QRME

"Nothing without Joy": A High School Chorus Teacher's Use of Aphorisms to Create Identity, Told in Sonata Form

Joseph Michael Abramo
University of Connecticut

Douglas Michael Coates
North Salem Central School District, NY

UNC GREENSBORO

"Nothing without Joy": A High School Chorus Teacher's Use of Aphorisms to Create Identity, Told in Sonata Form

Joseph Michael Abramo[1] and Douglas Michael Coates[2]

Abstract

In this narrative, Joe, a teacher educator, and Doug, a musician and choral teacher, tell a story of Doug's teaching in a sonata-inspired form. Doug transformed a choral program with dwindling numbers and student apathy into a thriving program. To accomplish this, he uses aphorisms—both spoken and written on the walls of his classroom—to construct identities for himself and his students. These aphorisms become signifiers of important experiences in his life and serve as a way to construct the semblance of his identity and project his ideals for students. Using analytical philosophies of language, and poststructuralist theories of performativity, Joe and Doug note how Doug employs *locution*, *illocution*, and *perlocution* in these aphorisms to construct his identity and create a safe space for students. Uses of these aphorisms, then, become performative acts, which might describe the construction of music teacher identity and the

[1] University of Connecticut, Storrs, Connecticut, USA

[2] North Salem Central School District, North Salem, New York, USA

Corresponding Author:
Joseph Michael Abramo, Assistant Professor of Music Education, Neag School of Education, University of Connecticut, 249 Glenbrook Road, Unit 3033, Storrs, Connecticut 06269
Email: joseph.abramo@uconn.edu

education process. In the "coda" we further develop these themes by exploring implications for music teaching.

Introduction

In this narrative, Joe, a teacher educator, and Doug, a musician and choral teacher, tell a story of Doug's teaching. Doug, who after a career in musical theater, began teaching chorus in the public schools in his forties, transformed a choral program with dwindling numbers and student apathy into a thriving program. In telling this story, we craft a story of the emotional work, vulnerability, and rewards of teaching framed by the following philosophical questions: How do teachers engage in the everyday emotional identity work in preparation of entering the classroom? How does what educators do, perform, and say—including aphorisms and sayings they tell themselves and students—in the classroom urge students to act on their own? What benefit to teaching and inspiring do teachers receive? Our collective story of Doug's teaching presents one narrative that engages these questions that defy conclusive answers.

We tell this story of Doug's teaching in sonata-inspired form. After this introduction outlining the theoretical framework and methodology, we present an exposition by discussing a sign above the entrance of Doug's classroom that says, "Nothing without Joy." This exposition is divided into two themes: first how the aphorism influences Doug's life and teaching and, second, how the aphorism influences his students and colleagues. This aphorism, and others are signs he puts around his classroom to reorient himself and project truths or axioms that he holds to be true or wants to instill in himself and others. Next, we develop these themes by viewing this aphorism through Austin's *speech acts* theory. We then move to a recapitulation, which serves as a discussion section, where we look to blur the lines between the themes of teacher self and student other. Finally, we end with a coda and terminal development, where we further develop these themes by exploring implications for music teaching.

Theoretical Framework: Poststructural Theories of Identity

In telling Doug's story, we are attuned to the conditional and limited nature of narrative, and yet, despite those limits, understand that people positively use narrative to construct identity. Narrative has become an important method of investigation in education and music education. However, informed by poststructuralist theories of identity, Miller (1998) questions if researchers can totally tell an educator's story.

> I think there is something missing in the invitation to teachers to "just tell your story." One difficulty arises when autobiographies, or narratives, or stories in and about education are told or written as unitary and transparent, "so that the fabric of the narrative appears seamless, spun of whole cloth. The effect is magical—the self appears organic, the present the sum total of the past, the past appears as an accurate predictor of the future." (Miller, 1998, p. 150)

This is a challenge to the traditional epistemological, ontological, and methodological assumptions of narrative inquiry, where language becomes a transparent conveyor of a teacher's total, consistent identity. Instead, Miller highlights that narratives are constructions that do not fully capture the messy and contradictory nature of identity. She also suggests that people understand and make sense of narratives through theories, whether or not they acknowledge those theories.

While identity is fractured, people form their ostensibly unified subjectness through the narratives they tell themselves and others. Signifying, abstracting from, and making sense of experiences through narratives are unavoidable; narrative becomes the glue that binds one's fractured, moment-to-moment self together. In other words, despite the constructed nature of narrative telling, it is the process by which one assembles an identity. This narrative telling, though, is not merely a conscious, individual, and purely creative construction of self, but is,

instead, driven by the discourses of society and borrows and cites past gestures and narratives. This process is what Butler (1993, 1999) calls performativity. Because performativity is driven by discourses, Butler (1993) argues that it "must be understood not as a singular or deliberate 'act,' but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names" (p. 2). In other words, people create identities by repeating behaviors and gestures that they observe and borrow from other places, making them their own. Not done in a conscious way, this is driven by social structures. "Masculine" identity, for example, is created by "acting" the social role of being male, rather than stemming from a priori, biological, or essential traits. Men *cite* masculine behaviors and gestures urged by social roles. This does not make identity any less "real" or "authentic," but highlights the contingent, context-based, and malleable aspects of identity.

