

2021-2022 Music Department Assessment Report

Assessment Meetings: May 4 & 23, 2022

Participants: Morgan (chair), Renshaw James, Krebs

Overview

This year, the music department is assessing LG3, which states that students will “develop advancing technical proficiency and musical self-awareness through practice and performance experiences in private lessons and ensembles.” Among our departmental learning goals, LG3 is the only one that directly addresses the skills one develops as a *performer* of music. The other LGs, on the other hand, pertain to the study of music academically through approaches of theoretical analysis, and contextualizing music historically and as a cultural phenomenon.

The direct evidence we are using for the assessment of LG3 includes our evaluations of two senior capstone recitals, performance juries for six additional music majors, and a survey of faculty involved in teaching private lessons and ensembles. Examples of our evaluation rubrics are included below for both juries and capstone recitals, along with the resulting grading spreadsheets for those students.

Indirect evidence was taken from a survey of music majors we designed that asked students to self-evaluate their development as performers (also included in this report). Because the language of LG3 incorporates specific components such as “advancing technical proficiency” and “musical self-awareness” in both lessons and ensembles, the survey questions we distributed are broken down into individual likert scale questions for each area of study.

Context

Students’ progress in LG3 occurs primarily through music activity (MUSA) courses, which includes private lessons and ensembles.

MUSA lessons are offered at two levels. 300-level lessons, which comprise weekly 30-minute lessons throughout the semester are, for many students, introductory in nature. Students learn fundamental techniques specific to their instrument, and beginning level repertoire. There is no performance requirement for students completing 300-level lessons, although students at the 300-level do regularly participate in our departmental recitals. One could even prepare for a capstone recital through 300-level lessons, although it isn’t recommended.

400-level lessons, on the other hand, entail advanced skill development, the study of increasingly complex repertoire, and require that students perform in both a departmental recital, held once

per semester. All music majors, regardless of their enrollment in 300 or 400-level lessons, are required to complete a performance jury at the end of the spring semester; the only students granted an exception to this rule are those who performed a senior capstone recital that year. Our music ensembles (Choir, Wind Ensemble, and Chamber Orchestra), offer ongoing opportunities for student development as performing musicians. Performing music as a member of an ensemble draws upon several unique skills that are not addressed through solo study. Performing with an ensemble requires communication and the ability to understand the responsibilities and needs of others. Students present concerts to the public multiple times throughout the year, and develop musical skills by studying music from a variety of backgrounds and styles.

Direct Evidence

Senior Capstone Recitals

The majority of our majors present a lecture recital comprising 25 minutes each of performance and presentation regarding historical and theoretical analysis of the music they performed. Each component of their capstone is evaluated using a rubric.¹ The performance rubric address performance aspects including Tone Quality, Accuracy, Expression and Interpretation, Articulation and Diction, and Stage Etiquette is presented below.

¹ It should be noted that our capstone evaluation for recitals uses an additional rubric to evaluate the research and lecture component of the project. The lecture portion of the capstone is primarily a reflection of LG5 (researching music as an academic subject); since research is not a relevant matter to this assessment report, the lecture rubric has not been included in the document.

