

Interview with Jason Silveira, conducted by Annie Liu, Spring 2024

How did you get into music education? And I was thinking maybe first as an educator and then more specifically into higher ed.

I knew that I wanted to be a music teacher, I think starting in 10th grade. Originally I wanted to be a doctor until I found out that the sight of blood made me faint. That ended my aspirations for a medical career. But I knew that I wanted to be a music teacher, specifically band, because that's what I was doing. Why? I think most of us were kind of good at it and we enjoyed it, and I always wanted to be someone who could help others. So, you know, music teaching seemed like a nice marriage of my interests and music.

As far as higher ed, when I was teaching high school, I started taking on some student teachers and I really enjoyed that mentor relationship with the younger teachers and kind of helping them through the program, and that's when I decided, well, I was going to go back and get my masters degree. I wasn't sure at the time if I wanted to do a conducting masters or a music masters. To be perfectly honest, the decision to do a summer program was based in finances, I just couldn't afford to take two full years off of teaching with perhaps not being able to come back to that same job.

So I did a summer masters in music ed. And at that point, I knew that I wanted to go in to get a doctorate, and I wasn't sure, again, if it was going to be conducting or a PhD, PhD or DMA. So in chatting with my professors at Ithaca College over the summer masters program, I came to realize that what I really wanted to do was continue working with student teachers, continuing to understand and read research and that sort of creative process really intrigued me. So I went to Florida State and the nice thing about that program is there is no DMA in wind conducting. There's DMA in orchestra conducting, but not in wind conducting because they want the band people to, like, have one foot in both worlds, like conducting a group and also doing research because some music Ed positions in higher Ed are strictly music and they don't get to have an ensemble. But I wanted to do both. I still think it's important for me to make music, whether it's conducting or playing trombone.

So I was able to get that experience there. And I knew that when I was looking for jobs, I wanted to find a job where I could do both. And it was at Florida State where I kind of, to borrow a phrase from my major professor, develop a love affair with research and it truly inspired me because the way he taught research was, you learn by doing. How do you learn research? Well, let's do it.

And I I've taken that with me in the classes that I teach here with the research methods courses in music and other disciplines. A survey of research methods, you know, like positivist, post positivist, naturalist, those, those kinds of things, but, you know, I think of it like a music appreciation class. How do we appreciate music? What do we gotta do? Music. We've got to be involved with music. So that's what led me to higher ed. I started at Oregon State. And I loved my time there. Wonderful, wonderful colleagues. Job opened up at Ithaca College, which is my alma mater. And I thought, well, let's go home, you know, and my wife and I missed being so far. We missed being close to family because all of our families are in Rhode Island. So we moved cross country again and both of us realized that this was not the right fit for us. She was working at Cornell. I felt the research fruit dying on the vine because Ithaca is a small liberal arts college, and it's a teaching institution. And I went there and I knew that, but it was not the right fit for me, nor for my wife, and this position opened up. And I mean, I was looking for jobs in November. That's how unhappy we were.

Thankfully this this position opened up and, well, I distinctly remember the question from the search committee was, you've been at Ithaca for a year or will be out there for a year. Why? Why are you leaving?

And I said, well, it took our leaving Oregon to realize that this had become our home. So that's how we ended back here in Oregon. I totally understand the the philosophy behind the small liberal arts college and teaching. And I was the recipient of that as a student, both undergraduate and masters degree. But I couldn't engage creatively in the manner that I wanted to, and I was conducting an ensemble there, but I wasn't able to create with my, you know, intellectual side of things. I just didn't have time.

What do you think is special about the music education program here at U of O?

Lots of things. Of course I'm biased, but I do like the fact that most of us on the on the music at faculty work with an ensemble. So that was important. I think that's important for our students to see too, because like, it gives us a little, you know, street cred. So that helps. But I think what I'm most proud of is our placement rate: one hundred per cent.

I talked to our corporate teachers and like this is where we want to send our students. And my favorite day of the year is the OMEA conference Friday night, when the University of Oregon reception happens and all the teachers come back and it's nice to just catch up and celebrate their successes.

What can students do with their music education degree? And maybe you could speak to the undergrad, masters, and PhD levels.

Well, primarily our undergraduates, they go into K12 teaching. They are certified pre K12 music. So most of them take that path. Some of them do studio teaching as well. Last year we had a student who was place bound. They wanted to stay in Portland, so they did some substitute teaching there. I mean really you can do just about anything with the, with the bachelor's degree in music ed.