These narratives that constitute performativity are enacted through the repetition of what Austin (1975) calls "speech acts." For Butler, "the notion of performativity [is]. . . understood as those speech acts that bring into being that which they name" (Butler, 1996, p. 112). Through repeated performative utterances or speech acts, a subject forms the semblance of an identity that is the process of performativity. They are linguistic performatives that describe phenomena, urge into being social constructions of reality, and construct identity. Narrative, performativity, and the speech acts that constitute them are the tools or processes a person uses to assemble a fractured identity into the semblance of a fixed identity. According to Butler (1996), Austin took for granted that the speaking subject had free will when producing speech acts. Butler nuances Austin's speech acts through performativity so that it can be viewed not as a process of mere creation of free will, but driven by social rules and the limits of the social conventions of language. In this way, this paper (as perhaps all narratives) is a *narrative of narratives*, a

collection of smaller, conscious and unconscious stories influenced by discourses that we gather up to make sense of ourselves and others (Miller, 1998).

What follows, then, is a narrative of the narratives Doug—together with Joe—tells himself and his students. It can never sit as a complete or, in some sense, "accurate" representation of Doug's narrative and his identity. As Geertz (1974) notes, all sociological writings are "fictions in the sense that they are 'something made,' 'something fashioned'—the original meaning of *fictio*" (p. 15). This story, then, stands as a representation—perhaps even as Geertz suggests, a fiction—that gathers up Doug's narratives to bring meaning to his experiences and how he forms a teacher identity and affects his students (Barone, 2007).

Methodology

Using narrative methodology, we tell Doug's story in a sonata-inspired form. In using this methodology and form, we aim to render the performativity and constructedness of identity through narrative.

Narrative research and musical form.

Our use of sonata form to tell this story is informed by music theorists' exploration of narrative in music. Sonata form is a formal structure used in Western art music, primarily within the common practice period of roughly 1700-1900. This form usually follows a structure of exposition, development, and recapitulation. In the exposition, first a theme is stated in the tonic or "home" key. A second, contrasting key is then stated in a secondary or "away" key. Next, in the development section, where thematic material is developed through compositional techniques. Through this process, the music moves through several keys, sometimes remote from the tonic key. Finally, the themes are restated in the recapitulation. In this restatement both

themes are stated in the tonic key. This requires that the second theme is thus stated in a different key than as it appeared in the exposition.

Some theorists argue that music, including sonata form and other "absolute music," can be understood as the unfolding of a narrative. Maus (1991), for example, suggested that

Musical events can be regarded as characters, or as gestures, assertions, responses, resolutions, goal-oriented motions, references, and so on. Once they are so regarded, it is easy to regard successions of musical events as forming something like a story, in which these characters and actions go together to form something like a plot. (p. 6)

McClary (1991) attributes this narrative quality to the interactions of keys within musical form. "[The] narrative schema" she writes, "is played out. . . . [in] the formal conventions of 'absolute' music. . . . [T]he course of a movement traces the trajectory from a home base (tonic), to the conquest of two or three other keys, and a return to tonic for closure" (p. 14). The protagonist or "self"—represented by the tonic—traverses alterities to create tension, finally returning home to resolve these tensions. In sonata form, this journey is enacted through a tension created in the opposition of self and other in the two or more keys of the exposition and then the conflict or violence of the rapidly modulating development section. Finally, the tension of the binaries of the "self" and "other" are resolved in the recapitulation, where the secondary theme is stated in the tonic key.

In evoking this metaphor, we exploit these thematic and tonal aspects of sonata form. We recapitulate thematic material in a truncated form in a way to understand this material in new ways. As the themes of "teacher self" and "student and colleague others" are presented as opposing themes in the exposition, we blur this binary in the recapitulation.

Narrative construction and interpretation.

Joe and Doug met each other when they previously taught music in a public high school together, a high school that is different than where both are currently employed. Doug continues to teach with Joe's wife, and Joe frequently visits the school. To create a narrative, we met monthly at Doug's school over an academic year, resulting in nine meetings. The meetings lasted between 45 minutes and two hours and were generally informal in nature, although Joe did craft semi-structured protocols to address questions he had after reviewing data from previous meetings. Joe audio recorded these meetings and took notes. We used Riessman's (2001) "performative" approach to narrative which suggests that, "[w]hen we tell stories about our lives we perform our (preferred) identities" (p. 701), because it aligns the methodology with the theoretical framework. The performative view of narrative enabled us to interpret the interviews as stories Doug tells to enact or perform his identity. For coding, Joe followed procedures outlined by Saldaña (2015); he openly coded the interviews by color-coding the transcriptions and collecting them into themes and then returning to the interviews for verification and generation of new themes in an iterative process. The theoretical framework of performativity and speech acts guided Joe's creation of these themes. This coding and interpretation set the agenda for the next meetings. The codes and themes developed in the coding and interpretation helped Joe decide which areas to explore further and allowed him to approach Doug with his initial thoughts in a kind of participant check.