	Excellent (A=3.6-4.0)	Good (B=3.2-3.5)	Average (C=2.8-3.1)	Poor (D=2.4-2.7 and below)
Tone Quality (25%)	Tone quality is vibrant, rich, and produced at a high level throughout the repertoire performed.	Tone quality is generally strong, with occasional issues of technique. The student displays the ability to correct issues during the performance.	Tone is developing and demonstrates inconsistency in quality. Fuzziness or lack of clarity sometimes evident.	Underdeveloped tone lacking focus and clarity.
Accuracy of Pitches, Rhythms, Intonation (25%)	Notes and rhythms performed nearly flawlessly. Superb control of pulse and rhythm. Outstanding intonation in all registers and volumes.	Minor note/rhythm errors. Pulse and rhythm are under control most of the time. Overall intonation is good; minor issues occur and performer demonstrates ability to adjust pitch.	Note/rhythm errors evident, but the overall performance remains effective. Pulse and rhythm are not always steady. Intonation issues evident. Inconsistent breath/bow control affects intonation.	Note/rhythm errors interfere with the musical flow. Performer has to restart due to errors. Intonation is poor. Poor breath support/bow control adversely affects intonation.
Expression and Interpretation (25%)	Performer displays a deep understanding of the music to render an emotive musical interpretation. Tempo choices are appropriate and tasteful. The performance is highly expressive. Dynamics performed extremely well at all volumes and in all registers. Performer demonstrates a mature sense of phrasing and musicianship.	Performer displays a good understanding of the music and a clear sense of musical interpretation. Tempo choices are generally appropriate. The performance is expressive, but sometimes sound is harsh/distorted during passages with dynamic/range extremes. Expressive phrase shaping and contouring of phrases with minor flaws.	Performer's musical interpretation is developing. Tempo choices are sometimes not always appropriate. The performance is somewhat expressive, but within a narrow dynamic range. Phrasing evident, but lacks definition, nuance and/or fluidity.	Performer lacks a fundamental understanding of the music. Tempo choices are not stylistically appropriate. The performance is not expressive. Lack of dynamic contrasts. Performer's sense of phrasing needs further development. Phrasing lacks cohesiveness.
Articulation / Diction and Pronunciation (15%)	Articulation/diction is superior throughout the entire performance. For vocalists: consonants are clear and pronunciation of language is correct.	Articulation/diction is very good most of the time. For vocalists: a few consonants are not clear. Pronunciation is correct most of the time.	Articulation/diction is inconsistent. For vocalists: many consonants are unclear. Pronunciation has several flaws.	Articulation/diction is nonexistent throughout. For vocalists: consonants are unclear. Pronunciation of language is not correct.
Stage Etiquette (10%)	Presentation is polished and professional. Dress and stage demeanor are appropriate.	Presentation mostly polished but with minor flaws. Dress and stage demeanor are mostly appropriate.	Presentation lacks polish. Dress and/or demeanor were somewhat appropriate.	Presentation is not polished at all. Dress and/or demeanor were not appropriate.

In April of 2022, we had two seniors presenting capstone recitals: June Baumann (voice) and Sarah-Marie Linneman (flute). June Baumann performed 20th and 21st century art songs that used poetry by Emily Dickinson. Her performance evaluation was as follows:

Categories	AM Grade	JK Grade	GRJ Grade	Average	Category %	Total
Tone Quality	3.75	3.9	3.5	3.71666666	25%	0.9291666667
Accuracy of Pitches, Rhythms, Intonation	3.75	3.7	3.6	3.68333333	25%	0.9208333333
Expression and Interpretation	3.8	3.9	3.7	3.8	25%	0.95
Articulation / Diction and Pronunciation	3.65	3.9	3.2	3.58333333	15%	0.5375
Stage Etiquette	4	4	3.9	3.96666666	10%	0.3966666667
				PERFORMANCE GRADE		3.734166667

Sarah-Marie Linneman's recital featured a diverse array of flute music, and explored the importance of performing music from a variety of cultural backgrounds and underrepresented musical voices. We evaluated her performance as follows:

Categories	AM Grade	JK Grade	GRJ Grade	Average	Category %	Total
Tone Quality	3.7	3.6	3.5	3.6	25%	0.9
Accuracy of Pitches, Rhythms, Intonation	3.6	3.2	3.5	3.433333333	25%	0.8583333333
Expression and Interpretation	3.6	3	3.6	3.4	25%	0.85
Articulation / Diction and Pronunciation	3.6	3.6	3.5	3.566666666	15%	0.535
Stage Etiquette	3.7	4	3.5	3.733333333	10%	0.3733333333
				PERFORMANCE GRADE		3.516666667

As indicated by our evaluations, both of these music majors are quite strong as performers. While our sample size is small, we felt that both recitals were very successful, and demonstrated a very satisfactory level of progress for these students as performers.

