

“When I’m Holding a Trumpet, I Don’t Get Misgendered”:

Exploring the Intersections between Instrument-Gender Associations and the Transgender Experience

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Introduction

Music serves as a carrier of societal norms, and can attempt to instill ideas and values in the broader population through its lyrics and its messages. We see this appear in multiple ways; political statements are often made through music, and have been made through this medium for centuries (Kraas 2018). Gender roles and stereotypes continue to be upheld through music in many ways, whether we are conscious of it or not. As music-making is an inherently social act, there is no surprise that other aspects of society bleed into the world of music.

One such example lies in the gender-typing of musical instruments. While there are no real signifiers of what can be considered a 'female' or 'male' instrument, studies have shown that musical instruments have established and ingrained gender associations (Abeles and Porter 1978). However, these studies did not recognize transgender students as a focus of research. Therefore there has been a severe lack of research outlining the intersections of instrument-gender associations and how this affects the experiences of transgender musicians. As public awareness of queer and transgender individuals increases, more and more people are finding the courage to come out and explore their gender identities. With increased rates of 'out' transgender people (Meerwijk and Sevelius 2017), the likelihood of a music teacher or private instructor teaching a transgender student is much higher. In order for educators to be fully equipped to teach transgender instrumentalists, more research and discussion needs to take place regarding these students in instrumental music settings. This paper aims to explore the potential connections between the experiences of transgender instrumentalists and the instrument-gender associations of their chosen instruments with the goal of developing guidelines and suggestions for educators and pedagogues to employ in private lesson, studio, and music classroom settings.

There is a thorough library of works exploring instrument-gender associations. The first study outlining these associations was conducted by Abeles and Porter in 1978, surveying the gender associations of musical instruments in elementary school (kindergarten to Grade 5) classrooms. Since then, numerous studies have replicated and confirmed these findings in a variety of age groups, including nursery aged children (Marshall and Shibazaki 2020), Grade 4 students (Delzell and Leppla 1992), middle school-aged students (Fortney, Boyle, and DeCarbo 1993), and university-aged students (Griswold and Chroback 1981; Graham 2005). In these studies, students have consistently placed instruments like the tuba, the trumpet, the trombone, and percussion in the ‘masculine’ category, with instruments like the flute, the violin, and the harp being placed in the ‘feminine’ category. There has been some ambiguity in the gender-typing of the saxophone, the French horn, and the clarinet. Further research has been conducted in more recent years to uncover any potential shifts in instrument-gender associations (Wrape, Dittloff, and Callahan 2016), though no substantial changes have been found. These instrument-gender associations can impact the instrument choices made by students, furthering the strength of the stereotypes (O’Neill and Boultona 1996).

Research regarding the source of these gender associations is inconclusive. Multiple theories have been put forward in hope of explaining how these associations came to be. Stronsick et al. (2018) proposes that the timbre and relative pitch of the instruments may affect its perception; the lower an instrument, the more likely it is to be considered masculine. The higher the pitch of the instrument, the more likely it is to be considered feminine. This makes intuitive sense, as we may be likely to associate pitch in instruments with pitch of the voice.

A different school of thought theorizes that, in classroom settings, the gender of an instrument demonstrator can affect the gender-instrument associations of the students (Delzell and Leppla 1992; Fortney, Boyle, and DeCarbo 1993). Children who only ever see a woman playing the clarinet are more likely to associate the clarinet with women. This idea can be turned on its head; by demonstrating with

gender non-typical musicians, students may be less likely to develop firm instrument-gender associations (Pickering and Repacholi 2001). Peer demonstrators have also been cited as a more effective demonstration tool instead of adult or professional demonstrators, due to their proximity in age and skill level to the beginner instrumentalists (Wrape, Dittloff, and Callahan 2016).