Based on these initial discussions, Joe wrote a first draft of a manuscript, showed it to Doug, and asked him to comment, make amendments, and challenge material. Some of the changes included Doug's elaboration of themes. There were times when, after reviewing the material, Doug wanted to add further thoughts, and that led to an audio-recorded discussion. We then added selected quotes from these discussions into the document. Doug also raised questions

about the amount of specificity to include in the document. Joe initially did not include certain

contextualizing information or material for his quotes that Joe thought Doug might not want to

reveal. However, after reading the document, he questioned their omission, and after a

discussion, we returned the material to the document. This back-and-forth process led to a

revised final document.

<div align="center">

Exposition: "Nothing without Joy"

</div>

Theme 1: "Nothing without Joy" as a Trigger of a Teacher Self

Doug teaches in, what he describes as, a pleasant school in a suburb of [a large

metropolis in the northeast of the United States]. As Doug notes, "Yeah, I've taught at another

school and it's not the same; this so much better. The teachers are great and it's a great place to

work and the administration support the arts. There's a group of kids who are dedicated to

music." As students, teachers, and others walk down a long hallway in this school, they see a

hand-painted message above the door of Doug's classroom with two-foot-tall, dark blue letters

that spell out, "Nothing without Joy." The sign is conspicuous and distinctive, and because of

that, Joe became curious about its intent and function in Doug's teaching and asked about its

significance:

> The quote is from the educator Loris Malaguzzi. And the speaker I saw who quoted him,
>
> Steven Seidel, said that it should be hung over the door of every classroom. There's no
>
> reason for there not to be any joy in all classrooms. . . . When I was performing
>
> [professionally], I swore that I would stop doing it if it wasn't fun anymore. I think the
>
> same is true for me with teaching. If it's not fun anymore, I don't want to do it. But who's
>
> in charge of that? I am. *Me.* That's *my* choice.

"Nothing without Joy" is an aphorism, borrowed from a professional development session, intended to be a message to students. We will explore this effect on students shortly in Theme 2, however, it is important to note how the aphorism facilitates Doug's process of transitioning into a teacher self:

> For some reason this "Joy" thing rang true, and there was a morning this week— whatever happened the day before, I was tired. I woke up and I thought, the last thing I want to do is go to school. I don't want to work, I don't want to do this today and I had the option. I can walk out the door and be shitty in the car, and be a bastard all the way in, or I could be "ok." You make the choice.

Doug enjoys teaching. However, like any other job, it is demanding and there are days that he does not want to go, preferring to stay home. "Nothing without Joy" is a signification of the teacher self he wants or needs to be during these times when he would rather not perform the rigors of teaching. It serves as a signifier of the type of teacher he wants to embody in the classroom. As a result, as Doug says, "'Joy' is a trigger for me. Flat out, in no-uncertain-terms."

> Doug placed the sign outside his door because it had a special resonance and he wanted it

to be the first thing he (and others) saw when entering the classroom.

> Of all the aphorisms I posted, this one was most important to me. I guess my insistence was ill-placed. I put it over my door so I could see it upon entering and leaving the room, but I did want my students to see it daily as well. The ones on the wall in my room become non-existent because I see them all day every day. Nothing Without Joy is important because I see it every time I enter the room. It hasn't blended into the room because it is outside the room – sort of the antithesis of "Abandon hope, all ye who enter here."

He uses the quote to remind himself how he is supposed to be in the classroom and what is important.

Theme 2: Spreading "Nothing without Joy" to Others

If "Nothing without Joy" serves as a trigger or signifier of what is important in Doug's teaching, it also serves as a signal that spreads to others.

I have to have it first before they can see it. It has to be part of me. Believe it or not, I'm getting a little bit emotional. It has to be part of me! And there are times when it's not. I had to make a point of it this morning; "It's going to be ok."

An idea that has guided his life is that he cannot expect others in his life to be joyous if he himself is not. Doug, then, needs to secure this aspect of his life and then it can spread to others. This spreading includes his colleagues.

What I've found—and the sign has been hanging there two or three years now—I found that it's creeping into vocabulary of other people. I said to [my colleague] Melinda the other day, "I don't know if you realize this or not, but I notice that you use the word. Not with the kids, but when we're talking about the department, whatever." She uses the word. I noticed [my principal] using the word. Ok, this is going to be a little bit cocky, but I think I'm a little responsible for that (laughing).

For Doug, this effect on his colleagues was not deliberate. "That was a kind of an unintentional perk, a byproduct. That was never intended. I'm glad it happened, but I was never like (in a sarcastically authoritative voice:) 'I'm going to turn this school climate around' or anything like that." Instead, by embodying "Nothing without Joy" for himself, he also has the added benefit of affecting others' attitudes and actions. As he said, "I want it to be part of me so it comes out and they're affected by that."