For masters degree students, some of them will go back to the K12 classroom. Some of them decide to go on to a PhD program. Of course, the nice thing about getting a masters degree and going back to teaching is you get a pay raise. That's always a nice bump.

And for our PhD students, again, primarily they head to the academic route teaching at colleges and universities.

I do have one of our recent PhD student. Do you remember Cam Siegel? So Cam was another place bound person. He wanted to go back to Dartmouth because he had family there. His wife, just about to have a baby, and he's got aging family members. So he went back to teaching, actually, elementary school. And he's also doing adjunct work in one of the colleges over there. Even though one gets a PhD, you know you can we can still go back and teach K12 music, which I think is one of the benefits of going for the music ed path. I mean I was just observing a student teacher today and I miss parts of that public school teaching environment. Not enough to go back. You know, if you want to do higher Ed, you can do higher Ed. If you want to do public school, that's also an option as well.

How would you advise someone who maybe has been K12 teaching for a while, maybe they already got their masters degree, how do they make this decision of do I want to continue in K12 or do I want to make that leap into higher ed by getting a PhD?

Yeah. Well, I sort of asked that question to my Master's degree mentor and he said, well, you have to be willing to pick up and move and that's what I tell people now. Basically you get 4 things that you can rank order of importance for you when you're looking for a job, there's: where do I live? What do I teach? What am I called? How much do I make?

And it's different for everybody. Like, for me, it was: What do I teach? Remember, I wanted to do both. If it's, where do I live now? You're kind of narrowing your choices because there are fewer jobs, so that's like, are you willing to pick up and move? Do you have that you know, ability? Also, another thing that I would recommend is if you're considering a PhD music Ed, is to take on some student teachers, see how that feels for you. Visiting campuses because, as you know, when you choose a PhD program, you're choosing the the person, not necessarily the institution. Like, who do you want to study with and getting to know those people is helpful, reading research. Are you curious about these types of things? I distinctly remember as I was going into my undergraduate degree, I thought a high

school band director was: I work with the band and then when I'm not working with the band I'm having coffee. There's so many administrative things that I just did not know. And it's the same with teaching in higher Ed. Teaching is technically 40% of my job, research is 40% of my job and service is 20% of my job. There's different percentages based on what institution you go to like. We just talked about Ithaca. It was like 80% teaching and then maybe 10% service, 10% research. So it was a completely different model.

Also, if they've been teaching in public school for a while and they have their masters degree, they are likely going to take a pay cut in their first year in higher ed. However with K12 there's a ceiling they're going to go over so far on the pay scale. But higher Ed there is not. So you start at a lower salary, but over time if you're successful then you can build your salary back up. I was fortunate enough when I was in a PhD program that I was able to take a leave of absence for my job. And the way that our Union had negotiated that was, I would get a year leave of absence and I could come back to my same job if I wanted to. I could take a second year leave of absence and I could come back to a job in the district, but it might not be my job, but not all have that. But yeah, it's tough to turn that money tap off because you know, you get used to a certain lifestyle and then... now I'm a student. It was a challenge. So just letting them know that it's gonna be, you know, it's an adjustment. I think it was worth it.

What is your go to coffee or your tea order?

This is gonna sound boring, but I just like, you know, plain drip coffee. I mean Starbucks, just Pike roast. My tea: I love mint tea.

I wanted you to talk a little bit about how you handle digital organization and managing your digital workspace.

So I live in file folder trees. That's my life. So for broad work life, I've got my University of Oregon folder and then within that it's kind of based on my work percentages. I've got my teaching folder, I've got the research folder, I've got my service folder and then in those folders they branch out into classes, in the research folder it's conferences, book, chapters, journals, guest lectures. And then within those folders, it's like conference is NAFME, SMPC. And then each of those have their own year for the conference and each of those years has a project and those projects, I'll organize them just like the structure of manuscripts: review of literature, method results, discussion, IRB. And where I find that that is the most useful in the research part of it is the review of literature. Just because you read all this stuff and trying to organize and compartmentalize it can be difficult unless you have a system. So my system is, as I start to drop articles in there, I have a file name convention: last name, parentheses date. From there as I start to develop themes, I create

a folder of that sub theme and then those articles get moved into that folder. That's the only way that I found to be organized. Because otherwise I don't know how people do it, and I see desktops and it's just files all over the desktop. Yeah, that drives me batty. I don't know how people can live like that. Another organizational thing I use when writing is just kind of developing a working outline, especially again with the review of literature, putting in those themes, starting paragraphs, stems, transitions and then looping in those related references that come in.

