and deep reflection, and it helps set me up for the day. But I also share that we often think of leadership as just about leading others. I think leadership actually comes from within.

It begins with how we lead ourselves. . So if we value listening to others, we also need to put a high priority and value on listening to our inner voice and getting in tune with our inner self. becoming aware of our own self-talk. , which I don't think Greenleaf addresses directly, but I do think this is really key and in, in my leadership teaching, I like to get real and go deep quickly with folks.

And we just. Go there and say like how do you talk to yourself? Do you treat yourself with the same kindness that you would treat others? , do you treat yourself with compassion the way you'd like to treat others with compassion? And I'll tell you what, almost every single time the answer is no.

Yeah. I don't treat myself with kindness and compassion and the way I'd like to treat others. And then I, say what about forgive? do you often find the last person you [00:29:00] forgive is yourself or the hardest person to forgive is yourself. And people say, yeah. And so I think we need to start thinking about like, how do.

talk to ourselves. Cuz what I found is how we treat ourselves ends up coming out in a way of how we treat others. . And so when you think of the tenets of servant leadership,



also think about how they apply to you. So empathy has having compassion. For yourself, giving yourself grace matters as much as being empathetic and compassionate towards someone else.

The healing is another 10 and . I think we need to think about self-healing and maybe that's that ask for help as well, because what we've, during the pandemic it's come up quite a bit, right? It's hard to pour into somebody else with an empty cup. And but creating spaces for healing within our ensembles is a wonderful aspiration to create, to think of the role that music can play with healing.

And we can choose repertoire that invites a healing [00:30:00] space and in choose repertoire with a theme of healing and that can transform the space. And healing is also, how we talk to ourselves and how we treat others. , of course, awareness is another one of the tenets. , and I love that it's included as myself, as a student and teacher of mindfulness.

Mindfulness is truly about being more fully aware. Of, our place, our space in the world our inner thoughts and how we interact with others. And of course, awareness as a conductor is really important to be aware of, what's coming at us how the music sounds in a relationship to our vision that we're trying to create.

Being aware of non-verbal communication and reading the room that's so key. And. . So in terms of some of the other, some of the other ones I just want to share, stewardship really resonates with me when I think about student leadership. , if we can talk about stewardship with our students, and this really resonates particularly with your senior class, if you're talking about [00:31:00] leadership at the high school level and like leaving the space better than you found it, leaving a legacy. That we're stewards here. Like it's not about us. It's about, the community and it's gonna continue without us here. And then a commitment to the growth of people is another important tenant of servant leadership. And to me, I think that.

Speaks volumes of one of our intentions and goals and our outcomes as music educators is that we use music as a catalyst, as a vehicle to support folks to access and reach for their full. Potential. And it also has to do with the belief of the teacher. It's been really important to me. Do we believe in the unlimited potential of our students?

And do our actions and thoughts reflect that. , and I think that's so important, creating that growth mindset, classroom and culture. And then the last tenant that really speaks to me is building community belonging and [00:32:00] inclusion. Brene Brown says something really powerful about belonging.

When you're in a group where you. Feel like you belong. You don't need to change who you are. When you're striving to just fit in Yeah. You often need to change who you are,

which is incongruent often with our own personal values and integrity. So if we can instead strive to create an ensemble or classroom that celebrates and honors the individual for all that they bring.

, now we're on the pathway to creating an inclusive space. That celebrates this welcoming community and creates a sense of belonging. Yeah.

Dylan: Oh man. Oh man. I'm sorry. . What I'm laughing at myself is the fact that you gave this beautiful explanation about listening and the whole time I was just like, everything this person is saying is amazing.

Matthew: And I was, and

Dylan: I was just thinking how happy I'm to whenever we're able to share this.[00:33:00] But no, and I want just to go back. That amazing point you made at the beginning, just listen, listening to yourself and the idea that yeah, we are hard on like even this morning, since I said my wife is a TikTok star, I have become an addict a little bit, but I was just skimming through and there was a little clip of the controversial Joe Rogan and he was talking about Someone had asked him how, like, how do you do it?

How do you survive celebrity and all of the things that come with celebrity that aren't necessarily positive. And he said, oh I'm harder on myself than anyone could ever be. And I guess there's some truth to that, but the, I never, I. It's really important to think about how we treat ourselves, and I didn't think about how that comes across to others and maybe how that might seep in maybe subconsciously to, to how we're speaking to others.

But yeah, but no so much good stuff there. The next question is could you maybe outline some challenges, institutions, structures in general create [00:34:00] that make servant leadership

Matthew: challenging. Yeah, that's a great question because in some ways we might say that the nature of a conductor at the front of the room and the ensemble, in fr, in facing them, already creates this imbalance or potential hierarchical structure to begin with, so that it actually takes intentional intentionality to transform the space so that. It's more collaborative. And more of a shared leadership model that gives voice and empowers the members of the ensemble because of the tradition, the traditional role of the maestro and ensemble the conductor and ensemble, we have to take steps to break down.

Potential division that can be viewed. And I was reading this book called The Silent Musician by Mark Wigglesworth. Highly recommend it for [00:35:00] anybody that, that wants to get in the mind of what it's like to be a conductor. And I think in his final chapter he makes a joke about there's so many jokes about conductors , right?

Conductors are probably like the most made fun of people. Other, I think he said, other than lawyers, I guess there's more lawyer jokes than conductor jokes apparently, but conductor is like a close second apparently. And so there's been that tradition of, maybe tearing down the conductor or, and whatnot from maybe that the hierarchy that the ensemble.

Has resented over the decades of since maybe since Mendelson, became the first modern conductor. We're fighting that historical trend in and feelings towards the conductor. But I think that we need to be very intentional about creating a culture of collaboration.

. And it can even be as simple as stepping off the podium, right? Stepping off the podium. And when we're talking to the musicians, [00:36:00] just being real authentic, genuine personal walking into the ensemble. greeting folks as they enter the room talking to folks as they're leaving and establishing a personal connection that and genders a more welcoming community.

And I think it's really important for conductors to express gratitude. . So something I'm very intentional about is beginning rehearsals many times with just sharing my g. Gratitude for the musicians and may even being gratitude for the beautiful weather or the space that we're in and the sun coming through the windows.

And just to begin with gratitude. And we even, sometimes we'll do a mindful breathing and breathe and gratitude, right? And then release out our mouth what we want to send to the world. And that can really transform the space which I think is important. Because of the natural setup of the conductor and the ensemble [00:37:00] being on on separate sides.

Yeah, we need to take steps to create those connections. It's possible and it's really exciting. And then another strategy, of course is to bring a student or bring up a couple students to the front of the room and have them listen to the ensemble and give feedback. And then all of this, Sudden it's not just you giving feedback, also asking a lot of questions in your rehearsals, asking students like, what do you think what suggestion do you have here?

I give them opportunities to, to gather in a, in their sections. Okay. Take two minutes in your section, just discuss what you'd like to improve so that it's Collaborative team process rather than I'm not the one with all the answers. I say the answers are in the room, but they're not always gonna be with me.

And so when folks feel like, oh, the connector values what I have to say, I can really make a significant difference here. That, that's very meaningful. Also, super humbling strategy is to Not conduct , and they have the students, lead with just a group breath, right? Everybody can close their eyes.