Development

"Nothing without Joy" as Speech Act

To develop these themes, we turn from Doug's voice and emic description, towards the etic descriptions of theory. How is it possible "Nothing without Joy" possesses these meanings and functions in an educational setting? Doug's use of "Nothing without Joy" to trigger his teacher self and to affect others might be understood as, what Austin (1975) referred to as, a *speech act.* According to Austin, any linguistic utterance from a person can have simultaneously differing intentions and uses. "[I]t makes a great difference whether we are advising, or merely suggesting, or actually ordering, whether we were strictly promising or only announcing a vague intention" (p. 99). For Austin, these varying intentions and uses are three different functions of language: *locution, illocution*, and *perlocution.*

Locution is the statement of a fact. Examples of locutionary acts include "asking or answering a question; giving some information or an assurance or a warning;. . . [and] making an identification or giving a description" (Austin, 1975, p. 98). It is the sort of "surface value" meaning of any utterance. *Illocution* is the "performance of an act *in* saying something as opposed to performance of an act *of* saying something" (p. 99, italics in original). An illocutionary act is an offer, promise, or command. It is an acknowledgement that a seeker has an *intended* effect in the future upon others. Finally, *perlocution* is the result upon the one who speaks and his or her intended audience. "Saying something will often, or even normally, produce certain consequential effects upon the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience, or of the speaker, or of other persons" (p. 101). Perlocution acknowledges that the intent of an utterance differs from the effect it has upon those who listen to that utterance. In sum, *locution* is what was said, *illocution* is what was meant, and *perlocution* is what happened as a result. "We

can similarly distinguish the locutionary act 'he said that…' from the illocutionary act 'he argued that…' and the perlocutionary act 'he convinced me that…'" (p. 102, ellipses in original).

These three types of speech acts provide a way of framing the differing functions of "Nothing without Joy" within Doug's life and in his professional space. The sign has words that are implied depending on *who* is viewing the sign and *in what context* he or she views it. The sign can be read as:

locution: (There is, or should be,) "Nothing without Joy"

illocution: (I urge you and myself to act in accordance with) "Nothing without Joy."

perlocution: (Through our actions in the classroom, I, my students, and my colleagues

enact) "Nothing without Joy."

"Nothing without Joy" is locutional; it is a statement of "fact" or a willing of that fact into being. Doug wishes to state that everything *is* or *should be* joyful. "Nothing without Joy" is also illocution; it is an aphorism that serves as a promise to himself of how he should be and an urging of how his students are to conduct themselves. Finally, it is perlocutionary because it has (intended) consequences upon himself and others. The phrase sets the stage for himself, his students, and his colleagues to act in accordance with "Nothing without Joy," resulting in, hopefully, a happier classroom and work environment.

Doug described the sign as illocutionary, albeit with different words:

I think initially it went up there for me, for the students, for them to know, for lack of a better term, "a place of joy." And it does serve me as a reminder because I can forget that sometimes, easily. The middle of the musical season, opening night when a kid can't show up because he's sick—I have to remind myself why I'm here.

Doug's use of "Nothing without Joy" as a simultaneously locutional, illocutional, and perlocutional speech act might provide new insights into the differing ways educators communicate. Music teachers perform speech acts every day. They provide information in utterances such as, "A major triad consists of a major third and a minor third." They maintain an environment conducive to learning through classroom management utterances such as, "We raise our hand before we talk." They ask questions that spark reflection and growth such as, "How can you make your composition more expressive?" They even communicate nonverbally, like when they model how to perform a phrase from *Nessun Dorma*.

While each of these utterances may seem straightforward, easily categorizable speech acts, they too have the potential to function simultaneously as locution, illocution, and perlocution, just like "Nothing without Joy." Offering information like the first example we provided above where the teacher explains the intervallic composition of a major triad is, *prima facie*, a locutionary statement or "fact." However, it is also illocutionary; it is stated to urge students to begin to see patterns and to construct triads according to the stated rules.

Similarly, statements of classroom management, as we provided in the second example, might also be understood as registering on several levels. When students are directed to raise their hands, it is illocution by urging or decreeing that this is a rule that students must follow in the classroom. However, there is hope that it has perlocutionary effects on students' behavior; a teacher hopes it results in students "behaving." Importantly, however, this classroom management phrase it is stated as a locutionary "fact." When a teacher states this in a classroom, it is a promise of future action; its utterance suggests that students should shape their actions around what the educator believes constitutes good behavior for all citizens.

Likewise, questions that spark reflection, like our third example, *urge* future illocutionary action and *enact* that change in perlocutionary action. However, they also contain in them locutionary statements. In other words, within a question is also a statement of what the teacher finds to be important.

Finally, as in our last example, musical modeling perlocutionarily urges students to act in a manner similar to the teacher; the teacher sings so that the student can copy. However, musical modeling can also serve as an illocutionary statement from the teacher to herself and her students about how musicians should always or usually perform the music. When a teacher says, "it should go like this…" and sings, she is also potentially starting a locutionary fact or belief—music might or should sound like this. Teacher modeling, then, is a demonstration for the students, but can also serve as an illocutionary statement that urges or reminds the teacher to perform music in a certain way.