One of the challenges for us in helping our majors prepare for a capstone recital is that students are, in most cases, taking private lessons with a faculty member other than their advisor. Most of the time, that faculty member is an adjunct instructor, with limited time on campus and face-to-face engagement with students only occurring in the lesson itself. The student's advisor must therefore keep track of their advisee's progress towards the recital, which generally takes a full academic year, even though the advisor is not directly involved in the lessons where most of the musical development is taking place.

Music Department Juries

Our yearly juries provide us with a better sense of how all our majors are progressing in LG3. For their juries, students prepare all the music they studied in lessons in both fall and spring semesters. We then hear the students perform 3-4 selections from that repertoire, and evaluate their performance using a rubric that we've adapted into a MS Teams form. The original format of that rubric is below (its structure is modified slightly in the Teams form, and rates each area on a scale of 1-10, rather than with the percentages on this rubric; otherwise it uses the same criteria and grading components).

	Poor (D and below)	Average (C)	Good (B)	Excellent (A)
1. Tone Quality 25%	Underdeveloped tone lacking focus and clarity. 50% 55% 60% 65%	Tone is developing and demonstrates inconsistency in quality. Fuzziness or lack of clarity sometimes evident. 70% 75%	Tone quality is generally strong, with occasional issues of technique. The student displays the ability to correct issues during the performance. 80% 85%	Tone quality is vibrant, rich, and produced at a high level throughout the repertoire performed. 90% 95% 100%
2. Accuracy of Pitches, Rhythms, and Intonation 25%	Note/rhythm errors interfere with the musical flow. Performer has to restart due to errors. Intonation is poor. Poor breath support/bow control adversely affects intonation. 50% 55% 60% 65%	Note/rhythm errors evident, but the overall performance remains effective. Pulse and rhythm are not always steady. Intonation issues evident. Inconsistent breath/bow control affects intonation. 70% 75%	Minor note/rhythm errors. Pulse and rhythm are under control most of the time. Overall intonation is good; minor issues occur and performer demonstrates ability to adjust pitch. 80% 85%	Notes and rhythms performed nearly flawlessly. Superb control of pulse and rhythm. Outstanding intonation in all registers and volumes. 90% 95% 100%
3. Expression and Interpretation 25%	Performer lacks a fundamental understanding of the music. Tempo choices are not stylistically appropriate. The performance is not expressive. Lack of dynamic contrasts. Performer's sense of phrasing needs further development. Phrasing lacks cohesiveness. 50% 55% 60% 65%	Performer's musical interpretation is developing. Tempo choices are sometimes not always appropriate. The performance is somewhat expressive, but within a narrow dynamic range. Phrasing evident, but lacks definition, nuance and/or fluidity. 70% 75%	Performer displays a good understanding of the music and a clear sense of musical interpretation. Tempo choices are generally appropriate. The performance is expressive, but sometimes sound is harsh/distorted during passages with dynamic/range extremes. Expressive phrase shaping and contouring of phrases with minor flaws. 80% 85%	Performer displays a deep understanding of the music to render an emotive musical interpretation. Tempo choices are appropriate and tasteful. The performance is highly expressive. Dynamics performed extremely well at all volumes and in all registers. Performer demonstrates a mature sense of phrasing and musicianship. 90% 95% 100%
4. Stage Etiquette 10%	Presentation is not polished at all. Dress and/or demeanor were not appropriate. 50% 55% 60% 65%	Presentation lacks polish. Dress and/or demeanor were somewhat appropriate. 70% 75%	Presentation mostly polished but with minor flaws. Dress and stage demeanor are mostly appropriate. 80% 85%	Presentation is polished and professional. Dress and stage demeanor are appropriate. 90% 95% 100%
5. Vocalists: Diction and Pronunciation 15%	Diction is nonexistent throughout. Consonants are unclear. Pronunciation of language is not correct. 50% 55% 60% 65%	Diction is inconsistent. Many consonants are unclear. Pronunciation has several flaws. 70% 75%	Diction is very good most of the time. A few consonants are not clear. Pronunciation is correct most of the time. 80% 85%	Diction is superior throughout the entire performance. Consonants are clear and pronunciation of language is correct. 90% 95% 100%
5. Instrumentalists: Scales 15%	Many note errors and/or very inconsistent tempo. 50% 55% 60% 65%	Note/tempo issues were evident. 70% 75%	Scales had minor errors. Perhaps some wavering of tempo. 80% 85%	Scales were perfect or nearly perfect. Performed at consistent tempo. 90% 95% 100%

