

# Building Community and Educating through Podcasting

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## Introduction

The past two and a half years have tested us as educators, pushed us to our limits, and made many of us question whether things will ever be “back to normal”. Yet, we have persevered, finding creative ways to inspire and connect with our fellow musicians: multitrack recording projects, Zoom rehearsals, guest speakers, and, specific to this article, podcasts. Although they have been around for a while, podcasts have emerged as one of the mediums leading a technological infusion in the band room. In this article, I discuss how podcasting in the classroom/band room can encourage engagement, increase accessibility, and build community. I also provide an overview on how to get started on your own podcast journey.

## But What The Heck is A Podcast?

A podcast is a collection or series of digital audio files that are made available for downloading or listening via the Internet.<sup>1</sup> One of the benefits of a podcast is that listeners can subscribe to it, ensuring all new episodes automatically download to the device(s) of their choosing. Like a magazine or journal subscription delivered to your home, once you subscribe to a podcast, each episode is delivered directly to you without the need to visit a web page to search for and/or download the latest episode. This ability to subscribe separates podcasts from other media services such as YouTube or your Blackboard, Canvas, or D2L platforms at school. Subscribers can listen to the podcast on their computer or download it to their phone (Android or iPhone) for convenient on-the-go listening. Video podcasts have the added capability of storing video files for viewing at any time in any place, making the sharing of tutorials and other visual aids easy. All of these features make podcasting an excellent tool in the band room, allowing improved accessibility and support for different types of learners.

## EDUCATING THROUGH PODCASTING

Podcasts have the potential to offer students a different way of learning. Whether they are creating their own podcasts, listening to composer interviews, or benefiting from supplementary material, students have increased control over what they’re learning and share it in a fun way. Below are some ideas for you to consider.

### Course/Rehearsal Content

Do you have a theory concept that needs reinforcement? Teaching a unit on Beethoven? Needing to guide several students through the process of tuning a timpani? Podcasting can be an excellent tool for sharing primary and supplementary information with your students in a way that allows them to learn on their own time, revisit aspects as needed, and maximize their increasingly limited time. Listening back to our rehearsals can speed up our learning process. It is also

invaluable for musicians in the ensemble<sup>2</sup>. Simplify things for them by uploading your most recent rehearsal audio to your classroom podcast and disseminating it to all involved for easy reference. They can listen to their efforts driving to rehearsal, en route to school, or while out for a walk.

### Student Podcast Creation Projects

One way students can demonstrate their understanding of a given concept is through the creation of their own podcast. For example, they might produce a podcast episode that focuses on the life and music of Canadian composer, Cait Nishimura. After researching Cait and her music, the student creates a carefully-written script and plans out the podcast. Next, the student records the script, putting their new (and very useful) skills to work. Finally, the student can enhance the recorded dialogue with a catchy introduction, sound effects, composer interview sound bites, and/or music (copyright-free or used with the necessary permissions). By using podcast creation as an assignment, not only can you assess knowledge gained by the student, but it can also be shared with parents, administrators, and other students via their own podcast or a class podcast channel (public or private). This allows students to take control of an aspect of their education and encourages engagement with the material. They can question, contribute, and teach each other. Visit Kathy Schrock’s Guide for Educators<sup>3</sup> for links to rubrics for podcast assessment. She also has ideas for creating your own rubric for student assessment on her website.

### Band Program News

What we do in the band room as music educators is often seen as a mystery. Using a podcast to share what you are doing can be a great way to dispel that mystery and advocate to your band parents and administrators. For example, Amy Burns’s first grade music class at Far Hills Country Day School in New Jersey shares its work on getting a steady beat via their classroom podcast.<sup>4</sup> Another use might be to create an annual band program accomplishments episode where students share their favourite moments from the year with loved ones who couldn’t make it to the various end-of-year celebrations. In addition to talking about the musical highlights from the year, the students could share memories from the big New York trip they took, the fundraising success for new percussion instruments, and more. Sharing these types of accomplishments and showing the dedication of your students to administrators and their families can aid in developing a greater understanding of what we do in our band rooms.