They breathe together and they begin performing and just see how far they can get without a [00:38:00] conductor. And oftentimes the group listens on a deeper level. It's more expressive than when we were up there flapping our arms around at that point. It's, yeah, it's very humbling and whatnot, but it's also enlightening.

Maybe that's what we wanna do in the end is empower our musicians to be independent. , musical minded folks.

Dylan: Yeah. It sounds like a lot of, a lot of the things that you're mentioning not only develop the artist, but they develop the humanity in the room too. And the idea that The idea that we can help foster students that can live on beyond their time with us in music.

Because I think a lot of the time when we are being dictators on a podium, there's a lot of people relying on our. Our power that we may or may not actually have. So for you, it seems like for you, empowering those students the way that you do, there's a chance to create lifelong musicians and lifelong learners and there's hope in the cheats possible.

[00:39:00] Yes. But but no, those are some really great takeaways for us to think about as we think about the institutions and how. It's the built-in things that, in our histories, as you mentioned make things challenging, but there's ways to change. So that's really really good things to think about.

The last question I have admitted to our last guest is . It's a difficult one. It's truly actually impossible unless we send a survey out to your students. But how would you say, , how would your, how would you say your students describe your leadership style and or philosophy? .

Matthew: That, that would be interesting and I'm sure very humbling to receive that.

I think as a leader, I strive to be encouraging and supportive while also having high expectations. Very high standard. I think that's important to share, in fact. Yeah. That's actually how I define an upbeat leader. I had this graph that talked about an authoritarian leader.

Permissive leader, and[00:40:00] and neglectful leaders, actually one of 'em. But the upbeat leader is somebody who's supportive and encouraging while maintaining high expectations. Cause I think all of us want to be part of something, bigger than ourselves. And we want to be part of something that really leads to synergy, right?

That the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. And so I think people want to be partisanly excellent. . So maintaining a really high standard and expectation is really important. But it's how we communicate. That makes a difference. And I, having high standards like we can do.

we can do better than this, right? , a week ago, I felt like intonation, again, back to that listening. I just felt man, we just were, we weren't listening at that level that we needed to. And , I took some extra time just on, on the tuning note. I'm like, as long, let's do that. That's guys, you can do better than that.

And you, some students come up at the break and, oh, I was having a tough day on intonation today, but But they understand that the reason [00:41:00] I insist on a high bar is because I believe they can achieve it. That I care about them. If I didn't care about them, then I would say, oh, that's good enough.

Yeah. That's good enough. But the saying like good enough, rarely is right. It's rarely is . And so I think a leader that encourages students to reach higher and higher to. , what I say, reach for their full potential matters actually define leadership in my book, upbeat and in only teachings and coachings of leaders, is that leadership is inspiring and encouraging others to achieve their full potential.

. And I also believe that you don't need a leadership title to be a leader. . And it's not about positionality. I think that, A decision to, to choose kindness, to be kind to someone. That's a leadership decision, cuz I'll tell you what most people just walk on by to encourage somebody who needs encouragement.

That's a leadership decision. , because most people won't, to share that. You're grateful to share appreciation with [00:42:00] someone. That's a leadership decision, cuz most people just keep it to themselves to let somebody know that you care about them. That you notice them to say, Hey, did you get a haircut?

It looks good. . I'm serious. I think something that we must say that simple Yeah. Is a leadership decision cuz most people will just walk on by . And there's a there's a guy named Drew Dudley who has a Ted. And he talks about lollipop moments, but he shares in this five minute Ted Talk, he says, sometimes we make leadership bigger than it is.

Like we make leadership about being like Gandhi or Martin Luther King Jr. Something that, or John F. Kennedy, something that seems like so beyond our reach and scope of our life. He says, but it's really about, is it really about the little things? And it's about letting people know that they make a difference in your life.

That's. That's an act of leadership and a lollipop moment is finding something today that we can do to make [00:43:00] somebody feel just a little bit better about themselves. And I might just be writing a little note of gratitude and that's a leadership decision. And when we all focus on the little things, we end up making a big difference in the world.

I would like to share something about making a difference in the world. Cause I think we all wanna feel like our life here on Earth Matter. Wouldn't you agree? Yeah. For sure.

Like how much time we have, right? We, how much time we choose, we make choices throughout our life, but sometimes we think I want to change the world.

Okay, let's, and I'm gonna change the world. Somebody tell us I wanna change the world. You're like, okay, good luck with that . But I actually think that we. Through our leadership choices. And that's what really upbeat is about that we can choose our upbeat, we can choose our thoughts, we can choose our attitude.

In any situation, we can choose how we respond. Ultimately, we choose our upbeat, just like a conductor chooses. They hear the music in their mind that they want to create in that upbeat. So I think we think about what we want to create before it happens, rather than focusing on what's wrong. We want to focus [00:44:00] on what we want to create these solution finders in life.

But I truly believe, As educators, we're given this opportunity to positively influence, impact, and potentially transform the lives of our students. And while we may not succeed all the time, I do believe that if you can make a positive difference in the life of a child, that you change their world.

. And when you change one student's world, , you actually are changing the world. , because that's how change happens one person at a time. And sometimes we as teachers doubt, we have self-doubt and we have imposter syndrome. We think is what I'm doing, is it really making a difference?

And I just wanna share the answer is A resounding yes. A resounding yes. As a music educator, you are making a difference. . , you're making a difference in the life of [00:45:00] one student at a time.

Dylan: Absolutely. Yeah I think that idea that I talked about that Dr. Tim moment that I had I was like, every moment of my life needs to be like that

But it, it's a really, yes, it's a really important thing to think about. Like when you're walking on the sidewalk and the way that you look at someone, the way that you smile, the things that we don't know that happen in those peop your students' days, the regular person's days the way that you interact with them, as you said, can change the world because they'll go on and affect someone else and they'll go on and affect someone else.

And it's a .

Matthew: Exactly.

Dylan: Yeah. This idea, and I want to maybe ask a follow up question. Which I know Oh, she'll share at the end, which I find funny, not, I find funny in a good way. Have you found that whenever your, cuz your beliefs are so strong and that in, in your leadership ideals, have you had pushback in your life from people that you've tried to share it with?[00:46:00]

Matthew: I think some folks when I say you can choose your upbeat , some folks will say can you really choose? Can you really choose your thoughts? And and I'll share, don't misinterpret upbeat, don't think that the outcome of upbeat is to be joyous and happy and positive all the.

Because that's ridiculous, . And I actually like to call the elephant out in the room right away when I lead professional development or get to work with folks and I'll say, let's talk about toxic positivity. , let's talk about toxic positivity and what that is. Yeah. Because some people when they hear something like, oh, that's just toxic positivity.

I'll also like, toxic positivity is when you're tone. Not musically tone deaf, but it's when somebody shares something with you that really matters to them they're feeling a certain way. They may, a case would be like, I would somebody who shares I, I've been diagnosed with cancer. And then you respond at least you have that nice car to drive in.

jeez. , just completely missing it. There's [00:47:00] no empathy, there's no compassion, which is really what that person needs at that point, like , I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. If there's anything I can do for you, do you want to talk about it? And that's really what upbeat leadership is about.