A. Categories 1-3 Average x 75%	B. Category 4 x 10%	C. Category 5 x 15%	TOTAL (sum of A,B,C)
			%

Our comments from juries have been merged into a (somewhat large and unwieldy) spreadsheet, which can be seen here: [Jury Grading Form.xlsx](#). Please note that this spreadsheet also contains jury comments from 2021. The 2022 jury comments begin in row 41. One of our primary reasons for holding juries is to provide students with a grade so that they can understand how their jury performance would have been graded if held to the same criteria as a capstone recital. Those grades can be seen in column O. In general, we find that this year's music majors were mostly earning Bs and Cs for their jury performances, and have considerable progress to make if they intend to pursue the lecture recital capstone during their senior year. This isn't relevant for some students, however, as they may intend to pursue a different capstone option, namely the research paper & presentation capstone. Given the size of our department and its small number of majors

(generally only a couple per year), it is statistically reasonable to note that certain class years will be stronger than others.

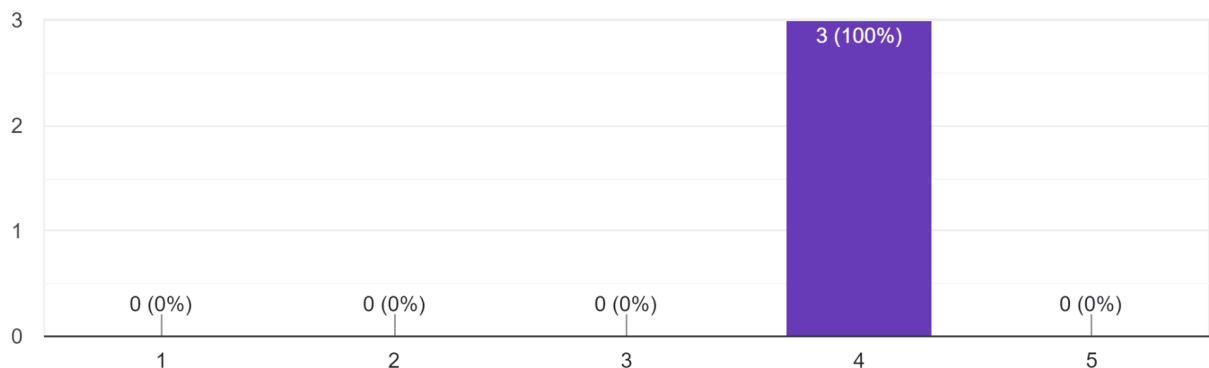
Faculty Survey - Ensembles

As mentioned at the beginning of this report, LG3 relates to the development of performing skills in lessons and ensembles. The development of musical skills in ensembles, while essential for any musician in training, is problematic when it comes to assessment of individual student progress. Students' grades for ensembles is largely a reflection of attendance and participation. In place of homework assignments or exams, students are engaged in rehearsals and performances, giving us little to any student work to evaluate. Likewise, students do not perform individually in the ensembles (other than the occasional solo, which could be given to a non-major). We have therefore surveyed our ensemble directors (Renshaw James, Crosmer (adjunct Chamber Orchestra director), and Morgan) in order to better understand how we perceive the progress our majors are making in ensembles. Respondents answered survey questions on a 1-5 Likert scale. The questions and responses from ensemble directors were as follows:

Question 1

To what extent have music majors studying with you in ensembles demonstrated increased technical proficiency as performers?