On a more mundane but no less important level, podcasts can also be a creative way of ensuring accurate dissemination of important logistical information such as concert times and attire, fundraiser details, and pre/post performance procedures. Using a podcast to share music program news can be an effective way of communicating important information not only to students, but to parents and administrators as well.

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## Podcasts as a Resource

If the thought of creating, overseeing the creation of, or marking/evaluating podcasts is overwhelming, fear not! There are plenty of podcasts in existence that you can use in your band room. There are podcasts that interview leading composers, educators, and conductors in our field, helping students explore new contexts and backgrounds to the music they are performing. *The Band Room Podcast*, which I host with Cait Nishimura<sup>5</sup>, Mark Connor's Everything Band Podcast<sup>6</sup>, The Brass Junkies<sup>7</sup>, and Diversify the Stand<sup>8</sup> are a few podcasts that serve as great resources.

As educators, podcasts can provide an excellent opportunity for professional development. Listen to one on your morning commute to pick up a few rehearsal tips or learn from a master teacher about how they select repertoire. One aspect I like is hearing other teachers tell their stories, including moments where things did not go well or as planned. It is often a great chance to remember we are all human and that every experience can be viewed as a chance to grow. As a student from a small community, it was often hard for me to hear and know of top quality professionals that were doing what I wanted to do. Though I was lucky to have a number of mentors and examples to consider in my life, podcasts would have helped me grow even more. You can probably think of many students in your own program that could benefit from this resource. You can find a list of recommended podcasts at the end of the article.

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To this point I have discussed uses of podcasting in the school band room, but this medium can also be a powerful tool in community band programs.

### Sharing Concerts

One of the easiest ways to utilize podcasting in the community band room is to record and share concerts in video podcast form. This can be a great way to build community outside of the one you live in and to share your music with family and friends. Once someone subscribes to your community band podcast, those concerts get sent directly to their device.<sup>9</sup>

### Guest Interviews and Get To Know Our Members

One of the special aspects of being part of a community band is... the community! Community bands are a celebration of so many different kinds of people coming together with a common goal of making music, all with their own stories and their own "whys". Doing a monthly "Get To Know Our Members" podcast segment is a great way to share the unique stories of your members and promote new membership as well.

Featuring a guest singer or conductor at your spring concert? Why not get the word out to your community about the great talent with whom you are sharing the stage. An episode may include a short interview with your guest, audio clips of them performing with your ensemble from a previous concert or rehearsal, or your guest speaking about the music they are performing and other concert information.

## Some Educational and Community Podcast Examples

Though there are examples of both school and community ensembles below, all are applicable to community ensembles.

### BERKSHIRE COUNTRY SCHOOL CHOIRS & BANDS

<https://podcasts.apple.com/ca/podcast/bcd-choral-and-band-concerts-audio/id346471515>

- Sharing individual concert pieces in audio form

### RINGGOLD COMMUNITY BAND

<https://podcasts.apple.com/ca/podcast/ringgold-band/id898805133>

- Talk about the history of the band
- Get to know the members
- Various guest interviews
- Great way to disperse information

### BISMARCK STATE COLLEGE WIND

<https://podcasts.apple.com/ca/podcast/wind-ensemble/id417141450>

- Share complete concerts in video podcast form

## READY TO PODCAST? GETTING STARTED – EQUIPMENT AND PLATFORMS

Interested in starting your own podcast? Thankfully, it has never been easier with free, powerful, and easy to use software combined with low-cost and high quality recording equipment. Here is a basic how-to with some equipment choices that can help everyone from a neophyte podcaster to a seasoned pro.

### STEP 1: CREATE

Decide what you want the focus of the podcast to be and begin to sketch out how you might like to structure an episode or series.

### STEP 2: EQUIPMENT & RECORDING

A potentially daunting aspect of podcasting can be the technology learning curve but it doesn't have to be. Before discussing the recording process, here are some recommendations for equipment and software.