, it's about compassion and kindness and choosing that. Not right, but we're just going and moving on. So I even that is a choice of how do I respond is a choice. Upbeat is about reclaiming personal control. It's about reclaiming your freedom. Cuz there's a lot of voices in our society that are trying to control what we think.

I think. Honest about that, we can all agree that's the case and in ways that are very successful with the power of media and the internet and social media. There's many, and of course advertising is the obvious one, but folks are trying to control our thoughts. And I wanna say in the end, we need to be accountable for the choices we make and the thoughts that we have.

And when we are accountable, we can begin [00:48:00] to choose. To focus on something that's gonna help lift us just a little bit more. And it's not like you can go from grief or feeling of loss to joy. That's like manic, right? . It's really about what can we do to feel a little bit better today? And that's why I share practical strategies, find one little thing to be grateful for.

, just one little thing. Even in the darkness. One little thing. And if we can start to think of something that we're grateful for. and really focus on that. The magic is you begin to find something else to be grateful for. . And then you start to see more things in your life that you can have gratitude for.

And then when you begin to share that gratitude and that appreciation, now you start to create a ripple effect and positively change other people's lives. And when you're able to serve and lift and encourage others, the magic. , how it lifts you as well. .

Dylan: Oh, that's beautiful. And the, yeah, the reason I ask that is because the, , [00:49:00] I find within my own just exploring this idea of servant leadership.

A lot of the assumption that comes with it is that, that high quality or musical standard is, not there, or it is it's not leading. And that's correct. It isn't leading, at least in my life. But to understand that whenever we do lead with what we've been talking about this for this past hour, that those things generally do come with it, but it's not about just letting it go.

It's not about just being nice. Oh, definitely not. You've talked about being direct. When something's out of tune, it's out of tune. We can all do better. But those ideas and the reason I was laughing before is because. , being someone who has, I'll be honest, in the process of reading your book, I haven't completed it.

But Sure. I was wondering about what it would be like to talk to you about having this choice and it's interesting and great to hear you walk the talk [00:50:00] cuz with some of the questions, there's a great possibility to talk about what is. and what is negative, but in each answer that you have given, you have chosen, to show the light in the world.

And you have talked about what is wonderful and what we can choose to answer with. So it's been really great to. to know that it's not folks, I know you can't see this, but it's not fluff . It's true.

Matthew: He lives what he preaches.

Dylan: And I just wanna say how appreciative I am for you to share all of this with us and to take the time to talk with me and and just the time alone.

I'm, I am very grateful for you're someone I wish I. Very much earlier in my life, . But I'm grateful that we have been able to have this time right now. So thank you so much, Matthew for everything that you've been able to share with us

Matthew: today. It's been a thrill and a pleasure. Thank you so much for your time and your authenticity, and you're doing great work in the world.



This dissertation project, I [00:51:00] think is gonna make a big impact and not just be one of those books that collects dusts on the shelf in some library. . , thank you so

Dylan: much.

## Colin Clarke Interview Transcript

Dylan: [00:00:00] Okay, here we are for another. changing your pattern. Finally, this project has a name, , and today's guest is the first person to hear that name, . I'm just really happy that I can move on with my life now. right in the project. But anyway I have the great pleasure of being joined by someone who has been very influential in my life since I was in grade seven, seven, which is hard to believe, and it's just a great pleasure to welcome the one and only conductor extraordinaire.

Collin Clark, welcome to Changing your Pattern. Thank you, my friend.

Colin: Good

Dylan: to be here. It's just, yeah. It's really great to have you and I'm sure we'll, we, I'll talk more about our connection and all of that. But just a reminder to listeners, this season is has a dual purpose as it serves my doctoral research.

So a lot of the questions are centered around servant leadership and that first question is, Are you aware of the work of Robert k Greenleaf and his [00:01:00] servant leadership model? And if so, how does that impact your work?

Colin: I wasn't aware of his work until I got contacted by you and saw some information about him.

So I looked him up and read his 10 characteristics of my servant leader. So I went through that thoroughly and it's very insightful and I've actually tried to incorporate a few of that, a few of its characteristics into. rehearsal just last night, so there you go. Oh, wow. Yeah. . .

Dylan: Okay. Yeah. Cuz I think whenever I when I've watched you rehearse and more, a more as a professional from my viewpoint, not whenever I was a little grade seven student, being

Colin: a, clinic by you

Dylan: I've even then I exper you experience a warmth and you experience someone who's listening to the group that's in front of them. And when we talked about these characteristics and being empathetic to the people who are in front of you so I like what were some of the ways maybe last evening even you incorporated some of the ideas?

Colin: I was, . First of all, last night I had a concert and a rehearsal, so it was a dress rehearsal at the Oh, [00:02:00] wow. Double whammy. Yeah. Yeah. One of those things.

And it's one of those stressful things where I think the, first of all, I should mention it, it was a youth orchestra, , Marquez and Jack Kovski on the program.

Pretty big heavy program for this particular group. And they did very well. My the, I was reading actually the the Larry Sp. Can tan characteristics in my dressing room. , just Okay. rehearsal. So I was, or today's interview, so I was reading for a few things and I, I love the concept of being just an empathetic leader to be the kind of person who. , use a certain ideology when working with people and trying to find a way to connect with them. Not in a hierarchical sort of way, but just how can I help us achieve our collective goals? How can I help you achieve our collective goals? And , the thing that caught my eye I just wanna find it here so I can just tell you directly looking, thinking about, but yeah.

The commitment to the growth of. , may I read this? You can edit this if you need to, but, Oh, yeah, absolutely. Certain leaders believe that people have an [00:03:00] intrinsic value beyond their tangible contributions as the worker. Now, this is a, this is the thing that got me, because very often as a conductor of young people sometimes, and I'm embarrassed to admit this, but sometimes when I have a musician who isn't, bringing the best version of themselves musically to our ensemble rehearsals. I often un, un unconsciously evaluate them as a person. And that's not fair, right? Yeah. Yeah. And I don't know if people do this or whatever else, but like you have a saxophone who's always late sort of thing and you think ill of him because, or she won't learn that part.

She hasn't learned that part. So you think ill of her beyond that. So I was reading through these 10 characteristics. I'm thinking, I have to remember that these people are people and I may see them. Yeah if their life is a hundred percent, I may see them maybe, 7% of the time.

Oh yeah. And therefore the other 93%, there's other factors that go into who they are and how they're, how they become who they are. That could just, last time I addressed in the thing, to find the ways or to be cognizant of [00:04:00] the fact that, sometimes people. the capacity to get to a certain point when it comes to what I see of them, the 7% that I see of them, and therefore it's important for me to meet them at that level and be kinder.

Not that to be the kind of person where I'm cognizant of their situation and trying to build them up so they can meet as who we are as a team as opposed. Always thinking ill of them outside of rehearsals. Oh, she was like a rehearsal again. And what kind person is she? He hasn't learned the soul yet.

He can't get it. What kinda, so that's, that hit me just last night in my dressing, before my concert. .

Dylan: It's a really important thought and it goes back to that kind of carry on, let you are the orchestra, let me play you. Yes. That is your job. Yes. And not thinking of our musicians as people, but as instruments often.

