

SERIOUSLY?!

ALSO BY SCOTT LANG

*Leader of the Band, Lessons for the Young Teacher in All of Us*

*Leadership Success DVD/CD-Rom*

*Leadership Travel Guide*

*Leadership Travel Guide Workbook*

*Leadership Survival Guide DVD/CD-Rom*

# SERIOUSLY?!



Ruminations, Affirmations, and  
Observations About the  
State of Music Education

SCOTT LANG



GIA PUBLICATIONS  
CHICAGO

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SERIOUSLY,  
SCOTT?

SERIOUSLY!

BANTZ

## DEDICATION

*This book is dedicated to anyone who has been a part of the music education movement. Through your efforts, lives are enriched and our world is a better place. Your impact on this world is immeasurable, and our debt to you for your service cannot possibly be repaid.*

## A SPECIAL THANKS TO...

*Tom Batiuk, who gave his time, talent, and favorite son, Harry Dinkle, to this project. Your work was among the first to publicly recognize and celebrate music education and its impact on kids. You made us laugh and you made us cry. Most importantly, you made us think. It was an honor to be able to work with you.*

*Julie Duty, my biggest critic and forever friend. This book and my life will forever be altered because of you. You will always be my “no to gal.”*

*Leah Lang, for not only supporting me on this ten year journey but reminding me of my true potential as a leader, teacher, husband, and father. You are the reason this book and this business exist. You bring joy to my life.*

*Kevin Lang, for being a sounding board and helping me find the voice of Harry. Some of my favorite moments in the book are when I am trying to write like you.*

*My clients. Many of you took a risk on me when no one else would. You stood by me in the beginning and will be there with me in the end. I mean it when I say, “Once a client, always a friend.” Thank you for being my clients and friends.*





# PROLOGUE

From the Desk of Harry Dinkle  
Band Director, Westview High School  
Westview, Ohio

Dear Reader,

Scott asked me to write this foreword in what I can only assume is an attempt to associate himself with yours truly, Harry Dinkle, World's Greatest Band Director.

This isn't the first time someone has tried to ride these lengthy and laudable coattails. The Westfield Scapegoats football team chased my epaulettes in vain for years. They never learned that they were just the preview to the BAND. Band is the reason people come to games and the reason that football fields exist!

I am glad Scott asked for my help. Am I not the man who put the bully in bully pulpit? Am I not the maestro with a manifesto? Am I not the icon who put Westview High School on the map? Am I not the World's Greatest Band Director? Don't get me wrong; he seems like a nice enough guy, but he's a drummer. And my experience has been that drummers struggle to complete sentences, much less write entire books. Prison sentences? Sure. Grammatically correct ones? Not so much.

Speaking of books, if you are looking for a great book on band directing, I know a real page-turner called FOOTBALL FIELDS ARE FOR BAND PRACTICE, by yours truly. Now that is a read! It's a work of such magnitude and importance that it clearly places me among the literary giants of my time. I still wonder how the Pulitzer Prize missed that one. Must have been a bunch of tuba players on the committee.

I agreed to work on this book because I am concerned about this profession. We need to take take control and work together to make music better for America's children. We can't leave it to politicians and administrators; our mascot the scapegoat has a better understanding of music education than some of the politicians I have met. This is important. These thoughts need to be shared. These discussions need to be had. This profession needs to be celebrated and not eviscerated. (Look it up, trombone players.)

Speaking of which, can you believe that they let trombone players become conductors? Seriously—the trombone? Who thought it would be a good idea to give them batons? These are the same people who use plungers and weren't smart enough to be given instruments with buttons. I seriously question whether putting them in charge of anything is a good idea.

If you ask me, and someone should, I will tell you that music education makes a difference in the lives of children; not just because of what we teach, but because of how we

teach it. Music connects the mind, body, and soul in a way that no other subject can. Music education engenders peer-to-peer relationships that help children to be successful in all areas of their lives. We need music in every child's life and we need people like you to fight for this.

