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[MAR 15 MEJ] From the Academic Editor

Music Education and the Military: The Special Focus Issue

by Patrick K. Freer, Georgia State University, Atlanta

An NAFME staff member approached the *Music Educators Journal (MEJ)* editor in early 2013 with an idea for a series of articles about the relationship between the military and music education. The idea grew from a spontaneous discussion at a cocktail reception attended by, among others, NAFME representatives and military musicians. The initial question posed was simple: “What do military ensembles have to do with music education?” Related questions grew to address the military as musicians’ career path, in-school outreach programs of the U.S. Coast Guard, the role of military ensembles in civilian ceremonial events, an exploration of NAFME’s cosponsorship of the U.S. Army All-American Marching Band program, patriotism and music education, and the influence of military veteran musicians who teach in public and private schools. During the earliest conversation about this idea, one NAFME staffer commented, “I grew up in the middle of Wisconsin, and I know that the military’s musical outreach ensembles are a huge deal in many small towns and medium-sized cities where vast numbers of our readers live and work.” The idea was launched.

The call for article proposals was posted in multiple online forums, asking for a series of manuscripts “related to the military’s role in United States music education and how music education presently functions within military schools.” This yielded many inquiries, suggestions for content, and manuscript outlines. The response quickly led us to realize that we could have enough content for a Special Focus Issue—an uncommon designation of importance requiring formal approval of the *MEJ* Editorial Committee and NAFME’s National Executive Board. A more substantive call for proposals was published in summer 2013 and included the following statement:

We begin to plan a special focus issue on the relationship between “The Military and Music Education.” This could include a range of articles addressing how American music education’s development was influenced by the military (historical), the effect of this relationship on our conceptions of music education (theoretical/philosophical), the current state of affairs, and an article about best practices emerging from a research study of teaching in a current military-affiliated music setting.

You are viewing the result. As indicated by the set of articles published in this issue, research about music education and the military is quite limited yet is broad in scope. We aimed for the widest possible range of subtopics but, of course, were only able to consider those manuscripts that were submitted and successfully navigated the peer-review process. Several of the authors presented their articles as a panel presentation session for the St. Augustine History of Music Education Symposium in May 2014. Feedback from audience members prompted several changes, including the eventual

addition of Gregory Drane's article on the role of African-American musicians in the integration of the United States Navy. All of us associated with the editing of *MEJ* realize that these articles are individually complete but are collectively incomplete; there are many more stories to tell, other perspectives to share, and divergent opinions yet to be written. We will welcome these responses and future manuscripts.

MEJ has a long history of substantial coverage of music education and the military. This content has peaked during times of war, including World War I (1914–18), World War II (1939–45), the Korean War (1950–53), the Vietnam War (1954–75), the Persian Gulf War (1990–91), Operation Enduring Freedom (2001–present), and the Iraq War (2003–10) and its continuing aftereffects. *MEJ* has presented a unified, supportive, and unquestioning view of how music education and the military are intertwined. This Special Focus Issue explores this view, provides a contextual framework for its history, and begins to raise questions for our consideration now and into the future.

I would like to thank the individual members of the *MEJ* Editorial Committee, the NAFME National Executive Board, and the NAFME administrative staff members who have provided guidance, support, and final approval of these articles and their content. Some of the articles will provoke discussion and promote dialogue. Some readers will not agree with everything in these pages. It is important to remember that *MEJ* articles do not represent official positions of our Association. Rather, *MEJ* provides our most public forum for reasoned and collegial discussion. I invite you to become part of that discussion as you read and respond to the articles in this issue.