Exactly. . But no, that, no, that, that's one of the points that kind of, I think caught my attention when I began thinking about this research and how it could be applied to what we do. . Because, we've all we've all either been or seen conductors who lead through [00:05:00] fear who kind of criticize beyond the music to the purposes in which, don't need to happen. So that this commitment to the growing people beyond music is something. I also get really excited about, the other thing, I'll, and I'll probably continually point this out during the interview, is you are someone who is empathetic to the musicians you're working with, but you're, I've also seen you just

Colin: Lay it down and

Dylan: And so what I'm trying to say is being empathetic doesn't mean lowering standards.

Exactly. I think it means if , you're empathetic to the fact that this person is not being their best selves yet. And that you can help bring out or draw out that musician inside of them. So yeah it's really fun to, to think back to all the memories I have of watching you rehearse and moving on.

Sure. And I'm really. I'm really excited about some of these questions. What or who has influenced your approach to leadership? Maybe discuss how they shaped your approach and maybe some experiences that you've had that also shaped you. Oh,

Colin: that's a great question and I [00:06:00] have, I guess several answers for that one, but the first person that came to my mind is my high school band teacher, and his leadership approach was something at that point in my life I was.

Exposed to in a way that like, conceptualizes, even leadership, it's something that I appreciated later on in life. But his approach to making music, making some phonic music with a large group was to always carry an element of, he had a perfect balance of fun. Music is fun. And music is hard work.

So there was an element if we want excellence, we have to work hard to get there, but as we work hard, let's have fun doing it. And right, it's, you don't really go into your physics professor's class and he says physics is fun. Let's try find a way to make this fun. Although for what it is, my physics professor was fantastic.

It was a lot of fun. But physics, rocks. . But that was probably a bad example. Let's talk math , right? But there's a certain expectation I had as a kid where you walk into a

classroom, you sit down and you are [00:07:00] spoken to about the material that's there. And I think my high school teacher, gave me the first impression of a style of leadership that was more collaborative.

So it wasn't so much about here's the material, absorb this, learn this, regurgitate this for the test that's coming up. It was more, here's what we have here, musically speaking, what do you think about that? Or How can we make this grower? What can we do about this? And I've always appreciated that kind of leadership simply because it shaped who I was as a conductor, even before I knew I wanted to be a conductor.

So we'll just call that a leader step. So that's where my first influence would come from. The list goes on, on and on. I remember Glenn Price? Of course. Yeah. Glenn one time said he was giving a talk actually, conducting my rehearsal actually. We brought him as a guest conductor and he was doing a rehearsal.

. And he said to me every rehearsal's an opportunity to inspire. and I thought of, at that point in my life, every rehearsal was an opportunity to, get the work done. We gotta get to the second movement in this rehearsal. We have to, finish this sweep before, [00:08:00] the concert comes.

And my approach to rehearsals has always been directional. We have a goal, we have to get here from A to B to state school, and that's it. , and there we go. So when I think. I'd go back to my high school teacher and his approach to music and how I was always inspired by him. We had rehearsals, we had a good time, but I didn't appreciate how some of the things he would say was inspirational to me.

And when Glen said this to Dr. Price said this to my ensemble. Back in those days, it was like a, a flash bulb, or sorry, light bulb went off over my head because. You don't know. We, we influence people in so many different ways, in ways that, we don't even realize we're doing sort of thing yourself, myself, our colleagues.

So there's some sort of how can I put this? after I, after Glen said that I look at rehearsals with a little bit more reverence. . So it's important to prepare for rehearsal to watch what you say in rehearsal to guide in the rehearsal because it's an opportunity to inspire and you don't know what you'll do or say to inspire.

[00:09:00] And that can be a negative thing as well. You can aspire someone to never come back to your rehearsals. . Someone not to rehearsal, what have you. So that's all the things I took into consideration. But yeah he is someone who I took his rehearsal technique and styles and his philosophies very seriously.

So yeah. Great guy. And I have a list that goes on and on. I can't remember who said this to me. It might even mean Colleen. Colleen Richards. Okay. But I think she or someone

like her said, I steal from everyone and share with everyone. So she gets these ideas all over the place and she's, oh, that's a good idea.

I'm gonna take that, steal, this sort of thing. Or she'd sit at one of my rehearsals. That's a good idea. Steal that idea from you, Colin. And then vice versa. And then she was sharing with. And that's something I've taken to heart as well, where whenever I'm in a situation, like I love going to festivals, I love watching other adjudicators do their job and and watch how they activate. We're all trying to accomplish the same thing, but because we're individuals, we have a different way of getting to these goals. So to hear different colleagues, of finding different ways to achieve excellence through [00:10:00] music. It's exciting and also inspiring. So I love being able to be in a situation where I can absorb as much information as possible, steal as much information as I can, and use that everywhere I go and share with whomever cares to listen.

So that's something else I think has shaped myself as a leader. Great. Those are all

Dylan: really great things and I like go, even going, just going way back to the your teacher. The idea of being a constructivist leader. And and acknowledging that you are not well, in some cases, we've been the person in the room that's gone around the sun more , couple

Colin: more times.

Dylan: .

Yeah. I'm graying. Even even a grade seven. students can offer great artistic ideas. Absolutely. And they can have thoughts and be creative and I think so, so much we just think, oh no, I need to direct and demand and that kind of idea. But to hear that, , that was your experience with your teacher is really cool thing.

And then with Glen, this, the idea of [00:11:00] inspiration kind. It, I connect it with one of the characteristics, which is persuasion. , it's a way of kind of not, demanding, but it, we can inspire someone to do something or persuade them to do something. So that's really nice to Absolutely.

Colin: Absolutely.

Dylan: a similar vein. Yeah. But what were some of the when, like when you were an ensemble member, what were some of the different kinds of leadership styles that you were exposed to? And this might nec not necessarily be

Colin: positive . Oh, I got several stories. I had a rude awake thing when I went from the band world into the orchestral world.

And when I was a kid I was in high school band and I guess my teacher thought I was excelling. He felt I should get an additional challenge. So he suggested I join an orchestra. And in my orchestra choice was the Toronto Symphony Youth Orchestra. And the con, we had two conductors and.

David Zer was the conductor of my first rehearsal on my first piece with a symphony orchestra. I [00:12:00] was 16 years of age. I was terrified. We were doing and , we were doing AOR Act Symphony. I was on Symphony. Yeah. And I'm not sure why, but the way he conducted, I would hit the as hand change direction.

I was right there . So I'm playing tape, doing boom and I'm not, and I'm. Second, a full second head of the rest of the orchestra, or a half a second or what have you. And I'm thinking to myself, I'm doing exactly what I think I should be doing as a percussionist, right? Why is the orchestra so slow or so behind or what have you?

So I would try to listen to the orchestra and keep up with them, but I was so trained as a high school kid, this is what you do. This is when you play, when you see this, you play that. Rude Awakening was just the notion that some conductors, and we've all seen this, would like you to with high level wind ensembles, with the orchestras where there is that delay between the IK twos, the change of direction of the B pattern.

And the response in sound from the orchestra. And I, that was [00:13:00] terrifying to me because there was that space where, I don't know, I'm supposed to play, I don't know why I'm supposed to be in there. I'm so used to being, there it is, there's a downbeat and here's my So David, who I grew to love he's a fantastic man.