The library of research conducted regarding the experiences of transgender classical musicians is much more narrow. Some research and discussion has taken place regarding transgender vocalists, specifically in choral settings (Rastin 2016; Manternach et al. 2017; Manternach 2017). The differences in voice type and gender presentation of a transgender individual can have heavy effects on their experience as a choral or vocal musician. Additional research has been conducted on the experiences of transgender university music education students (Bartolome 2016; Bartolome and Stanford 2018; Silveira 2019). However, not much research has been done on the experiences of transgender musicians in instrumental or band settings. In Dr. Emma Joy Jampole's 2022 dissertation, the author explores some of the experiences of transgender high school instrumentalists, though most of the focus was on larger ensemble settings; this study, while valuable, took place on a small scale, with only four interviewed participants.

Music, especially music performance, can be an inspiring space for expression, exploration, and inclusion. However, for transgender instrumentalists, there may be adverse circumstances and pressures — related to the gendered perception of their instruments — that prevent them from enjoying music-making to the fullest. LGBTQ+ students, on average, face higher rates of bullying and targeted harassment in schools compared to their straight and cisgender peers (Grant et al. 2011). Transgender people, on average, are at an elevated risk of suicide and suicidal tendencies compared to cisgender people (Virupaksha, Muralidhar, and Ramakrishna 2016); transgender youth are the highest risk (Austin et al. 2022). For many, the band classroom is an escape, a safe space, or at the very least, “a less dangerous place in school” (Allsup 2016). Music is a form of self-expression through which many people are able to explore their inner thoughts; music can even serve as a catalyst for someone exploring their

own identity. These potentially unexplored impacts may prevent music from being a completely safe and gender-affirming environment for all.

In this paper, I aim to address the following research questions:

1. Overall, is there a connection between the experiences of transgender instrumentalists and the gender-typing of their instruments, and are these potential connections positive or negative (i.e. do they encourage gender dysphoria or gender euphoria)?
2. Overall, how might these potential connections affect the musical and learning experiences of transgender instrumentalists?
3. What implications do these potential experiences have on current pedagogical practices, and what different practices must be included to encourage gender-affirming music-making in educational settings?

Vocabulary

For the purposes of this paper, the umbrella term *transgender* refers to anyone whose gender identity does not align with their assigned sex at birth (Palkki and Sauerland 2019). The term transgender will sometimes be shortened as *trans* in this paper. This umbrella term includes individuals who are binary-gendered (identifying as either male or female), or *non-binary*-gendered (identifying outside of the gender binary of male and female; identifying as neither or a combination of both). *Transmasculine* people identify with the ‘masculine’ part of the gender spectrum, while *transfeminine* people identify with the ‘feminine’ part of the gender spectrum. These individuals may identify within or outside of the gender binary. Some transgender individuals experience *gender fluidity*, which can be described as a fluctuation between gender identities or combination of gender identities (Diamond 2020). Gender fluid people may use more than one set of pronouns (e.g., using both she/her and they/them pronouns), though not all do.

Transgender individuals may experience a psychological phenomenon known as *gender dysphoria*. Gender dysphoria can be defined as feelings of distress in relation to the disconnect between one's physical body and their gender identity (Rastin 2016). Certain traits that are commonly associated with one's assigned gender at birth may cause these feelings of intense distress; they could also be caused by external factors (i.e., how one's gender is perceived by others around them). Dysphoria relating to a certain part of the body will generally be described in relation to that certain body part (ex.: chest dysphoria, voice dysphoria, height dysphoria). The opposite of gender dysphoria is *gender euphoria*; a feeling of elation or joy in regards to one's own gender presentation. Gender euphoria can also be described as an affirmation of gender, or the alignment of one's internal perception of self and their external presentation (Beischel, Gauvin, and Anders 2022).

It cannot be emphasized enough that transgender people are not a monolith; no two trans people will have the same lived experience, nor should they. Transgender individuals will have different experiences with gender dysphoria and euphoria, and may experience it with differing levels of severity. No single trans person can speak on behalf of the entire community, nor should they be expected to.

It is worth acknowledging my place within this topic; as a cisgender woman who plays a stereotypically feminine instrument, I cannot speak from personal experience. I myself have not experienced feelings of gender dysphoria, nor has my instrument choice affected my own perception of gender or the perceptions of me from others. I am only passing on and consolidating information that has been shared with me from transgender individuals based on their varied experiences as musicians and as people.