From Speech Acts to Felicitous Utterances

It is one thing for a teacher to utter mere speech acts, but another thing to enact change in students and to teach. In the classroom, teacher illocution does not guarantee perlocutionary effects upon students. In other words, as any teacher might attest, just because a teacher directs students to do something does not mean that students will do it. This leading of locution and illocution to perlocution is what Austin (1975) calls a "felicitous performative utterance" (p. 22), where listeners willingly agree to a speaker's illocution. How do educators turn their mere words into speech acts that enact perlocution, student action, and growth?

For Doug, a felicitous utterance, as the aphorism suggests, is enacted through joy. However, perhaps paradoxically, that joy is achieved by acknowledging his and his students' vulnerabilities.

> A teacher must show a certain vulnerability to establish a relationship—from both sides. It's easy to see the vulnerability in kids. I know what they're vulnerable about. There are certain things that teenagers go through. I went through them, it was a little while ago, but I went through them (laugh). . . . I've never been able to hide my emotions. The kids know. The kids worry. That vulnerability also opens up more of a relationship. I think if I stood up here and played the notes [and just said,] "do this," it would be different. But, that's not how I want to run class. I don't know how I do it. I don't do it consciously.

For Doug, this vulnerability is an essential aspect of both singing and his pedagogy.

> As musicians, we always ask, "how can I express?" You can't express something unless you're vulnerable. If you do, it's not an honest expression. That's the difference between singing a song perfectly and expressing. There's a vulnerability involved; you have to connect to it somehow. That's what I want my kids to understand.

The difference between technique and expression is connecting to one's vulnerability and to the vulnerability expressed through the music and the words of a song. That expression also links to verbal, prosaic expression when Doug invites his students to reflect and dialogue about the direction of rehearsals.

> Every two weeks instead of rehearsing, we sit in a circle and talk. [I ask them,] "What have you learned? How does that inform where we go next? What did you pick up that you probably didn't know you picked up?" When you put kids in a circle like that, it puts everyone in the same vulnerable position. There's nothing in front of you; you're sitting in a chair in a circle. For some kids, that's a really vulnerable spot.

Students face their classmates with nothing physical, such as a chair or music stand, to hide behind and express their views. This expression leaves them open to critique and vulnerability.

As Doug noted earlier, "I think if I stood up here and played the notes [and just said,] 'do this,' it would be different. But, that's not how I want to run class." Encouraging dialogue, rather than running a teacher-led rehearsal, also invites vulnerability. However, Doug believes this vulnerability leads students to acknowledge and accept that vulnerability and the joy of not taking themselves so seriously:

> One of my students once said, "Mr. Coates taught us a lot, but the most important thing that he taught me was how to laugh at myself." . . . Because I laugh at myself, you know. Sometimes it's a defense; I do it before someone else can do it (laugh). But, not take yourself so seriously. You're going to make mistakes. Be vulnerable, it's alright. That was many years ago, but it has always stuck with me that that was the most important thing she got out of this.

In this quote, Doug sums up the relationship of vulnerability, joy, and performativity. By allowing his students to be vulnerable, they cannot take themselves so seriously and begin to laugh and find joy. This is reiterative, because in not taking oneself so seriously, students are more apt to take additional chances and be more vulnerable. He does this by modeling or performatively constituting this identity of joy through his teacher identity. However, again, perhaps paradoxically, this joy is enacted, in part, through his own vulnerability. His joy is sometimes born from a "defense" and his vulnerability of others laughing at him.

Acknowledging those vulnerabilities and turning it into joy creates a welcoming environment for his students.

> My high school kids will tell you—they won't say "safe space," but that's what they mean. At the end of the year, they say, "we're like a family in here," and I don't know

how that happens. I don't consciously do it. It's just who I am, or who I've become with

these kids. The "Joy" word brought it home, tied it together.

While it creates a safe space for students, he notes that there is benefit for him as well.

This is a safe space for me, too, because the kids trust me. There's a relationship. . . .

When my parents passed, it was hard for me to come back to work. I had a rough time.

And I had one of my sixth graders come up to me and say, "Mr. Coates, I'm really sorry.

I'm really sorry for your loss." I choked up. I can't imagine a kid saying that to every

teacher. There has to be some sort of relationship where she felt safe enough to come say

it to me. And again, I don't do it consciously.

A felicitous utterance in Doug's teaching—that link between his "saying" and students'

"doing"—is through vulnerability and ultimately joy. Acknowledging vulnerabilities in the act of

expressing, whether it is through song or dialogue, allows his students not to take themselves so

seriously and create a space where they can "take a chance" and find joy. However, importantly,

this is not merely an act for his students. It has benefit for him as well. It creates a safe space for

him, where students acknowledge his vulnerabilities, like the passing of his parents, and he too

can also find joy. Finally, as he says, twice, it is not completely intentional, he "doesn't do it

consciously."

Recapitulation

Theme 1: "Nothing without Joy" as a Trigger of a Teacher Self

I woke up and I thought the last thing I want to do is go to school. . .

. I can walk out the door and be shitty in the car, and be a bastard all

the way in, or I could be "ok."