No, he's no longer with us, but fantastic teacher educator, conductor, but he was obviously of that ilk of the orchestral world, and this is how we do things and whatnot. So he snapped at me immediately. and said, , he gave me, no, he gave me no help whatsoever. I thought I was being punked by like a nineties, five piece orchestra where I would give, he'd give the damn beat I'd play on the downbeat.

No one played at the same time. It was always a couple seconds or like a little bit later, , and he'd look at me and say, I'm wrong. What's wrong with you, man? So if you want to even get the sense of that, and I finally clued in, but there was that moment in time where I thought he could have handled that better after that.

And this, again, this is my first rehearsal in a full symphony orchestra. And the Toronto Symphony Orchestra is an exceptional organization. Yeah. And, some great talent that comes outta that group. So I [00:14:00] was just overwhelmed by hearing these fantastic

sounds I'd never heard before as a kid. And this music was extraordinary and this is fantastic.

And there I was screwing it up because I'm playing what I thought was the downbeat, the time. So I actually, I remember distinct. On the subway drive subway, ride home back to Bramton, bursting the tears. Cause I thought I made a fool of myself on my first rehearsal. Follow. And of course I had people in my section who were like u t percuss.

They were to me. And they're both like shaking their head saying, wrong with you. I actually sitting on my, on, in the in the subway Ryan, new Yorkdale station, and tears are I'm thinking like, this is about for me. My teachers not be good enough to plan this orchestra.

I thought I had the chalk to pull it off. The first rehearsal, I got yelled at a couple of times, mind you, by the by the conductor and got the side eye from my percussions colleagues. And now again, this turned into a fantastic experience. I learned quite a bit, but if there were some conducting styles that I think come from another generation, so I don't really connect with, [00:15:00] it's the idea I was singling at a person and.

Not really meeting him or her where they're at, but disciplin them in the mirror. It says you did this wrong. Get it right. And Right. I'll admit, I'm I've done that myself a couple times when I was on the but that was such a starting experience to me, and I don't think he understood what the problem was and therefore I wish he showed to, to go to your list of the 10 characteristics.

I wish he showed better empathy to recognize, or maybe he couldn't even recognize it at the time. , but to recognize what the problem was because, and I'm repeating myself here, but he gave the down bit, like two or three times, and every single time I was right there, he stopped the in the wrong spot.

and I, do it again, , boom. And you're on the wrong spot. Look, play my music. Look at him and the orchestra. Look at me like I'm some sort of, oh, no , whatever. But yeah, I think empathy would've been a great exercise right there to say, this is how he played a sy or this is this is the thing you should expect when you're playing in a symphony orchestra.

Or music like this, or a conductor like myself or whatever. But instead it was just get it .

Dylan: Yeah. It's so funny that you say that cuz [00:16:00] in this is now the fifth interview I think I've done and, I'm talking to Jodi Blackshaw, I'm talking to a Matthew Arou. Ramona Weiss.



Wow. And it's been interesting to see this exact pattern come up every time. Really? The understanding, yeah. The idea. We never know the full, and you already said that in an earlier question. We never know the full story of who's in front of us. And who are we to be Maybe he clearly didn't have any idea that it was your first time in an orchestra and that there's this history of, playing behind the beat, blah, blah, blah.

But, and that, and you're right, it's a complete, it's an old no, not playing behind the beat still happens, but that old school mentality of rehearsal, I feel like even in the orchestra world is starting to dissipate a little bit. . . And then we're, we're thinking more of people that are in front of us and being collaborative and all that.

But it's just, it's been really interesting to see that pattern come throughout all of this, all of these questions. Yeah. Were there any other experiences you wanted to talk

Colin: about? Oh, how much time do you have This? Several, but sure. Let's go one more. . [00:17:00] I remember almost hypothetical this last.

I remember one time, same conductor. Same orchestra. And it was a situation where he wasn't giving a clear beat pattern. He was just, for all intents and purposes, he was just conducting in a circle. And we were doing this, we were doing Pictures and exhibition Missouri King. Oh yeah.

And there is a movement called Baba yaga, which leads directly into the finale movement, the Great Gate Kiev. And these strings have this string from really technical part, and at the downbeat of the next movement, hear me again on Tiffany. There's a Tiffany hit right there. The downbeat of the next movement.

So he would just, I. Like something that would illustrate time. He conducted in a circle and he did it over and over again. And I'm thinking to myself, I, you're not helping me. I love you as a conductor. You're a great, I'm happy to be here. You're not helping me. And the entire orchestra was like, I don't get this.

What are you, why are you doing that sort of thing? . [00:18:00] So we all arrive it, it's like picture, like four or five people falling down the stairs at the same time. We all arrive at that downbeat. So and he'd stop and say, you're not doing it right. The same sort of routine as well. But what he was trying to get us to do was to listen.

and it took me a while to even figure out what he was trying to do, but it was actually brilliant where he was saying, you listened to the orchestra, listen to what's happening around you. Put the music together. Think out. Think out. He didn't say these things directly, but you can see then that the, at the, I don't know what we call the top of the circle or the bottom in the circle, you can see what that beat was supposed to happen.

And we did it that way. We were all planning, it made sense. All of a sudden now in content, he didn't conduct in a circle, he actually gave us a, a little more time, but he talked more safety to be. To have agency on the music and not necessarily to rely on each other so we can hear where the music is going, and then achieve that great climax together as a group in time.

Again, I didn't understand his methodology when he began, and again, everything I learned from connectors, no one conducts in a circle. always loved the way he did, but it made a lot of sense. [00:19:00] And come the concert, it was brilliant. We just listened together and just came. . Yeah. Wow. Okay.

Dylan: Yeah, and that, that's another really great point. The idea of what we do, not so much as directors, but as like stewards of what, of the ensembles we have and any opportunity that we can empower our musicians to be creative artists that they are. And not just a cog in the band machine. Exactly.

I know. And I know horns, you made your choices when we played in marches, right? You were playing off beats. But, that's your job. You can play 'em musically. But anyway, but the idea to, like you said, give agency. It's really beautiful. And the second thing when we, cuz we, we talk about these experiences as scary as they might have been and, but these directors that we're talking about, although maybe wouldn't fully line up with the servant leadership model, they really love not only the music they're doing, they love the people they're doing it with.

And I think it's really important to. To say [00:20:00] that, and you already admitted. Sometimes I do this in my rehearsals and I, I will also join that train with you and say, I get mad in rehearsals. I lose my train of thought. I say things, I don't mean to say I hurt people's feelings by accident, but the idea is that.

with all of these characteristics and the idea of being a servant leader as a, it sounds cheesy, but a way of life. It's we're constantly checking in on that. It's not to say that's completely absent from your leadership style, but it's just like checking in with yourself being aware of your what you're saying, how you're communicating, all that.

Yeah, because I can mean I I have a very similar story, with a very well known conductor in Toronto, who I will not mention. But yeah, it just, it was not the same situation where we were doing Petruska Ooh. And, I was in the trumpet section, and I forget it was, think it was like the bear movement.