Method

Participants

The survey and interview process was approved by an internal review board at Memorial University of Newfoundland’s School of Music. Participants needed to be (1) transgender, (2) currently enrolled in a post-secondary music degree, (3) currently studying in either Canada or the United States, and (4) play an instrument as their major. Vocalists were excluded from this study due to the involvement of physiological traits in transgender singers (voice range and type). There are certainly gendered stereotypes involving singers, but those were not explored during the course of this study. In total, eight students took part in this research study, with eight responses to the survey, and four participants participating in a follow-up interview. The survey responses of one participant were excluded, due to them being a vocalist instead of an instrumentalist, leaving a remaining seven valid responses. All of the remaining seven participants were transgender (binary or non-binary) university instrumentalists currently pursuing a degree in music (concentration or specialization information not requested). Of the participants, three identified as transgender men, two as transmasculine people, one as a transfeminine person and one as a genderfluid person. One participant was a trumpet player, two participants were saxophone players, two participants were flute players, one participant was a trombone player, and one participant was a tuba player.

Table 1 - Survey Participants

Participant Number	Instrument	Gender
Participant 1	Flute	Transmasculine
Participant 2	Saxophone	Transgender Man
Participant 3	Saxophone	Transmasculine
Participant 4	Trumpet	Transgender Man
Participant 5	Tuba	Non-Binary/Gender-Fluid
Participant 6	Flute	Transgender Man
Participant 7	Trombone	Non-Binary/Transfeminine

Table 2 - Interview Participants

Participant	Instrument	Gender
Participant A	Trumpet	Transgender Man
Participant B	Saxophone	Transgender Man
Participant C	Tuba	Non-Binary/Gender-Fluid
Participant D	Trombone	Non-Binary/Transfeminine

Procedure - Survey

Participants completed a ten-question anonymous Google Form. Nine of the ten questions were free-form, long-answer questions, where participants could include as little or as much information as they wished. One question was multiple choice. If a participant was interested in completing a follow-up interview, they were instructed to enter a contact email. All data collected (minus the contact information required for the follow-up interviews) was anonymous, and by completing the survey, participants gave informed consent. For a list of the survey questions, please consult Appendix A.

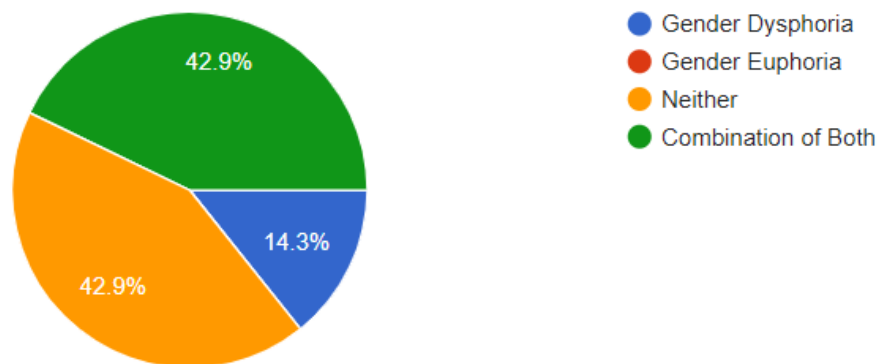
Procedure - Interview

Participants who decided to pursue a follow-up interview were contacted by myself, and a meeting time was arranged. All interviews were conducted in-person, lasting about 30 minutes each. Each of the interviews was recorded through a mobile device and manually transcribed, with any identifying information removed (names, school names, location-related information). In these interviews, participants were invited to expand upon their survey responses, and share any specific personal anecdotes they felt relevant.