#### Headphone Microphone

As mentioned before, recording is easier than ever. One of the easiest ways for people to do this is by using their phone's voice recording app along with headphones that have a built-in microphone. You might be surprised by the quality even before putting it through editing software.

#### USB Microphones

If you have some available funds, a USB microphone is a nice initial upgrade. A USB microphone plugs directly into your computer allowing you to record easily without any additional equipment.

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Here are some recommended USB microphones:

- The Blue Yeti
- Apogee HypeMiC
- Rode Podcaster
- Rode Nano NTC

Price range from \$50 - \$400

## XLR Microphones

If you want to dive right into the deep end, consider an XLR microphone. If you do end up using an XLR microphone, you will also have to purchase an audio interface. An audio interface is simply a piece of hardware that turns recorded analog sound into digital sound that your computer can work with. In many cases, XLR microphones offer better sound quality, as well as better build quality and durability. Here are some recommended XLR microphones and audio interfaces:

- Audio-Technica ATR2100x-USB (Both XLR and USB)
- Shure SM57
- Rode Podmic
- Rode Procaster
- Shure SM7B
- Electro-Voice RE20

Price range from \$70 - \$600

## Sound Interfaces

- Focusrite: Scarlett Solo 3rd Gen
- Audient iD4 MKII
- Zoom H4 or H6
  - This is a great option as it doubles as a recorder on its own. Good for rehearsal recordings or interviews on the go.

Price range from \$120 - \$1000

To learn more about microphone differences and what will work best for your purposes and budget, visit: <https://www.buzzsprout.com/blog/usb-mic-vs-xlr>

## STEP 3: RECORD AND EDIT CONTENT

You've got your script and have decided what recording setup best suits your needs. It is time to record! You will have to use either an external recording device, such as a Zoom recorder (as mentioned above) which will record to an SD card for later uploading to editing software, or connect your microphone directly to your laptop to record into one of these software programs:

**Audacity**<sup>10</sup> is a free audio recording and editing program for Mac and Windows. I did two seasons of The Band Room Podcast with Audacity and was very happy with what it can do.

If you are a Mac user, you might consider using GarageBand. It comes pre-installed on your laptop, is very user-friendly, and creates a great end product.

If you're interested in upgrading, you might consider looking into **Adobe Audition** as it has numerous powerful features, such as noise cancellation, equalization, and various filters that can be added to your audio, as well as more shortcut options designed to save time. This is what we now use for The Band Room Podcast. If you're a Mac user, you may want to use

Logic, a fancier version of GarageBand with a lot of the same features as Adobe Audition.

When you're done editing, convert the content to mp3 or WAV format for audio or mp4 for video.

## STEP 4: UPLOAD YOUR FILES TO YOUR INTERNET SERVER OR HOST

In short, you need to set things up so your audience can subscribe to your podcast through something like iTunes, Spotify, Stitcher, etc. There are two ways to do this:

### 1. Create your own RSS Feed for your website

A podcast RSS feed contains information about your show and its episodes. It then passes that information to podcast directories, such as Apple Podcasts or Spotify, each time a new episode is published. Rather than explaining the process here, you can learn more by visiting: <https://rss.com/blog/how-to-create-an-rss-feed/>

### 2. Finding a podcast host

Hosting platforms take your audio/video and send it to all of the podcast platforms such as iTunes, Google Podcast, Amazon podcasts, Spotify, etc. There are a number of free hosting services that work well:

- **Anchor** is a new-ish platform and it's the number one platform I recommend if you want to start a podcast. You have unlimited audio storage and they distribute your episode to the biggest podcast platforms for you, which will save you lots of time and effort. We used this host for two years of the podcast
- **Soundcloud** is a free service where you can host your audio, however you have limited audio time. Only 3 hours of free audio can be stored before you'll be prompted to purchase the paid version. You'll also have to go to each podcast platform and sign up for your podcast individually. This is the first platform I used.