One of the things I like most about this book is that Scott asks more questions than he provides answers. This could be because he is a drummer and doesn't know the answers, but I suspect that this is not the case. Like most drummers, he is crafty and sneaky, and I am guessing that his hope is that through the pages of this book, you will find your own truths and chart your own path. But I could be wrong, he is a drummer. Either way, this book reminds us of the power of the podium and the awesome impact that we have on our students. It reminds us not only of the burden we carry, but of the privilege we have of carrying it.

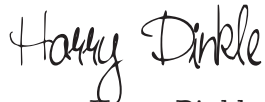
Speaking of you...band directors today have lost their esprit de corps and gone soft. Where are your uniforms? Where are the whistles and gloves? Where have all the bullhorns gone? Where are the guard towers and barbed wire at band camp? Soft, I tell you. You have all gone soft. I long for the days when prison camp was easier than band camp, when men were men, women were women, and drummers made the mascot fear for his life!

You should know that, when compared to me, Scott has the charisma of a Gregorian chant and the sophistication

of a beginning band method book. In fact, that might be a slam against the aforementioned. My apologies to monks and method book authors. I can only assume that this guy took one too many mallets to the head or something. But Scott means well, and has worked hard on this book, so bear with him. He might just surprise you, especially if set your expectations low. Keep in mind that there are two kinds of students in high school: band students and juvenile delinquents. In Scott's case, he appears to have been both.

There is more to share and say, but I have to go take care of a problem. Apparently the mascot got into the instrument storage room and is eating an oboe. Such a shame, the goat deserves better.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Harry Dinkle". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Harry Dinkle

World's Greatest Band Director ®



## *INTRODUCTION*

I have been contemplating writing another book for some time now. Honestly, I do not enjoy the process of writing and I am not particularly good at it, but I felt as if I had some things I wanted to say and ideas I wanted to share. I wasn't looking to write a thesis or wax philosophic on all things music education, but wanted to share my thoughts in a casual and conversational manner.

Recently, I was contacted by a music teacher who was looking for an old article I wrote as part of my weekly e-zine. Since I do not catalogue or organize my newsletters, I was forced to look through over three hundred articles written over ten years. I found myself re-reading articles I had forgotten and rethinking thoughts I had already thought. Somewhere through this process, I thought, "Here is the next book right in front of me!"

Most of the material contained herein is new, but for those of you (my mother and my Golden Retriever) who are regular readers of my weekly e-zine, you will recognize some of the subject matter within these pages from my missives. However, the e-zine has constraints that often leave the materials underdeveloped or incomplete. Where the writings originated from my e-zines, I will attempt to



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share my thoughts and ideas in a more thorough and less abbreviated manner, not just for the sake of writing more words, but for the sake of depth and understanding.

This book is broken up into three distinct sections: ruminations, affirmations, and observations, although there is a fair amount of carry over in the chapters. You can pick up the book and start from any point and stop at any point. The book is not “through-composed,” and the order of the chapters is served up in the same way dinner at my house is: Start where you want and don’t take more than you can digest at one time. You can always come back for seconds. Keep in mind though that dinner at my house can be a little chaotic, as my family is not short on opinions or the desire to share them.

When I speak to students, I want them to see that the character traits most important in life are already inside them: dedication, determination, compassion, work ethic, etc. These traits aren’t behaviors we can reach in and take from them; they’re values that are already within them. There is nothing that their teacher or I can do to bring them to the light of day.

Everything a student needs to become successful in band and in life is already “pre-installed” and waiting to be used. Our job is to help each student discover what she is truly capable of and facilitate her musical and personal growth. Music education, and more specifically marching band, is one of the few programs in school that concerns itself with

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what we can bring out of students instead of what we can put into them.

It is my growing opinion that we spend far too much time trying to put information into students (information, facts, figures) and not enough time coaxing behaviors out of them (commitment, discipline, teamwork, dedication). This book is written to express that philosophy.

