

## **Invisible Student: Understanding Social Identity Construction within Performing Ensembles**

Hourigan, Ryan M. "The Invisible Student: Understanding Social Identity Construction within Performing Ensembles." *Music Educators Journal* 95.4 (2009): n. pag. Print.

This article "The Invisible Student: Understanding Social Identity Construction within Performing Ensembles" by Ryan M. Hourigan discusses the concept of the "invisible student" in ensembles. This is the person that doesn't have many friends and feels like they don't belong. The article aims to help music teachers recognize these students and foster a positive and inclusive environment for them. It was **interesting** to read about the various ideas to foster this type of environment. The article suggested techniques such as doing ice breakers on the first day of class, holding ensemble socials to allow connections to form outside of the classroom, and/or greeting each student as they come in the door by asking them how their week was. I'd be interested to know what other techniques teachers have used to help foster their accepting space, and whether or not these techniques were successful.

I found it **surprising** that some people don't feel comfortable in the music room because in my experience, I felt most comfortable in the music room. I felt that my music teacher was able to foster the ideal inclusive space the article talks about. He genuinely cared about each and every one of us in the music classroom and outside of it. He liked to check in on how our days and weeks were going. He would also share his thoughts, which created a connection amongst the class. I'm grateful that I had a teacher who was able to nurture genuine connections between himself and the students, as well as offer a space where every student felt comfortable expressing themselves.

I was **saddened** when I realized that there may have been several invisible students in my class that I was not aware of. If I had paid more attention, I could have reached out to these students and introduced them to others in the class. However, I had just assumed everyone in our ensemble felt safe and happy. Hopefully as a member of the choir committee this year, I will now be more aware of these students and implement initiatives to help them feel comfortable, such as weekly vibe checks or ensemble socials to get to know one another better.

If I could **talk to the author**, I would ask him to conduct a survey asking every student how many times he or she has felt like an "invisible student". I am sure everyone has felt this way at some point. It would be comforting to see the results and realize that you are not the only one feeling this way. I would also ask him to share this article with educators outside of music classes. I think it is important for all teachers to promote a positive and inclusive environment for students. It will motivate students to participate in class, feel comfortable sharing answers, and love learning even more!