, or is it said on my part, the beer movement, ,

Colin: And Dunno.[00:21:00] But

Dylan: anyway, it was just, it was same thing. It was very like, unclear. And I don't think he was, oh, I don't think this person was trying to create agency. I just think it was like they, it was about them. . Yeah, so there's, but it's really important to do what you did and identify those characteristics in the people you look up to and and, we're all human. That's the point. Yeah, exactly. That I'm trying to say back to a little bit more of a specific of a servant leadership question. How are the following servant leadership characteristics as defined by Green Greenleaf exemplified in your work as a conductor and educator?

And just for our listeners, I'll read those off again. That's the listen. Empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to growing people and building community. And by no means do you need to give me ,

Colin: an example of each one. , like I said while I was reading this, Last night in my dress rehearsal or in my, before my rehearsal a lot of things that jumped out at me, the commitment to growth and people, of [00:22:00] course, we talked about that.

, is a big one. Listening is something I know for myself. I had a problem with as a young conductor. Not just listening to the ensemble and making judgment calls based on what I hear as an ensemble, but listening to the problems and finding a way to. What I want to the musician so they understand.

So it's again, collaborative. I remember when I was at Western University my conducting professor there, I did a rehearsal for him. I was part of my growth. I did a rehearsal for him. So I had the orchestra and we were doing, ironically, Tchaikovsky was his. Sixth Symphony. Sixth Symphony.

And we did our score study in lessons before the rehearsal, week before the rehearsal. And then I did a rehearsal and , my next lesson with him was just to come back and say how did it go? And I was complaining. I was like, the strings are this and the violas and this and what have you, thing and this tell me more.

What do you mean this didn't happen? I wanted to have this happen here musically speaking, but they're not [00:23:00] prepared or I want to do this, and they weren't ready and the profession was this and he was later, what have you. So when we isolated some of the musical concerns that we were having that I was.

He said to me, do you know what your issue is? I think I solved your problem, and he reached into his desk and pulled out a small mirror and held it in front of my face. Said, I think we found the problem, , and it, first of all was so upset who do you think you are? I studied for weeks to put this together.

I know my score, right? They were the problem. But I wasn't listening to the orchestra. I was listening to Lee Wilham as a great a phrase he calls it. As conducted, we do a lot of

mistake elimination. So we go into a rehearsal and our job is just to get rid of all the mistakes, correctly get rid of thing.

And I'm. I'm paraphrasing his definition there by saying my intent going to that rehearsal was to, make a point musically, but all I was doing was listening for the mistakes and just hashing it out sort of thing. And then of course I complained about it cuz it wasn't what I wanted.

But my professor said quite dramatically with this whole mirror thing, you're not [00:24:00] listening, some of the problems that you can, that you hear in rehearsals, you sometimes create yourself in rehearsals. So we have to find a better way to connect with the orchestra, to listen to the music to get the things that have to come across.

And of course, the challenge for us as conductors to sometimes do this without necessarily saying it, and there's a way we can show what we want from the orchestra. Cuz ultimately when we get to the performance, the last thing you can say is Viola, you're behind the beat or mo cell you're flaps or anything.

You can't say those things in concerts. His challenge to me was to go away and think about every mistake that I tried to eliminate and how I could do a better job at connecting with musicians. . And that meant more listening. . Yeah. Yeah. No,

Dylan: for sure. And that's, and that even goes like beyond just musically listening, right?

You're listening to maybe s you know no then we go into empathy again, but . But certainly it sounds like maybe you need to listen to yourself a little bit more . So yeah, it does go beyond that idea of music. Before I [00:25:00] move on, next question. Are there any.

Colin: characteristics. Oh, I'm a big fan of building community, so that's one of the other characteristics that, that I took with me quite well because there's something really special about making music, whether it's orchestral or vocal. Or wind ensemble because we create this little microcosm of our, of a community, people come in, they each have the different roles, and they all contribute to the greater good of our collective goal. And it's important to me in my ensembles that their role in the ensemble goes beyond just. Second horn or, viola or, second trombone sort of thing.

So very often I'll go out of my way, for example, to learn the names of, even if it's, even if it's like a 20 minute clinic, I'll do a, I'll do a clinic on time at a festival and I will try techniques to try to connect with the musicians. Not always successful when, yeah. But it builds a sense of community.

Sorry. I guess what's important to me is having that sense of community [00:26:00] where people understand our role as an organization, whatever our goal is, the, as an organization. . But our role is to contribute to this again, this musical microcosm that we call concert band that we call orchestra. We call.

Choir and find a way to not only create community within the ensemble, but also to connect that en community to communities outside the ensemble. And what does that mean? So a number of things that we can do to connect outside of our internal community. And I try in my efforts to do things like that to, it can be as simple as bringing, guests in to work with the ensemble.

Yeah. Someone new to our community and welcome them in. And that person works with the ensemble, having guest artists sort of thing or bring little clips of our music to. Schools, different classes or different ensembles. , I remember another person who who I hold in high regard Mark Hopkins.

Dr. Mark Hopkins one time said to me, you should go to as many rehearsal. How do I get better as I conduct Dr. Hopkins? I wanna be like you one day. How do I get better? And he just, I've asked him the same question, . [00:27:00] Exactly. And he said consume, absorb, consume everything. So I, he said, I like, okay, so I should go to more orchestra rehearsals.

No. Go to jazz rehearsals. Go to choir rehearsals. Go to masterclass. Just just consume that information. And Even the act of that helped me build my own community of different things in the world. People in my space who are making music in different ways and different kinds and different styles and different genres.

But it helped to develop a rounder perspective, a more fuller, respective perspective, pardon me? Of my understanding of the music that's around me. Beauty building is a big thing in my way of thinking. And trying to find a way to facilitit. As a facilitator in my community, ways to bring people together through music.

Dylan: Yeah. That's great. And I was laughing when you were talking about the learning people's names because I remember when it was , it was the first National Youth band concert back after the pandemic. And the Toronto Youth Win Orchestra was opening the concert. And I remember you having this conversation with this little boy in the audience, , [00:28:00]

Colin: you

Dylan: remember that?

And you just kept going back and forth and you learn his name . And I know it seems like a silly example, but it that's like an example of connecting with someone. .

Colin: Oh goodness. Yeah.

Dylan: Cause I remember. Talking to all her, I think I was like texting Jillian and she was like, that Colin, he like, he connects like no one else.

Like I

Colin: remember having that conversation, , it was, it's never happened before this, he was like four or five years of age and the middle of a concert. He puts up his hand, says, can I go to the. and , his mother's right there, but he asked the guy on stage in the middle of a concert and one to the bathroom.

So I said, yeah, sure, go ahead and take off. Do what you gotta do. And I you with that, of course, he came back and then when he came back he was talking about his experiences going to the bathroom and then all these things that he learned as kid. I asked his name, he said, my name's Kevin, but I have far, I have four nicknames as well.

And , people [00:29:00] probably Kiwi or Ke or whatever else. And this is a concert, in the middle of a concert with a live streams. It's the whole thing. Hilarious. That kid. That's funny. can die.

Dylan: But that that, that came into mind. And also just in general, I. , I would be hard pressed to come up with an example of community more so than the Toronto Youth Wind Orchestra I'll call organization.

There's. , like the people that you have in the, the current group are so dedicated to it. And to see the alumni of it talk about their experience, heck, they even started a band after the fact. The, your Metro wins. So that, that love of community and music that you build within and the musicians you get to work with is a beautiful thing.