You, too, already possess all of the necessary qualities to be a successful teacher and program manager. I believe that somewhere hidden in the deep recesses of your mind, behind the bass clarinet fingerings and history lessons on Gregorian chant, is the artist, entrepreneur, and teacher who is vital to your success in today's modern classroom. I know this because you teach. And without those qualities, you could not have managed the hurdles, barriers, and borders that it takes to be a teacher today. Your arrival at the starting line tells me that you already have the characteristics of a successful runner.

In the following pages I will try to share some thoughts and ideas with you in an entertaining and engaging way. My goal is to give you things to reflect upon, to confront some commonly accepted ideas, and perhaps to challenge you to see elements of music education in a different way.

I suspect that we will agree on many things, but I also suspect that we'll differ on more than one occasion. That's okay. My truth does not need to be your truth. My values are not necessarily your values. My challenges are not your

challenges. My failures are not yours and your successes are not mine.

In this book, you are not likely to be dazzled by an impressive array of research and data. You will not find huge appendices or academic citations. There are no charts and graphs, and I am avoiding footnotes at all costs, mostly because I don't understand the proper format. But, the other reason is that I want this to be a more casual encounter. Through this book, I am hoping that we will be able to have a discussion (albeit inside your head) and develop a relationship where we can share our thoughts and ideas.

In the mean time, thank you for trusting me with your time. I take the trust seriously and have worked hard to make the time spent reading this book as valuable as it is engaging. If you are so inclined, I would love to hear back from you. What chapters did you like? What ideas did you disagree with? Which Harry Dinkle quip made you laugh the loudest? This book is meant to be a conversation among friends, and it is always good to hear from a friend.

Enjoy!

Scott





*Part One*

# RUMINATIONS



## *SOUND THE ALARM*

Today is the two hundred thirty-ninth anniversary of the ride of Paul Revere. In honor of Mr. Revere, I submit the following.

Most people are not aware that Paul Revere was equal parts activist and artisan. He was an inventor and a silversmith beyond compare, well liked and respected by friend and foe. Heck, he sounds like a guy I would want to hang out with.

Although Revere accomplished a great deal in his life, he will forever be immortalized by his midnight ride to Concord to warn the Americans of an impending invasion by the British. He is famous for his midnight ride, and his clarion call to his fellow countrymen, “The British are coming!” will forever etch him into the minds of all sixth-grade history students, despite its half-truths and inaccuracies. It turns out that Paul Revere never shouted that famous sentence, as it would have been a dead giveaway to loyalist countrymen. It has also come to my attention he was also only one of over forty riders that night, and by “midnight ride” they really meant 9:30 p.m. But let’s be clear—it’s far less compelling to talk of forty riders whispering as they rode through town at just after dark, so we will yield for the sake of telling a good story. After all, we don’t want to mess with the heads



of a bunch of sixth graders or their teachers with real facts and information, do we?

It seems as if we do!

The Common Core is coming and is holding students and their teachers increasingly accountable for not only the information they can remember, but how they can apply it to every day life. Granted, this is not as threatening as an impending invasion by the Redcoats, but it is still frightening to Americans on many levels. And given the threatening actions by an overreaching government, who better to sound the alarm than our very own Paul Revere?

It will help here if you picture Paul in the dead of night with a long coat (even though it was spring) and holding a lantern in one hand while riding full speed (as if that was safe or even possible), screaming, "HEAR YE! HEAR YE! The Common Core is coming! The Common Core is coming! One if by pencil and two if by keyboard...Common Core is COMING! Alert thy neighbors and hide the women. Gather thy muskets and let us muster our defense! The alarm has been sounded! Let us rise up against King Arne Duncan and his imperialistic Army! Music Education without representation? WE SAY NO! Rise up ye countrymen and stand tall against the imperial forces bent on destroying us. The Common Core is coming!"