This development of Doug's language through speech acts theory and vulnerability embedded within language and expression leads back to "Nothing without Joy" and points to how educators construct a teacher self. The sign above the door to his classroom might seem like a small, perhaps insignificant gesture; teachers regularly place posters and other aphorisms around their classrooms. However, Doug's hand-painted "Nothing without Joy" serves as a signifier of the necessary identity construction teachers engage in to enter the classroom. He created and hung the sign to remind him that identities are situated and contingent and that an educator's teacher self is not identical to her non-teacher self. As Doug notes, this shift to a teacher self is not easy, but is gained through effort:

> I think there's a physicality that if you—as uncomfortable as it is—if you force yourself to smile, and you know it isn't real, your body responds. Whatever it takes. That's how I know I get through it. There are days when I don't want to. I'm here, walking through the door just miserable. . . . My morning greeting to almost everyone now is "morning sunshine!" (laugh). But, I can't say that without them smiling and without me smiling. . . . Joy forces you to find the positive in it.

Doug speaks of the performativity of teaching. There is a sort of fake it until you make quality to this positive teacher self. Teachers transform themselves, sometimes uncomfortably, into their teacher identities to serve as models for students (Alsup, 2006; Britzman, 2003). As Doug embodies "Joy" through citational bodily acts of "forced" smiles and the speech acts of peppy greetings, his teacher identity *becomes* at school. Performativity suggests that identity is not the expression of essential, unchanging biological or psychological qualities, but is instead a series of gestures that fulfill the conception of an identity (Butler, 1999). In this sense, Doug is

becoming a teacher by purposefully and performatively enacting a teaching role and teaching gestures through these citational bodily and speech acts.

This performativity is captured in two other aphorisms Doug painted on the walls of his classroom: "I don't sing because I'm happy; I'm happy because I sing—W James" and "He who sings frightens away his ills. Cervantes." Like these aphorisms, Doug does not bring a happy self to the classroom to sing. In the space of the classroom, he must create that happy teacher self. In doing so, he "frightens his ills away," and benefits his overall mood and self. Similarly, as these aphorisms might suggest, he wants his students to become their full selves in the classroom through singing. Through music and dialogue, he hopes his students can similarly find a "safe space" to express themselves, be vulnerable, and ultimately find joy.

Doug's deliberate creation of a happy self through bodily acts and speech acts is similar to, but also contrasts, Joe's unconscious creation of a teacher self. As Doug shared his experiences of conjuring up a teacher self, it prompted Joe to tell his own story of how a teaching persona can be natural yet contrary to the self outside the context of teaching. Unlike Doug, Joe stressed how this process became automatic:

> You know that kind of reminds me of this time that Melinda [Joe's wife and Doug's colleague] and I took a graduate course together. We had an assignment in class where we had to lead an ensemble. When it came to be my turn, I got up and taught. I ran a rehearsal; I gave directions, asked some questions—you know I just taught. I did my thing, I didn't think much about it. When I was done, I sat down and Melinda said, "who the hell was that!?" (laughing). I was like, "what do you mean?" She was like, "I've never seen you like that. You were so animated." And we had been married for several years at that point. She teased me about it for some time after that. But, you know, that

was the first time I realized that we shift into a teacher self that is quite different than our

everyday selves and we don't even realize it.

Doug's uses of "Nothing without Joy" and the forcing of himself to be happy at work and

Joe's anecdote suggest that teaching is performative or that a teacher's identity *becomes* in the

classroom. Doug takes great pains to transform from "being shitty in the car" to being "ok." For

Joe, this process became automatic and hidden at some point. In creating a presentation of self

for the context of a classroom, Doug tells himself a narrative—perhaps even a fiction—about

himself represented or triggered by the aphorism and speech act of "Nothing without Joy." This

aphorism can never be a complete description of Doug's identity, but aids in conjuring up a facet

of his identity that he brings to the surface for the classroom. What makes Doug's process of

conjuring up a teacher self different than Joe and perhaps many other teachers is how delineated

the process is for him. Performativity, as Butler describes it and as Joe's anecdote suggests, is

largely an unconscious process where subjects do not freely create themselves but are

constrained by discourses. For Doug the process is more conscious and deliberate. As Joe

described it in one of the conversations, "there's a sign. There's literally a physical sign above

the door of your classroom that says something that we as all teachers do," namely to remind

ourselves, consciously or not, of the identity we need to gather up before we enter our

classrooms.

Theme 2: "Nothing without Joy" Spreads

I have to have it first before they can see it. It has to be part of me. Believe

it or not, I'm getting a little bit emotional. It has to be part of me!

If the performativity of transitioning into a teacher self is difficult for Doug, then why

does he continue to do it? Doug, of course, strives to be a joyful teacher for his students and this

also has residual, unintended, but positive effects on his colleagues. However, performatively

constituting a joyful teacher is not merely a service for his students and colleagues; he also gains

benefit from it as well.