If you wanted to upgrade to a paid service one of these might be to your liking:

- Buzzsprout
- Captivate
- Transistor
- Castos
- Podbean
- Simplecast
- Resonate
- Libsyn

The most important aspect is that your podcast is connected to some kind of distributor so it can be sent to iTunes, Spotify, Stitcher, etc. If it's just uploaded to your website, it won't make it to iTunes, etc. The **Podcast Host** is an excellent resource for anyone just starting their podcast adventure.

## Conclusion

If the past two years have taught us anything, it's that we are capable of creating content for and with our students in new and creative ways, and that we can put a lot more trust in our students when

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it comes to their learning. Podcasting allows for the possibility of information to be much more accessible and gives us more time as band directors to work on what really matters — music! It might seem like a daunting medium to dive into but its benefits to our students far outweigh our fears.

## EXCELLENT PODCASTS TO CHECK OUT

### The Band Room Podcast with Dylan Rook Maddix & Cait Nishimura

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-band-room-podcast/id1267710858>

### The Score with Eric Jimenez & Justin McLean

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-score/id1475442249>

### Band Together – Kenley Kristofferson

<https://podcasts.apple.com/ca/podcast/band-together-podcast/id1434359230>

### Diversify the Stand

<https://www.diversifythestand.org/podcast>

### After Sectionals

<https://podcasts.apple.com/ca/podcast/after-sectionals/id1089059721>

### The Global Band Room with Keith Kelly (DCI and more)

<https://podcasts.apple.com/ca/podcast/global-bandroom/id1508044467>

### The Score

<https://www.revivalmusicproject.org/podthescore/>

### AMusEd

<http://www.amusedcast.org/>

### Everything Band

<https://podcasts.apple.com/ca/podcast/everything-band-podcast/id1220063931>

### Band in Minnesota

<https://podcasts.apple.com/ca/podcast/band-in-minnesota/id1502567757>

### Ic2us | The Evolving Conductor

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/ic2us-the-evolving-conductor/id1540850185>

### Music Tech Teacher Podcast

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/music-tech-teacher-podcast/id1193933534>

### The Brass Junkies

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-brass-junkies-podcast-pedal-note-media/id969120513>

## ENDNOTES

- 1 <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/how-do-podcasts-work>
- 2 <https://banddirector.com/marching-band/tips-for-teaching-students-what-to-listen-for-while-playing>
- 3 <http://school.discovery.com/schrockguide>
- 4 <https://mustech.net/2019/01/podcasting-in-the-young-elementary-music-classroom/>
- 5 <https://www.bandroompod.com/>
- 6 <https://www.everythingbandpodcast.com/>
- 7 <https://www.pedalnotemedia.com/the-brass-junkies>
- 8 <https://www.diversifythestand.org/podcast>
- 9 As with any form of audio/video sharing, we must be careful that we are obtaining necessary copyright permissions or sharing copyright free music. For more information visit: [https://wiki.creativecommons.org/wiki/Podcasting\\_Legal\\_Guide](https://wiki.creativecommons.org/wiki/Podcasting_Legal_Guide)
- 10 [www.audacity.sourceforge.net](http://www.audacity.sourceforge.net)



## DYLAN ROOK MADDIX

is a sought-after conductor, clinician, trumpeter and adjudicator, and is pursuing his doctoral studies in wind conducting at Arizona State University. Originally from Prince Edward Island, he is founder of the Toronto Winds and founder/host of The Band Room Podcast. Maddix served as Professor of Music and head of wind and brass studies at Cambrian College in Sudbury, Ontario, where he conducted the wind ensemble, taught music theory, wind/brass methods,

and pedagogy courses. He also taught conducting at Laurentian University. Maddix was the conducting/music consultant for Netflix's Umbrella Academy and Global TV's Private Eyes. As a trumpeter, he has performed with artists such as Sarah McLachlan, Roger Hodgson of Supertramp, The Video Games Live Orchestra, Johnny Reid, The Broadway Tenors, Hannaford Street Silver Band, Toronto Concert Orchestra, and the Hogtown Brass Quintet. Maddix holds a Master of Music in Trumpet Performance from the University of Toronto and a Bachelor of Music from Mount Allison University.