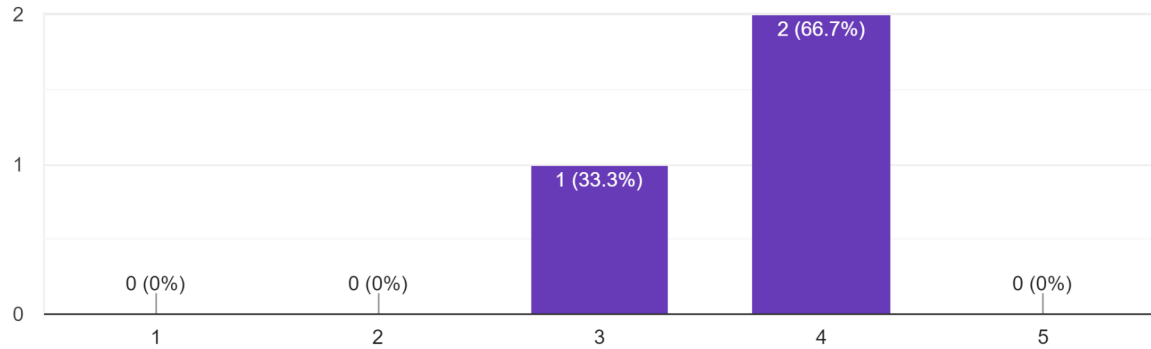
3 responses



Question 2

To what extent have music majors studying with you in ensembles demonstrated increased self-awareness as performers?

3 responses



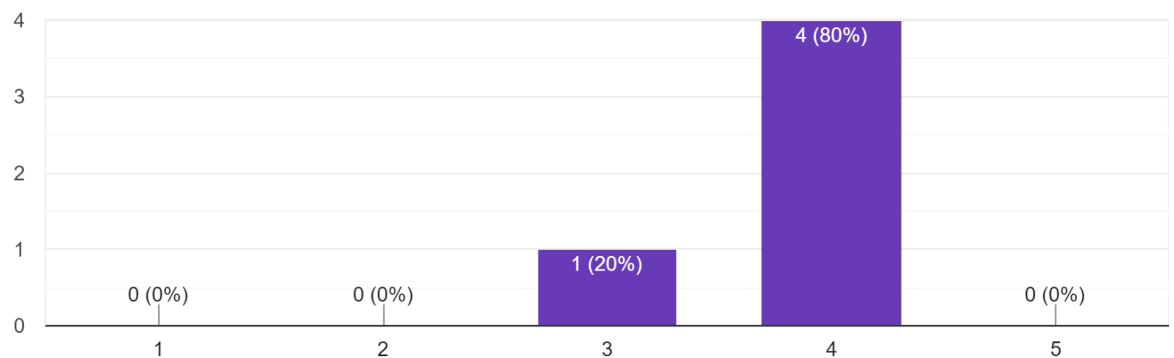
Faculty Survey - Lessons

A similar survey was sent to our private lessons instructors, for which we had 5 responses. The questions were identical to the survey sent to our ensemble directors. Responses were as follows:

Question 1

To what extent have music majors studying with you in private lessons demonstrated increased technical proficiency as performers?

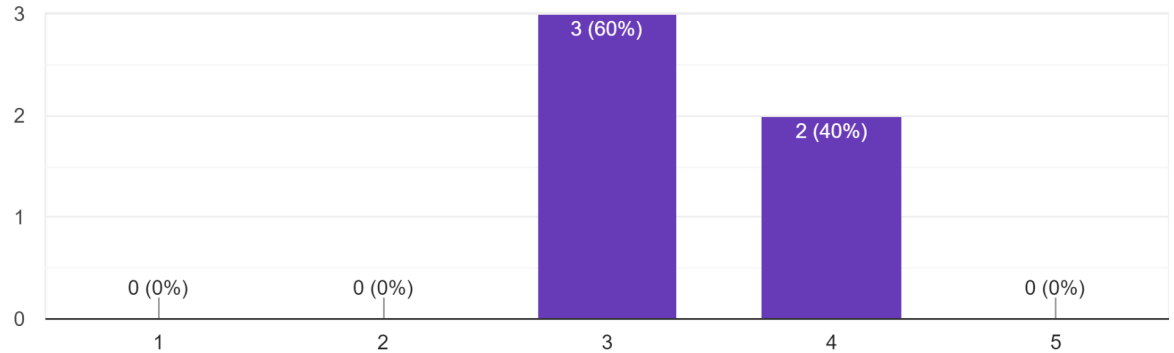
5 responses



Question 2

To what extent have music majors studying with you in private lessons demonstrated increased self-awareness as performers?