> Doug: When I first put the sign up, there were people laughing at me. But that's ok, I
>
> didn't care because I wanted to see it spread. But, whether it did or not, *I needed it for*
>
> *me.* Before this quote came into my life, this (gesturing around his classroom) wasn't a
>
> fun room, a joyous room. It could be. It had the opportunity to be. And there were days
>
> where it was. But, it wasn't everyday. . . .
>
> Joe: Were you upset by the laughing?
>
> Doug: I think the laughter was not necessarily cruel; it was meant to be good-natured
>
> ribbing, but it was coming from a jaded, cynical place in some mid-career teachers who
>
> have been in the district for most, if not all of their careers. Teachers can easily become
>
> stagnant and complacent in what they do, especially in a high-performing building. [They
>
> think,] "Nothing needs to change, and the school community doesn't need to be bettered.
>
> Things are fine just the way they are and have always been." . . . It also points out the
>
> silos that the teachers live in inside the building. Most of those teachers have rarely or
>
> never been inside my classroom. They've never seen me teach. They only reference
>
> they have is their own experiences in middle/high school chorus classes.

Doug is "making it spread" but, as he says, he also "needs it for me." There is a mutually

beneficial aspect for him and others; teaching is a symbiotic relationship. Doug summarized this

relationship by relating it to his experiences as a performer in professional theater:

> When I interviewed here [at my current school], I got the question, how do you see
>
> yourself going from a performer to a teacher? It's the same thing, you know. There's a

certain entertainer aspect that we have to have. As a performer you give to the audience

so that they can give back to you, so you can give back to them. Teaching is the same

thing. I'm giving to the students so they can give back to me. The more you give them

more you get back and I know that sounds trite and cliché, but it's so true. . . . That's

what you get out of it. It's not applause, it's a give-and-take.

To speak, express, and be joyful and vulnerable for the benefit of students is also beneficial for

the teacher. To utter speech acts that have intended perlocutionary effects on others is also an

opportunity to state locutionary beliefs, make illocutionary promises to oneself on how to act,

and create perlocutionary changes in oneself. In short, teachers' speech acts are intended to enact

learning in students, but they also help teachers form their identities, and grow and learn

themselves. By enacting a joyful teacher, Doug strives to improve himself to become a better

person. This is not easy; it requires effort to conjure up a teacher self, to performatively

constitute all that one hopes to be and for his or her students to be. This takes teachers' deep

commitment; it requires teachers' speech acts not to be simple commands, but to be embodied

and become performative. Doug—and perhaps other teachers—does not do this for "applause"

and accolades, but for the "give and take," that mutually beneficial but vulnerable relationship he

builds with students. When Doug makes himself vulnerable, enacting this teacher self and

inviting his students to also be vulnerable, he creates a joyful "safe space" for both his students

and himself. In short, to take on a teacher identity through speech acts is for the benefit of his

students *and* for him.

The act of teaching, then, is to dialectically care for others *and* oneself. When a teacher

truly becomes a subject in the classroom, he enters into a relationship of vulnerability and joy

with his students rather than an all-knowing model that hides his vulnerabilities. We have tried to

reflect these dialectical relationships in the structure of this paper. Sonata form's recapitulation reconciles the opposites of self and other, tonic and dominant, and home and away. Similarly, in this paper, we have presented teaching as an act that dialectically merges the seeming opposites of care for oneself with care for others and vulnerability with joy. The speech acts and performativity an educator employs to perform a teacher identity for students is also work for and upon oneself.

Coda: Terminal Development Upon Narrative Research

We now turn one final section, looking to develop further the themes of this paper towards implications and applications to music teaching. The description of teaching as simultaneously a care for oneself and others that concluded the recapitulation section might reconceptualize music teacher's speech acts in the classroom. There are several areas of literature within music education that deal with speech acts, although this terminology is not specifically used. Whether on the nature and quantity of feedback given to students (Duke, 2009, Duke & Henninger, 2002; Goolsby, 1997), the types of questions used (Bernard & Abramo, 2019; Haston, 2013), or even the aim towards inclusive language (Abramo, 2012; Bradley, 2007; Lamb, 1994), these bodies of research focus on perlocution. In other words, this research looks at the effects speech acts have on students and the educational environment. The simultaneous nature of speech acts might explore further how these speech acts work on the identity of the teacher. For example, how does repeatedly performing these types of speech acts—say continually striving towards clear feedback, asking questions that promote critical thinking, or addressing race, gender, or class in the classroom—change the conceptions teachers have of themselves? Further, the framework of performativity and Doug's narrative suggest a contextual sense of self, one that is specific to the classroom. How, if at all, then, does this situational sense

of self through speech acts interact with a "personal," non-teacher sense of self (Meijer, Korthagen, & Vasalos, 2009)? Researchers might pay particular attention to how vulnerability within the teacher and the students creates and is created by these speech acts. Performativity and speech acts as frameworks, then, might provide an opportunity for researchers to combine and intersect further the areas of research in music teacher identity and language in the classroom.