Findings

The survey results revealed that there is some correlation between feelings of gender dysphoria/gender euphoria and instrument, but not from all participants. From the seven completed surveys, one participant (14.3%) shared that they experienced gender dysphoria in some capacity in relation to their instrument. Three participants (42.85%) shared that they experience a combination of gender dysphoria and gender euphoria in relation to their instrument. The remaining three participants (42.85%) did not experience either gender euphoria or gender dysphoria in relation to their instrument. All participants indicated some sort of gender association with their instrument; all these answers were in accordance with previous findings. For the most part, participants associated the flute with femininity, and the trumpet, trombone, tuba, and saxophone with masculinity. Many participants did not believe that there was an inherent gender related to their instrument, but rather that societal expectations and norms caused their held instrument-gender associations.

Figure 1 - Experiences of Gender Dysphoria and Euphoria in Relation to Instrument



Discussion

Multiple recurring topics were covered in the interviews and survey questions. These topics have been grouped into the following sub-categories: Musical Choices and Effect on Music-Making; The Physical Body; and Social Presentation and Gender Perception.

Musical Choices and Effect on Music-Making

One common theme was related to the expected role of an instrument within a musical setting. Whether we realize it or not, the gender associations of instruments are inherently tied to our perceptions of the roles of instruments in larger ensembles. In a modern orchestral or wind band setting, certain instruments have certain expected roles. For one tuba-playing participant, they shared how they perceive their instrument as “the grandfather” of the orchestra; it is supportive, manly, and stable. For this individual, who experiences gender fluidity, this can at times be very gender-affirming; however, it can also be gender-non-affirming on days where they are not feeling as masculine. Participant 3 explained his perception of the role of the saxophone; he frequently experiences discomfort in ensemble settings when playing graceful, melodic lines that are doubled with other upper woodwind instruments, such as the flute, the clarinet, and the oboe. For this musician, he perceives this to be feminizing; playing these lyrical melody lines reminds him of the role of a vocal soprano. It causes him to experience gender dysphoria, even though he perceives the saxophone as lacking in a strong inherent gender association. This serves as a limiting factor of his playing; these feelings of gender dysphoria prompted by musical role expectations can hinder his playing.

There have been some connections drawn between the relative pitch of an instrument and its relation to voice dysphoria experienced by many transgender people. In Jampole’s (2022) dissertation on transgender youth in school bands, one research participant shared her attraction to low-voice instruments as an outlet to play bass parts without having to use her singing voice. As a transgender woman, she experienced voice dysphoria; using an instrument to access that range helped provide a buffer between the instrument and herself. Similarly in this study, Participant B shared his love for the baritone saxophone, the lowest saxophone in the ‘common’ saxophone family. According to him, that instrument, and the connotations of that instrument based on its range, are very aligned with his personal experience of

gender. In addition, Participant B shared how he attempts to align the tone of his instrument to the tone of his speaking voice (or how he wants his speaking voice to sound). This serves as a gender-affirming action, since he is able to imitate a more conventionally masculine sound through his playing, which he may not be able to do at this moment. However, this same idea may cause instrumentalists to box themselves into one tone or style of playing out of fear of exploring playing styles that might emulate a gender outside of their identity.

The Physical Body

One common topic mentioned in the interviews is the act of binding. Binding is a form of chest compression that many transmasculine people or transgender men use to achieve the appearance of a flatter, more masculine chest. There are different ways to bind, but the most common include body tape, bandages, or specialized chest binders made of sturdy fabric. People who may not have access to these resources may turn to wearing multiple high-compression bras or pieces of clothing to achieve a similar effect. All of these forms of binding restrict the expansion abilities of the ribcage and the lungs; binding for extended periods of time (multiple hours a day for months on end) may lead to pain, skin irritation, and damage to the ribs (bruises or fractures) (WebMD 2023). Three of the four interview participants shared some of their experiences while binding. One participant discussed how it impacts his playing; he is unable to intake the same amount of air as other students due the chest compression involved in binding. This student shared the importance of being able to have open, candid conversations with his teacher on how much air he can intake, and how often he must breathe while playing the saxophone. Participant A shared a similar story, where he had to out himself as being transgender to his private instructor in order to address some breathing and posture issues he was facing due to the act of binding. This participant had undergone top surgery (a double mastectomy) a few years prior to this interview; since then, he shared that he is much more confident in his presentation as a musician, and no longer has to deal with the physical pain and discomfort that binding can cause. Another participant explained how it