What is it like being an associate editor (soon to be editor) of UPDATE?

Yeah, well, first I should. I should say that I swore I would never do it. No way will I ever be an editor. And then I was kind of convinced to do it so I actually start, I take over as editor July 1st. The associate editor, part of the term has been dovetailing my responsibilities into the current editors, so sort of how that looks is getting familiar with Sage, which has their particular online system. When do I get notifications when our manuscript comes in and when? How do I send it out to reviewers? The past year and a half have been just managing the logistics of it, not really actually editing or say, serving as an editor. It's like OK, well, what button do I click when I need to do this? I don't want to send it to the wrong person.

So it's, but it's been rewarding and I think it'll be even more so once you know July 1st comes around, but, typically the process is when someone submits a manuscript, I'll get a notification automated notification from Sage saying there's a manuscript ready for review. And then you go in and there's a like a checklist that you that you have to do first and actually Casson is going to be doing this. He's going to be my editorial assistant.

It's basic. Is it APA format? Does it meet the page requirements? Does it have a bulleted list of implications and suggestions? Because update is a research to practice journal.

And then once those are are checked, it comes back to me and based on the topic or the methodology, I'll figure out well which reviewers do I want to send this to while also keeping in mind OK, well, this person I've sent things to them five times out of the last six. This person hasn't had anything for a while.

So trying to balance that out, I think that's probably the trickiest part, because I was also on an editorial board and it's, it's work. And like if you get too many, after about two when you have two in the queue and then the third one comes in, that's when I start to get like anxious.

So sending it out to them. And then there's a 30 day time window that reviewers have to complete their review. And if they're naughty, they'll get an automated message saying please, you know, turn this in and then they get a second automated message. Two weeks

after that. And then if they're still not in, then I have to reach out to them and say hey, just checking if this is going to come in or if I need to find someone else to do this review? So once those are in. I go back to the system and I read their reviews. And then there's a like a generic template that I use for either accept, revise, or reject, and putting when that e-mail is populated the reviewer comments automatically they went there. And then, there's another month for revisions and then the process kind of repeats itself until final decision.

And this part I'm still getting used to because it's sort of the tail end of the process, like once we get to go ahead. Now I work with the author and the publisher to work on final edits typesetting all of that stuff that you know, I wasn't taught in my schooling. This is a lot of learning on the fly with that but it's been rewarding, more rewarding than I thought it was going to be. And now that I'm in the editorial role, I get to write like a basically a forum piece for each issue that comes out so that that's going to be new and different, I have not written that style before.

But my predecessor has got a great sense of humor, and he just he approached it in a lighter sense. And I think that's helpful, especially since the purpose of this journal is to, yes, reach people in my position, but also K12 teachers. Because as you know, academic journals can be kind of bland sometimes. So that's, I mean in a nutshell that's kind of what it is.

I wanted to ask what your favorite music to one, listen to, two, play, and then three, conduct, is?

I love Chicago, the band Chicago. Even though they were, I mean they were writing before I was born. The Fray? Coldplay. Yeah. Good band.

If we're talking listening to non pop music, I love minimalism. I've got a lot of John Adams, Steve Reich. I love it. And when I can, I try to program that for my group. It's a little bit more difficult to write minimalist music for concert band

Perform, oh, gosh. Strauss. Wagner, any romantic composer that has, you know, good, good writing for trombone? Yeah, totally selfish. And then conduct. Gosh, that's a tough one. Well, composers whose work I like, David Maslanka. John Mackey. Nancy Galbraith, another Neo minimalist composer. Yeah, I wish I could say there's one particular style. Yeah. And something that actually has grown on me as I have, you know, grown older and wiser in my years is marches. Yeah. I mean, I used to hate conducting marches because I didn't know what to do. So you're just keeping time. And it wasn't until I realized, well, how should we be playing this and what is the intent and what's the style considerations? And I realized, oh, there's a lot of stuff going on here that I just didn't consider before now.