5 responses

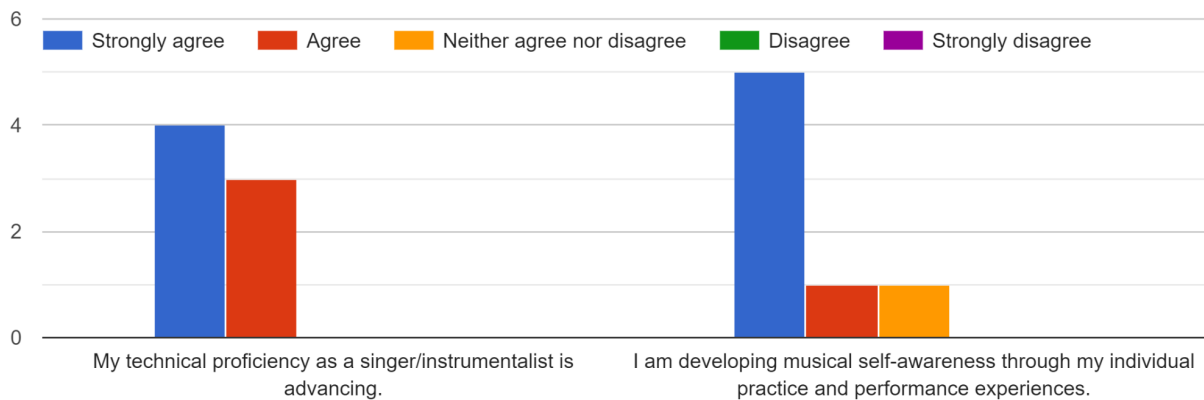


Indirect Evidence

We sent similar survey questions to our current majors, and had 7 responses. A more detailed analysis of their responses, along with the faculty survey questions presented above, will be discussed in the next section.

Question 1

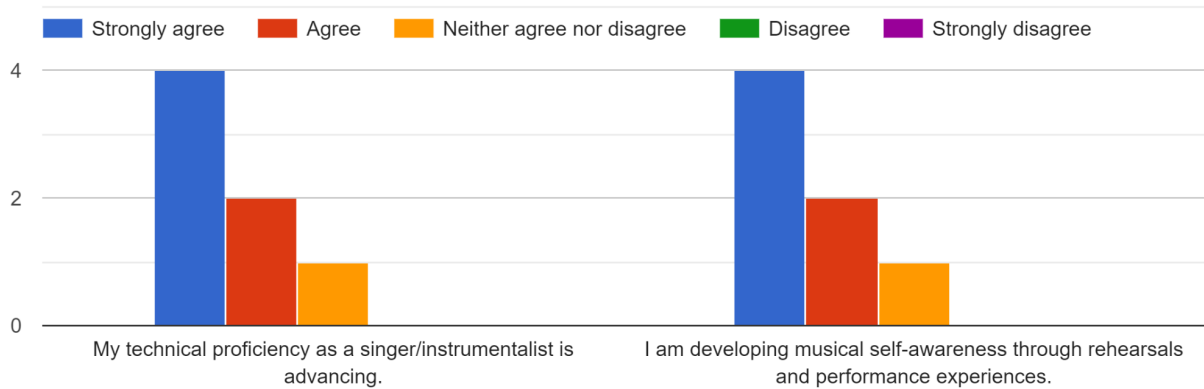
To what extent has your experience participating in PRIVATE MUSIC LESSONS at Hendrix helped you progress as a musician?



Regarding their development in ensembles, students indicated the following:

Question 2

To what extent has your experience participating in MUSIC ENSEMBLES at Hendrix helped you progress as a musician?