is quite uncomfortable for them to wear a binder while playing, as their instrument requires such a large amount of air. They shared that they used to bind by using ‘trans tape’, but it was too much of a hindrance to their playing that they had to choose their musical endeavors over their physical appearance. In the case of this participant, they shared that some of the body dysphoria they experience in relation to their playing has to do with their inability to bind; they are not able to physically present themselves how they see fit. The act of binding (or not binding) had an effect on all three of these musicians; the gender dysphoria they experienced as a person caused them to require binding, but it served as a frequent reminder of their physical body and its misalignment with their gender identity.

In a similar vein as the effects of binding, general posture and physical composure can have an effect on the efficiency and balance of the body while playing. For transmasculine people or transgender men who experience dysphoria in relation to their chest, adopting a hunched-over posture can alleviate some of that discomfort; curling the shoulders forward can hide the appearance of a larger chest. Additionally, raising the shoulders can give the appearance of a broader, stockier build, which may be desirable for some. Participant B lists the former example as something that is a detriment to his playing, but that he has to continue doing in order to feel confident enough to live his day to day life. “Compromising on musicianship and gender is sometimes necessary.” (interview with Participant B, March 27th, 2024)

Social Presentation and Gender Perception

For participants whose gender identity does not align with the commonly held gender-association of their instrument, such as Participant 1 (a transmasculine flute player), the disconnect between gender and instrument can induce feelings of gender dysphoria. Participant 1 shared how they experienced feelings of dysphoria after coming out as transgender; he was now an outlier, lacking in masculinity because he played a “girls’ instrument,” in addition to being perceived as lacking in masculinity for being

transgender. He described a need to compensate for his feminine instrument choice through the hyper-masculinizing of his physical appearance and presentation. However, for participants who play more stereotypically masculine instruments, it can be a source of gender euphoria. Participant A theorized in an interview that, at a summer music camp, he may have had an easier time passing (not being read as one's assigned gender at birth) due to the fact that he played the trumpet. He shared that "if [he] was a [...] trans guy and playing the flute in that situation, [he didn't] know if [he] would have been read quite the same" (interview with Participant A, March 27, 2024).

On a similar note, Participant C shared that, as a non-binary person most commonly read as female playing a highly masculine-coded instrument (tuba), they experience gender euphoria in musical settings. In order to experience gender euphoria, they enjoy programming what they consider to be stereotypically 'feminine' repertoire for their stereotypically masculine instrument. As examples, they listed Mozart's *Horn Concerto No. 4*, and Cait Nishimura's *Golden Hour*. For them, they "experience true gender euphoria when [their] perceived "masculine" instrument makes pretty and "feminine" sounds" (interview with Participant C, March 28, 2024). However, they experience additional levels of gender dysphoria by being read as a female musician playing a masculine instrument; they are not "a girl who plays tuba."

As is congruent with previous research (Palkki 2016), physical presentation in musical spaces can have a large effect on one's own sense of gender dysphoria or gender euphoria. In band settings specifically, this can include concert dress expectations. Three of the four interview participants shared that they feel less gender dysphoria when they are able to dress how they wish, with the 'option' of their choosing. However, they all expressed how thankful they were to be in ensembles or at schools that don't have gendered concert attire (i.e., Option A and Option B instead of Women's and Men's attire). Confidence in physical presentation allows transgender musicians to focus on the music instead of the perceptions of their gender from the audience and their peers.

In terms of social presentation, many participants shared experiences where they felt they had to perform in more than one way when on stage as a musician. Not only were they performing their music, but they were also performing aspects of gender expectations in order to ‘pass.’ Participant A shared that when entering new spaces as a gigging trumpet player, he has to think about what he wears, and the pitch at which he speaks. This is especially true for him when working gigs in churches or with more conservative audiences. While he does admit that playing the trumpet helps him to a certain extent, he must still be aware of how he presents himself and how he ‘performs’ that part of his gender. As discussed above, Participant B also engages in behaviors that inhibit his performance of music due to their necessity in the performance of his gender identity. This includes his posture, and the tone he chooses to use on the saxophone. These musicians are engaging in two types of performance at once.