Not to mention, your little feeder system of the junior wins and, sorry, concert wins and things. So yeah, like it's. I just love when I'm, every single person I've talked to [00:30:00] for this are people that don't just talk the talk like you are a walking example of what you're preaching.

And it, I think it's a really beautiful thing.

Colin: I just wanna say that's very kind to you. I can't tell you how much that means to me because that's a special organization and we've had a lot of great people go through

that program. And it's. Wonderful to be able to contribute to our community in that unique way.

So that means a lot to hear you say up. Thank you very much.

Dylan: And now you get to do it, the Royal Conservatory. It's just, oh, that's great. , which will be in your, which will be in your flattering intro. I record.

Anyway, moving onwards and upwards. Could you outline some of the challenges institutions or structures in general create to make this idea of servant leadership

Colin: challenging?

Challenges. There are several. Number one . I've often I've now worked both in the community setting in a professional setting, like at the university level. , I've taught high school and no matter where you go [00:31:00] Trying to convince non-musicians the importance of the arts.

And these non-musicians have to be the people who, who sign the paycheck or who, who create your budget or, these people. Sometimes don't see the significance of having a wind ensemble leave the campus and we talk about community, right? Leave the campus and spread the wealth of music at this, at X school or X University, whatever else, right?

And that will always be a challenge that will never change. Unfortunately. This is the sort of thing you have to contend with as a. As a conductor, as an artist, and I know it's not just me, of course, I'm sure like you can go span across the arts for, dance and visual arts and whatnot.

They probably have the same challenges as well, but certainly in my, close to home was trying to find. I shouldn't even say non-musicians, but certainly people who have a different mindset when it comes to, their role in that community where it be a university or what have you.

And and trying to convince them that what we do is significant, special and important, especially in building [00:32:00] community. I have a as a leader as a. servants trying to lead musicians. Another challenge I face, and I know my colleagues who are in high schools and elementary schools face this and perhaps the university level as well, is trying to motivate kids sometimes to.

How can I put this? Realize their best self in music. There's a trend that I didn't even recognize because I don't really see it in my little, space with my ensembles. But I've had friends and colleagues talk about how kids nowadays, not my dad, kids know

But actually back in my. We had to practice, we practice all the time outside of rehearsals and it's a concept that a lot of kids, that's, I think formed to a lot of kids this day, these days where you go to rehearsal to play. . And when you play, that's when you get your practicing again.

You know what I mean? Like you take out your saxophone and dust off the [00:33:00] cobwebs. And you play and you learn the music, learn the rhythms. When you play it there, as soon as class is over, you put the saxophone back and you go home and you do your thing, whatever else. And that saxophone stays there until the next time you actually play.

So as a, I'm not sure I mean answering your question, but as a challenge that I find especially post pandemic where I find musician. Need to practice more often, need to hone their skills. And it's a combination of how educators motivate kids. But at the same time, I think there's so many distractions for kids these days and their defense.

, if I had to deal with TikTok and Facebook when I was 15, it's unlikely I'd be picking up my saxophone on a regular basis sort of thing. Cause there's so many entertaining things in a way. My, I, I. I'll concede that for kids growing up in the 21st century.

But at the same time I do workshops in schools. I do festival adjudications. You do the same thing as well, my friend and . When I see kids who, I even asked that at one a workshop one time, are you allowed to take the instruments home? And one of the kids said, I don't know, I'd never take my instrument.[00:34:00]

and right there, I wanna throw the tube, I wanna throw the, to tuba at him. But yeah, I'm here. I probably didn't play in class. So is that a challenge worthy of your question? I don't know, but in recent days I've been trying to find a way. to not only meet the musicians where they are, because some people have, nering circumstances.

, but also try to elevate them in a manner where they themselves decide, okay, I want to take my tuba home even though it's February and I have to walk. I wanna take my tuba home and practice it so I can get better. And I remember one occasion. I did a speaking of the window orchestra, we did what we call student concerts.

, and we got this, it's my favorite part of the year. I absolutely love doing this. Nothing excites me more than doing a concert for students, for young people who may have an elementary understanding of music, maybe completely new to them. People never heard of a concert band before, or Symphony Archie before, but I love that element.

And we did a concert one time where we brought a whole bunch of schools to this one. And the [00:35:00] Canadian brass were our guests on that concert. And these boys can



play these guys. As you well know there, there's some really talented cats and funny too, great music really in a really virtuosic way, but they're having fun as they do it.

And I remember getting a number of emails from teachers who wrote to say how much they enjoy the concert. And how many kids were inspired to go home and practice. So when I think about that, what can we do as educators to inspire kids to go home and practice so that they themselves feel compelled to elevate their own place in life as a musician?

. And to be mortal, the ensemble. Me, it was I just loved to play music, so I was practicing all the time and just wanted to get better and better. And as a result, I did. . But and I don't want, again, hang gonna say my father, about a lot of kids these days for some reason, they practice, for that, 90 minute block, on Wednesday when they have rehearsal and that's it.

So I find that to be right, quite the challenge. And again, especially because a lot of kids that they have far more [00:36:00] distractions than I ever did when I was in grade, grade seven. So there's that.

Dylan: Yeah, no, and I think that is a challenge worthy of the question. . because and you, yeah, I guess as someone who has groups in which like people sign up for or audition for you weed out a lot of those students that, that might not want to put in the work and et cetera.

But it's certain, it's, I was thinking about it cuz it's even a challenge that. , I think we've faced here at ar, Arizona State sometimes where it's like the first rehearsal and people will be site reading and that shouldn't be happening here. Precisely, nicely. This, one of the largest schools in the United States, number one in innovation, and so it's.

The idea of like, how do we as servant leaders who yes, care about people empathize, make the world a better place, how do we also from the get-go, set those expectations of this is what needs to be done and inspire. But yeah, so certainly the concert is another example.

Colin: And then when you have, just to take, talk to your point there.

There was the [00:37:00] pandemic, there Oh yeah. Kids were going into Arizona State after two years, two and a half years, or maybe not even playing their instrument. The understanding that there's an expectation once you're at the university level. Cause I did the same thing. I was doing some work at local university here post pandemic.

And there was that, I don't wanna call it an attitude, but there was the reality that. Kids didn't know how important it was to maintain practice, regular practice. And it shouldn't

be up to me to say, guys, you should be practicing this stuff. You shouldn't be site at the first rehearsal. You shouldn't be waiting till the next rehearsal.

Take up your instrument again. You have work to do as a member of this ensemble. So those are things I think about and find ways where we can, again, help motivate the kids, help elevate the kids, meet them where they are, and inspire them in some way to to do better in that.

Dylan: Yeah, absolutely. , and then that, that other point of. Not, yeah. Not non-musicians, but talking to people who don't have an understanding of, the worth of what we can accomplish with music. Absolutely. Absolutely. Yeah it's always an interesting ride of [00:38:00] how to word things, how to speak their language.

Yep. And You've been part of the grant writing process for many things. Oh, yeah. And you know how Oh, yeah. How those puppies are worded . That's an academic term, by the way. Puppies . , but anyway, no, two, two really good challenges. The next question , I've realized it's a very difficult one to answer , because you are not your students or your musicians, but how would you say your students, your, the people who play for you, how would they describe your leadership approach?