Did you picture it? Was it a vivid fantasy? Heck, was it even a dream? I mean, if you take away the horse and the lantern and insert the internet and desk lamp, is this such a farfetched analogy? Perhaps not. Even if you disagree, hang

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in there as I might make a salient point soon. Then again, I might not.

The Common Core and its predecessor, No Child Left Behind, have created an era of high stakes testing which has fostered a public perception that says, “If we can’t test it, we shouldn’t teach it.” This culture has forced our education system to go all in on subjects that are tested at the expense of those that are not. Throughout this process, arts advocates have been feverishly working to get music and related subjects recognized as “Core Subjects” on equal footing with math, English, and science. And while they have had some positive effects on the legislative and policymaking front, it has done little to change the public’s and decision makers’ perception that music is an adjunct curriculum worthy of second-tier status in the world of education. As I said, we have made progress on the legislative front in getting music recognized, but without a true understanding of the value of music education, these gains are little more than policy lip service.

As music teachers, we have little representation in the educational process on a national level. Sure, we have professional coalitions (think NAFME, ASTA, ACDA, etc.), but they are not a part of the decision-making process on virtually any level. They move information to the masses and attempt to sway the people who sway the people who make decisions and no, that was not a redundancy, just a circuitous demonstration of how far removed they are from the actual decision makers. I do not believe that President

Barack Obama has a grasp on what the presence of music education can do to elevate the academic achievement of a school community. I don't think Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has any true understanding or appreciation for what music can do for a child. I do not think that the Senate majority leader or House minority whip have any grasp of the impact of music in the lives of children. In short, they have no idea what they don't know about music education and its academic and humanistic effects.

**THIS IS UNACCEPTABLE! THIS IS UNTENABLE!  
I WANT MORE FROM THEM!**

I want to know that our voices are heard. I want to know that the powers on high understand the importance of music education. I want to know that as we delve deeper into the world of high-stakes testing, people see music not as an obtrusive impediment to student achievement, but as the most efficient and effective pathway to it. I want our contributions as music educators to be acknowledged, universally understood, and accepted as meaningful.

As a profession, we have tried being collaborative and including math and English into our music curricula. Music teachers have tried to incorporate other curricula into our music classrooms. We have yielded our rehearsal time and space so that children could have extra time in math and reading. We have tried making impassioned pleas filled with powerful statistics. We have communicated student-centered, emotion-filled stories of how transformative music is. We have sent our petitions, our delegates, and

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our donations. We have hosted confabs, consortiums, and conventions, and still find ourselves on the outside looking in. What else can we possibly do? Perhaps it's time to make a splash. Perhaps it's time for another Boston Tea Party.

Yes, the Common Core is coming and maybe that's a good thing. Maybe it will force us to stand up for ourselves and stand our ground. Just as the attack of the British served to coalesce our country, so will the Common Core for our music education community. Maybe now we will stand together and ensure that our voices are heard by the true powers that be. Maybe now we will demand that every child has access to high-quality music education teachers and programs.

Now is the time to make a case for music education in a more impactful way. Now is the time to draw our line in the sand and say, "No more taxation without music education representation." Perhaps it's time for a grand gesture. Perhaps it is time to DECLARE WAR against misinformation and ignorance and take the fight to good King Duncan! I don't have a battle plan...yet. Then again, neither did Paul Revere. He was just sounding the alarm and declaring that the war had begun.

Now if I could just learn to ride a horse!

## *MY DIRTY LITTLE SECRET*

I am not what you would typically call a “teacher.” I do not have a regular classroom or a consistent group of students. I meander from city to city, band room to band room, talking to whomever I can get to sit down in front of me. It is a nomadic life and is filled with lots of idle time involving planes, trains, and automobiles. Well, not so much trains. It’s true that I have not been a classroom teacher for over a decade, but I still consider what I do to be teaching. Therefore, in my mind, I am still a teacher.