Pedagogical Suggestions

For educators, the gender-affirming action that is the easiest to implement is the act of respecting and using a student's chosen name and pronouns. Despite being a small action, this allows for transgender students to enjoy music-making in a setting where they feel welcomed and accepted. As teachers, educators, and pedagogues, we have a certain level of control over how another student’s gender may be read by the public (Jampole 2022). Misgendering a student (not using their correct pronouns) or using their deadname (name given at birth) may inadvertently cause them to be ‘outed’ to their peers; this may affect how others perceive their gender. In an interview with Participant A, he discussed a time where his deadname was used when being introduced in a concert by the band director. This affected his ability to ‘pass’ in that setting, and took him out of the experience of music-making due to the high levels of discomfort and dysphoria that it induced. In another instance, this same participant was misgendered by a superior at a music summer camp, causing peers to start misgendering him in turn. Educators are role models, and often shape the decisions and the choices of their students. Modeling respectful practices

when it comes to name and pronoun usage is one of the first steps in building an inclusive classroom or private studio.

In similar fashion, avoiding the use of gendered language can help develop a more gender-neutral classroom or studio setting (Palkki and Sauerland 2019). This can be as simple as avoiding terminology such as ‘boys and girls,’ even when talking to a group of only one gender. This can also apply to expressive text or descriptors being used to explain musical intention. In discussion with Participant D, they shared a discomfort at some terms that are often used in relation to the trombone, most notably the phrase, “balls to the wall.” Phrases such as these perpetuate gender-typing of instruments, but they also may encourage feelings of dysphoria for students who do not identify with those heavily-gendered figures of speech. Asking students to emulate certain imagery that involves heavy gender associations can also have the same negative effect; this can include asking students to emulate a gender stereotype or a person of a specific gender through their playing. The act of avoiding this language also includes the openness to criticism and feedback from one’s own transgender students. Participant B shared that in private lesson settings, he appreciates when a teacher is open to modifying and shifting non-gender-affirming language as needed, especially in the context of musical emotive or descriptive text.

As has been suggested many times over, concert attire expectations can be modified to be more gender affirming. Allowing students to choose from two non-gender options (i.e., Option A and Option B instead of Men and Women) allows for students to choose the option that best suits them at that moment. Adopting an all-black concert dress standard for all musicians can also help equalize expectations, instead of expecting a tuxedo for men and a dress for women. Alternatively, a uniform shirt option can serve the same use, wherein students are only expected to choose the bottoms and shoes of their liking. Allowing students to choose the most gender-affirming option gives them the opportunity to feel more comfortable in their skin; they will be able to focus more on the performance of music instead of the discomfort they feel in non-gender-affirming attire.

Education on transgender people is of the utmost importance for educators and teachers. Understanding what being transgender really means, what steps people may choose to take in their transitions, the personal and social struggles that transgender students may face, and how that might impact their learning and development as musicians; these are all highly important points for educators to know in order to best serve their students. If teachers are unsure as to where to start exploring these topics, consider exploring resources through organizations such as The Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity, Trans PULSE Canada, or Gender Creative Kids. There are numerous international organizations that have online resources to explore, including The Trevor Project, the Human Rights Campaign, The Rainbow Project, and the National Center for Transgender Equality, among many others.

All of these suggestions entail an openness to discussing topics regarding transgender musicians in private lessons and classroom settings. Understanding the experiences of transgender students comes through clear, non-judgemental communication and meekness. Being open to the idea of these topics coming up in a lesson, for example, can help alleviate some of the stress a trans student may feel. Being receptive to feedback from transgender students regarding language or classroom habits will foster a stronger, more inclusive community for all students. As transgender musicians navigate the world, their music, and their identities, educators can help alleviate some of the microaggressive burden of students translating (Hess 2016) for their teachers and mentors through compassion, educated understanding, and openness.