The narrative we wove might also have practical applications. Some research documents the difficulty for preservice teachers to create, inhabit, and transition into teacher identities (Britzman, 2003; Chong & Low, 2009; Meijer, et al., 2009; Walkington, 2005). If, as Joe said, "Nothing without Joy" is "literally a physical sign above the door of [Doug's] classroom that says something that we as all teachers do," to transition into a teaching self, then similar aphorisms might serve as a pedagogical tool for preservice teachers. A created or borrowed phrase, image, or even musical passage that signals to preservice teachers to transition into the type of teacher they want to be might help in this notoriously difficult task. Similar processes might be useful for in-service teachers as well. Akin to the ways Doug uses aphorisms, veteran teachers might use similar triggers to reorient their actions during stressful times or times of doubt. To capture teachers' dynamic, ever-evolving conceptions of teaching and identity as suggested by performativity, they might also periodically reevaluate, rewrite, or replace these triggers.

Such processes might help new and experienced teachers articulate and hold what is for Doug, and perhaps other teachers, the vulnerable but rewarding, joyful, emotional, and sometimes overwhelming experience of teaching. "It has to be part of me," as Doug says, "Believe it or not, I'm getting a little bit emotional. *It has to be part of me."* Making teaching "a part" of oneself through what one does and says in the classroom, more than mere delivery of

content is an avenue of exploration that education researchers and practitioners might continue to

explore.

References

Abramo, J. (2012). Disability in the classroom: Current trends and impacts upon

    music education. *Music Educators Journal, 99*(1), 39-45.

    doi:10.1177/0027432112448824

Alsup, J. (2006). Teacher identity discourses: Negotiating personal and professional

    spaces. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Earlbaum Associates, Inc.

Austin, J. L. (1975). *How to do things with words* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Oxford

    University Press.

Barone, T. (2007). A return to the gold standard? Questioning the future of narrative construction

    as educational research. *Qualitative inquiry*, *13*(4), 454-470.

    doi:10.1177/1077800406297667

Bernard, C. F., & Abramo, J. M. (2019). Questioning strategies. In *Teacher Evaluation in Music:*

    A Guide for Music Teachers in the US. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Bradley, D. (2007). The sounds of silence: Talking race in music education. *Action, Criticism,*

    and Theory for Music Education, *6*(4), 132-162.

Britzman, D. P. (2003). Practice makes practice: A critical study of learning to

    teach. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Butler, J. (1993). *Bodies that matter: On the discursive limits of sex.* New York, NY Routledge.

Butler, J. (1996). Gender as performance. In P. Osborne (Ed.), *A critical sense: Interviews with*

    intellectuals. New York, NY: Routledge.

Butler, J. (1999). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity, tenth anniversary*

    edition. New York, NY: Routledge.

Chong, S., & Low, E. L. (2009). Why I want to teach and how I feel about teaching—formation

of teacher identity from pre-service to the beginning teacher phase. *Educational Research*

for Policy and Practice*, *8*(1), 59. doi:10.1007/s10671-008-9056-z

Duke, R. A. (2009). *Intelligent music teaching: Essays on the core principles of effective*

instruction.* Austin, TX: Learning and Behavior Resources.

Duke, R. A., & Henninger, J. C. (2002). Teachers' verbal corrections and observers' perceptions

of teaching and learning. *Journal of Research in Music Education, 50,* 75–87.

doi:10.2307/3345694

Geertz, C. (1974). The interpretation of cultures. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Goolsby, T. W. (1997). Verbal instruction in instrumental rehearsals: A comparison of three

career levels and preservice teachers. *Journal of Research in Music Education, 45,* 21–

40. doi:10.2307/3345463

Haston, W. (2013). Perceived use of teacher questioning in secondary music ensembles. *Bulletin*

of the Council for Research in Music Education*, (195), 77-94.

doi:10.5406/bulcouresmusedu.195.0077

Josselson, R. (Ed.). (1996). *Ethics and process in the narrative study of lives*. Thousand Oaks,

CA: Sage Publications.

Lamb, R. (1994). Feminism as critique in philosophy of music education. *Philosophy of Music*

Education Review*, 59-74.

Maus, F. E. (1991). Music as narrative. *Indiana Theory Review*, *12*, 1-34.

McClary, S. (1991). *Feminine endings: Music, gender, and sexuality.* Minneapolis, MN:

Minnesota University Press.

Meijer, P. C., Korthagen, F. A., & Vasalos, A. (2009). Supporting presence in teacher education:

The connection between the personal and professional aspects of teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *25*(2), 297-308. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2010.08.013

Miller, J. L. (1998). Autobiography and the necessary incompleteness of teachers' stories. In W. Ayers & J. L. Miller (Eds.), *A light in dark times: Maxine Greene and the unfinished conversation* (pp. 145-154). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Riessman, C. K. (2001). Analysis of personal narratives. In J. F. Gubrium, J. A. Holstein, A. B. Marvasti, & K. D. McKinney (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of interview research: Context and method* (pp. 695-710)*.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Saldaña, J. (2015). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Walkington, J. (2005). Becoming a teacher: Encouraging development of teacher identity through reflective practice. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, *33*(1), 53-64. doi:10.1080/1359866052000341124