If there is extra time at the end of a workshop, I will take questions. Last night, a young lady raised her hand and asked, “Why do you do what you do?” I paused for a moment and thought. No one had ever asked me that question, and frankly, it had me stumped. My first inclination was to answer the question with the standard and safe answer: “I do it for the children.” But anyone who has been to one of my workshops knows that I am anything but standard and safe. So I answered her question with the truth, as unconventional as it may be.

I don’t teach “for the children.”

And as long as we're at it, I should tell you that kids are not why I became a teacher, nor for that matter is music. I didn't do it to change the world or shape the future, or any of that tree-hugging liberal stuff. Like I said, I don't teach for the children. So why do I teach?

I do it for selfish reasons; I teach for me!

Yes, I teach for me! I know this doesn't make for an emotive or evocative ad campaign. It also isn't likely to be the banner headline on the American Educators' Association convention, although I think it should be. I would also suspect that you aren't likely to find "I teach for me!" greeting cards or bumper stickers during Teacher Appreciation Week. But for me, it is my truth. I teach for selfish reasons.

I enjoy teaching! I enjoy going to work in a place where I am challenged on a creative and an analytical level. I like being in a place where I have control of the entire program and can see the fruits of my labor. I like working with young, energetic people who like to laugh. I like teenagers. I like being the decision-maker and the person who gets to make the call. I enjoy the fact that I work with kids and adults, and yes, if I am to be completely honest, my ego doesn't exactly mind being the center of attention for four hours a day. For you it may be different. For you it may be "all about the kids." But for me, it's not.

Teachers are one of the few professional groups that have turned going to work into a badge of honor. Some walk the halls of our schools and the aisles of our community grocery stores carrying the weight of self-imposed martyrdom. Some

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act as if their jobs and their lives are such a burden, but they willingly carry it so that others' loads may be lighter, so that our country and its people may move forward.

Not me! Call me a selfish pig. Call me a jackass! Call me immature! Call me what you want, but I don't do it for any of those reasons. I teach because I like to giggle. I teach because I get to do what I want to do, when I want to do it, and how I want to do it. I teach because I get a "do over" every time I walk into a room. I teach because I get to celebrate each and every holiday. I teach to avoid spending large amounts of time with grumpy grownups. I teach because I hate Excel spreadsheets and terms like "360-degree analysis". I teach because I dislike memos and the people who write them. I teach because my cubicle is 10,000 square feet and I get a standing ovation more often than not. I teach for a paycheck, health insurance, and retirement. I teach for me!

Why is it so hard to admit that? Why do educators go to such great pains to paint themselves in a light that is less than flattering? Why are we so embarrassed to say that we chose our profession because it brings us joy AND it just so happens to serve a greater calling of enriching our community and the young people who live in it? We teach children, yes, but I am not sure we all teach for children.

In an effort to be "child-centered" and "student-focused," educators often act as if they are making a grand sacrifice for the betterment of tomorrow, which may or may not be true. But let's not forget, we chose this work. We choose to come

to work each and every day and sign a contract year after year. We choose to be teachers.

When your parents raised you, did they teach you to follow someone else's dream? Did they say, "We just want you to be unhappy?" When you were choosing a major in college, were you encouraged to follow someone else's passion? Did they say, "Do what is right for them," or "Find some kids, and follow their bliss."

No, I doubt it. Your parents probably said to do what you want to do and to follow your passion. And isn't that what you did?

If it was about "the children," then think about this. More than likely, you chose to teach before you ever worked with children. You made your decision never having served in this role before. You did it because you thought that an adult you admired enjoyed his job and that you just might enjoy it too! You did it for you just like I did it for me.

I am not ashamed that I'm happy. I am not embarrassed that I like my job. I am not a martyr and you need not pity me. I'm doing rather well, thank you, and your pity would be better spent on someone who doesn't get to do what they want to do.

I teach because I enjoy it. I teach because it's what I want to do. I teach because it makes me feel good. I recognize that the byproduct is that I do it for children, but I do it because of me.



I recognize whom I serve in this profession: children. But I am also cognizant of why I serve. I teach for me.

Anyone want to buy that bumper sticker?