Results & Discussion

In parsing out LG3, we felt it was important to identify student progress as performers in both lessons and ensembles. Furthermore, we wanted to understand both students' development of technical proficiency and their own understanding of how they approach the music they study (their "self-awareness").

In this latter regard we found the most interesting disparity between faculty evaluation of student development and students' own perception of their progress. A sizable number of students felt that they were developing self-awareness as musicians through their lessons and ensembles; five out of seven students indicated "strongly agree" for their development of self-awareness in lessons, and four out of seven responded the same way for the question related to ensembles. Conversely, lessons instructors were far less convinced that students had a growing sense of self-awareness (60% of faculty selected 3 out of 5 on our Likert scale, equivalent to "neither agree nor disagree"). This disparity is significant, and indicates that students have a far different understanding of their progress than faculty do.

This would seem to indicate a few things. First, we suspect that our use of "self-awareness" in LG3 is, at best, vague. In our assessment meeting, we discussed our own individual understandings of the phrase, and realized that we, even, are not in agreement about what it means. For one faculty member, self-awareness in the context of performer development meant

that the student was developing their own active understanding of an interpretation for a piece of music (“I want the music to sound like *this*,” or “I want to bring out certain features in a piece I perform”). Another faculty member took self-awareness to mean the development of one’s understanding of their strengths and weaknesses as a performer (a broad notion of self-awareness). My own understanding of self-awareness - and I should note that the inclusion of the phrase in LG3 was at my suggestion! - related to how musicians practice. When rehearsing with others or practicing individually, it is vital that musicians are highly aware of their habits, techniques, and methods for approaching a piece of music. Effective practicing requires active and ongoing reflection in thinking about how we are making music, the specific choices we make, the strategies we use to solve problems, etc. Developing the ability to recognize one’s own musical habits (good and bad!) and to identify specific strategies to solve problems through is both challenging and essential for musicians.

Dr. Renshaw noted also that self-awareness is an inherently subjective concept; students may indeed feel that they have a better understanding of themselves and how they play or sing. It is entirely possible that students may feel they understand their abilities in a very real and meaningful way, even if their instructors are not as convinced of students’ self-awareness.

Summary

This year’s senior capstones were successful and indicate that students have made very good progress as performers during their time at Hendrix. Because the size of our sample is quite small, however, it is inevitable that certain class year’s will be stronger than others. Our music juries this year suggest that students are performing at an adequate level, but several of these students will benefit from an increased focus on practicing and further skill development if they intend to perform a capstone recital.

Because a large majority of our lessons are taught by adjunct faculty, we must strive to find a balance between establishing clear expectations for the level of progress we wish to see from our students while, at the same time, allowing instructors the autonomy and flexibility to lead their lessons with the discipline-specific knowledge they have. There is a challenge in finding this balance, and we will need to revisit the issue in the 2022-2023 school year.

An immediate matter that we will need to work on is restructuring the language of LG3 in order to clarify the meaning of “self-awareness.” While we have not yet settled on any language, on potential revised version of LG3 could read, “students will develop advancing technical proficiency and the ability to self-identify appropriate problem solving strategies through practice and performance experiences in private lessons and ensembles.”

Links to comments and responses for surveys:

- Faculty survey regarding student development in lessons:
<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1PCrmHGn4ooTxxrhFqj7-fiwMVUw3vxqaE1nAyyEQzDI/edit?usp=sharing>
- Faculty survey regarding student development in ensembles:
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1gIMGOC_i66nFRgrZIRmm5kTgpA-I-F62fBywrkIrD18/edit?usp=sharing
- Student survey regarding development in lessons and ensembles:
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1BGqM8AwWZyub_3PMGpd7sUp2B7jTBTHkAF5X9uZasA4/edit?usp=sharing
- 2022 Capstone Evaluations:
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1hNBcRh_Nx5pmbu6DxV6K4cHTNd3ymuQT?usp=sharing
- 2022 Jury Evaluations:
[Jury Grading Form.xlsx](#)