



## RESOURCES FOR STUDENT MUSICIANS - EDUCATOR GUIDE

### Music community I: Teaching artists at work

This resource tells the story of a partnership between highly successful professional musicians, [Four Nations Ensemble](#), and school children, where the musicians worked as “teaching artists”. Ask students to read the story and use the questions for reflection or discussion. Perhaps refer them to a [performance](#) and the ensemble’s [Facebook page](#), and point out some of their work with [young audiences](#). For more information about the project and teaching artists, refer to the details on the next page.

The following questions are designed as discussion topics, reflection topics or short essay topics.

- Why would successful performers such as the Four Nations Ensemble choose to undertake education work, even when their performances are so much in demand?
- For the young students who participated in the project, what opportunities were there for learning?
- What specific kinds of learning would musicians need for this work (subject areas, personal growth, particular skills and personal qualities developed)?
- What specific skills are needed to be a successful teaching artist, and how might you develop them?
- What kinds of teaching artist-related work have you done?
  - o Did you like this experience?
  - o Why or why not?

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- What kinds of teaching artist-related work have you done? Did you like this experience? Why or why not?
- Which aspects of the Four Nations Ensemble’s work are attractive to you as a musician?

## TEACHING ARTISTS AND NEW YORK’S FOUR NATIONS ENSEMBLE

Over the past 30 years, orchestras, opera companies, festivals and concert series have invested in community education programs. These are aimed at helping audiences make a more direct and personal connection with music. Many orchestras now typically offer pre- and post-concert talks, family concerts and interactive websites to engage audiences of all ages. In addition, soloists and chamber musicians engaged to perform in professional concert series are routinely asked to speak to audiences from the stage, introducing themselves and one or more pieces on the program. This is part of the work that ‘teaching artists’ are called upon to do.

The term ‘teaching artist’ defines a relatively new niche and one of growing importance for musicians. Arts consultant and author of *The Music Teaching Artist’s Bible*, Eric Booth (2009), offers this definition:

*A teaching artist is a practicing professional artist with the complementary skills and sensibilities of an educator, who engages people in learning experiences in, through and about the arts.*



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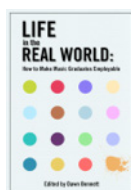
Teaching artists work in a variety of settings: in primary and secondary schools, hospitals, prisons, shelters, community clubs, retirement homes and museums. As a result, many musicians make a significant portion of their income as teaching artists.

The work is challenging and rewarding, and it represents the future as there will be an increasing need for skilled teaching artists. Many opera companies have young artist programs that focus on touring children's operas and other educational community programming. Orchestras offer contract work for players doing chamber music as teaching artists in the communities. The New York Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Orchestra and the San Francisco Symphony all hire outside teaching artist specialists to do this work in collaboration with their own orchestra members.

Teaching artist work can be far more involved and creative than simply introducing a work from the stage in a few sentences. The Four Nations Ensemble (an early music group with a core instrumentation of harpsichord or fortepiano, violin/s, flute and cello) has had long-term residencies working with inner-city New York schools in the Bronx and Brooklyn. At a presentation for Chamber Music America, Four Nations harpsichordist Andrew Appel, described some of their residency project work. His description comes from a presentation at a Chamber Music America conference in 1995.

*Our approach is to engage students in a project that involves their skills and imagination and which helps us, the musicians who are strangers in and unfamiliar with their communities. We ask a group of 9th or 8th graders to work as a marketing agency for our ensemble. (Those taking part have had some introduction to business and run a school store.) Four Nations doesn't know enough about them, their families and friends, and doubts if we can attract an audience to our programs of music. Their (the students') job is to get to know our product (classical music), get to understand the market (through surveys and interviews in their school), and develop an advertising campaign for classical chamber music that appeals to the market while remaining truthful to the product (truth in advertising).*

*There is never any pressure to 'appreciate' the music, only to observe and describe it. At the end of the school year, they present Four Nations in a concert. Tickets are available at the school store. Students manage the concert hall with the help of the school staff.*



This resource comes from *Life in the Real World: How to Make Music Graduates Employable*, published by Common Ground in 2012. Purchasers of the book are permitted to download all of the tools and resources.

If you have yet to purchase the book, please order it from [here](#).

This resource was contributed by Angela Beeching.

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