Colin: How would they describe my leadership approach? Okay. I'm trying to leave Bash here. I think they describe me as very collabo. And also very humor. . I think that's what if I had to take a guess into what, what comes to mind when you think of Colin Clark in the orchestral rehearsal hall or in the band room?

, what do you think of Colin Clark? I tend to be very jovial by rehearsals and that, that kind of just a love of music. I, and maybe I should rethink this, but it's worked for me for most of my [00:39:00] life. I love making music. I love. people together and making this sound and increasing that sound and making it even better, and the feeling we get from that shared experience.

I love that. It makes me excited. I even in a 15 minute workshop with a orchestra band required a festival, oh, you're doing this piece. This is a really cool piece. Let's talk about this section here. How can we improve on that? , I love that stuff. It just gets me going.

I love it. I think that enthusiasm comes out in my rehearsals. , I hope positively cuz sometimes, we have rough days and what have you. So there is that. So I would argue that my students perhaps see me as a jovial leader. I hope they see me as sympathetic. And collaborative. Cause I try to be. But also and I know I've seen you in action, so I know you can relate to this, but you also find that balance between, having fun with the music, but, music is work, music takes effort. Mu music like anything else. Requires a certain level of discipline to get things done and, you, you can't just whip together linkage chapsi by coming together unless you [00:40:00] have, particular level of humble, but

certainly in my experience, you don't just sit down and site read link chapsi. You just don't, not the way. We get the most out of it sort of thing. Or, a John Mackey symphony. You don't just sit down and say, okay guys from the top 1, 2, 1 2, 3

Exactly. Yeah.

Dylan: Yeah.

Colin: White dark . Anyway. Yeah, there's a certain discipline that comes. any level of excellence. Whether you are an athlete , whether you are an artist, whether you are an academic, there's a certain level of discipline that you must accept as part of your realm, part of your your responsibility to meet that level. And I hope that my musicians. who can describe me as having a certain commitment and dedication to that. , to that discipline to making sure that when I, when I say we have to get things accomplished and here's how we're gonna get there as a group, but they understand this is part of their job as well.

I will often say to my ensembles, we've arrived at the point of rehearsal. This is no [00:41:00] longer about rehearsing in my ensemble. This, it's no longer about. Let's spend the next, next 10 minutes working on technique so we can get this one part in, it's now up to you guys to take that away and get that under your fingers.

I'm not gonna spend the next 10 minutes teaching you how this part goes. And also that very often where I'll hear something in my rehearsal, in my music, and I have notes about why I wanna achieve in a rehearsal. Sometimes I achieve it, sometimes I don't. And I accept the fact that sometimes I don't achieve those goals because, It's not because I should rehearse the second movement over and over again and repeat these four bars until they get it right.

It's something where I, okay, this is what you guys have to do. Cause instead of wasting time, there's 60 people in the room instead of wasting time working on this section here, guys we've arrived at a point in rehearsal where this is no longer a we issue, but a me issue. And you yourself have to go away and take this apart and put this together and bring that back to rehearsals for better success.

So I hope. , my students could define that part of me where I have a level of excellence that I am dedicated to and that requires , [00:42:00] again, repeating myself here, but that requires a, discipline to achieve that. So I hope they see the collaborative side of my approach to music, the passionate side to my approach to music, the humor side to my approach to music, but also the disciplinarian to get things done.

Cause we know we have to do some do to achieve the big things. .

Dylan: Yeah. Yeah. Absolutely. And I want to continue to reiterate the idea that like, sometimes we do need to be a little more direct. Yeah. Because it's like we, it's time. , we have to be efficient. But to understand that we can be direct, we can be as, as you said, be more disciplined.

And I think both of us are examples of, we're the first ones when we hear a big

Colin: and something's totally

Dylan: wrong. We're in, I'm like, what was that? and then addressing it like that wasn't your best and this is why it, this is why it should be. . Cuz I think a lot of people say that was garbage.

Your garbage .

Colin: And I'm

Dylan: not gonna tell you how you know the reasoning. to your why. . But anyway it's garbage. Just [00:43:00] fix it. Yeah. So I think you live the example of having the accelerations, giving those expectations yourself as a conductor who's prepared and ready to go and has put in the work themselves and all of that.

But anyway, this is, and I concur. I would have to say I would say I was a student of yours kind like Sure. Off and on. Sure. Over the years, and you took, especially when I moved to Toronto and began my professional life, you were someone who were the one of the first to take me under your wing and give me opportunities to work, and it was much appreciated.

And along those lines, I want to thank you so much for taking the time to share your thoughts, your wisdom, your experiences with us on changing your pattern. I just need, I like to say it because me too finally came up with a name. Very Claire, the other thing. Oh, thank you. Thank you. And the other thing is and I know I need to start getting this word out of my vocabulary.

It's not very academic, but how cool is it to think. I [00:44:00] started this whole educational journey. And one of those experiences with you as an adjudicator when I was grade seven, could barely play my instrument . And now you are involved in my doctoral research, at the bookend of my formal education, and I think it's, it says something about you and it says, Something to the idea that we've spoken about on this whole podcast.

You don't know who's in the room, you don't know who you're gonna affect. And Colin Clark, you have been such an impact on me wanting to do this, wanting to even do this

research, and I'm just really grateful for who you are and for taking the time to speak with us today. So thank

Colin: you so much, Colin.

Very you, sir. And thank you very much for including me in these episodes of your life. I don't know if we have any time left. I'll share one ag note about Dylan Maddox . Oh no. Cause I, as I ran a festival for a little while, the Golden Music Festival, and I decided to hire you as an adjudicator.

And that's because you and I work together on the East Coast one time. That's when I first met you at, I think it was the Atlantic Band. So I [00:45:00] like this guy. And of course he came to Toronto. We started to hooking. We were, we're friends and all that stuff, friends, colleagues, coworkers. So I was like, you know this guy telling my committee, now this guy Dylan, he's fantastic.

He says, great. He's a young guy, he's very talented, he's very sharp, he's great. Let's bring him in. A little bit of feedback or a pushback cuz he's not really a doctor, Dylan from the University of such and such, or maestro Dylan who conducts the ts, this or the whatever orchestra thing.

He's just a guy you'd met at a festival. I'm not sure he qualifies as someone who should be adjudicated ensembles. So I took that as a little bit of a okay, I, I hear what you're saying. Thank you very much for your feedback. I'm gonna do what I wanna do and hire him anyway, , and while I did, out of the gate.

The kids just responded to you. The teachers got some valuable information from you. They learned someone new in their community to call on to do workshops or festivals or more adjudicating, whatnot. And seeing you in action may just make me so happy. Now, it's funny because I had forgotten that I had met you when you were in grade seven.

I just remember seeing you. And thinking, dude, [00:46:00] this I can throw down in a festival setting. He's got chop. Let's bring him in here and do that. So the fact that I think you're doing so well, my friend and I couldn't be happier for you. And I appreciate the kind things you say about me, but it goes both ways.

You are a very talented individual. I wish you every success with everything you do. If there's anything to help you with anything, let me know. But my good , I'm glad we connected. Thank

Dylan: you so much for those kind words and once again, thank you for your time.

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