Conclusion

This study explored the potential connections between the gender associations of musical instruments and the experiences of transgender instrumentalists at a university level. While no major conclusive findings can be made, there are certainly related aspects of gender and music-making that can

have affirming or detrimental effects on transgender musicians. Certain parts of the music-making experience can promote feelings of gender dysphoria, including language choices, concert attire, expected instrument roles, and the social perception of certain instruments. Alternatively, there are aspects of the music-making experience that are gender-affirming and promote feelings of gender euphoria. Coincidentally, all the same examples listed previously also apply here. Based on the responses from participants, some potential gender-affirming pedagogical approaches were proposed.

This study took place on a very small scale, with only seven participants in total, and only four participants partaking in interviews. It is difficult to make any conclusive statements based on this limited sample size. As mentioned previously, the transgender community is not a monolith; every transgender instrumentalist will have different experiences and experience different levels of gender dysphoria and gender euphoria. The impacts of a musical instrument on these feelings of dysphoria or euphoria will obviously vary.

Within the sample group, the gender diversity of participants could have been improved; all but one of the participants were transgender men, transmasculine people, or non-binary individuals. There was only one response from a transfeminine person, and no responses from transgender women. Participants within this specific gender demographic might provide further insight into the intersections of gender identity and instrument gender-coding, as well as any potential experiences of misogyny and transmisogyny in relation to their instrument choice. Further research regarding this topic with a larger, more diverse sample would be beneficial, especially for ‘highly-gendered instruments’ that were not included in this study, such as percussion, violin, and double bass.

An additional area for future research would involve the experiences of cisgender instrumentalists. *Cisgender* refers to people whose gender identity aligns with their assigned sex at birth (Aultman 2014). Cisgender people are impacted by gender-affirming actions and habits (e.x., clothing,

haircuts, hobbies), albeit differently than transgender people. It would be valuable to explore the potential implications this may have for cisgender instrumentalists playing highly-gendered instruments; does the act of making music with a certain instrument encourage gender euphoria or not?

Further research should be considered regarding specific pedagogical practices and teacher education. While encouraging teachers and instructors to do their own research is a great first step, having instrumental-music-specific resources would better address the needs of students in that specific demographic. Developing resources for teachers and instructors to use and reference when working with transgender instrumentalists may help make the environment more welcoming and understanding. Furthering teacher and instructor education on transgender issues, transgender terminology, and the broader transgender experience will set them up for success. Educating teachers will save student musicians from experiencing the microaggression of having to translate (Hess 2016).

It appears that gender associations with instruments may not change for a long time, if they ever change at all. However, this may not be all bad. For many transgender musicians, they experience gender euphoria from playing an instrument that stereotypically aligns with their gender identity. In this situation, it is a necessary evil. Whether we agree with it or not, gender does play an important part in the experiences of many musicians; this is something that should be embraced and encouraged. This can start in the private lesson setting, in the music classroom, or in the band rehearsal. “I always love when I can walk into a lesson or a class and still feel [...] like I’m being seen” (interview with Participant B, March 27, 2024).

Appendix A

Exploring the Intersections Between "Highly Gendered Instruments" and the Transgender Experience

This pilot survey aims to explore the intersections of gender identity, the transgender experience, and gender associations of musical instruments for transgender instrumentalists in higher educational settings.

Participants must be university-aged (adult) transgender instrumentalists (binary and non-binary individuals) currently pursuing a post-secondary degree in music performance (or adjacent) in Canada or the United States. This survey is anonymous and the data will only be accessible by the student conducting the research. Should participants choose to complete a follow-up interview, either in-person or online, the survey would no longer be anonymous; the data will then be anonymized by the researcher (that is, removing any identifying personal characteristics from completed answers). For those participating in the interview, data will be confidential but not anonymous. Participants may choose to not answer any question at any time and may also refuse to complete the survey at any time. The survey will be completed through Google Forms; all information collected will be deleted once no longer needed.

By completing the survey, you consent to your data being used in this project.

For any questions, concerns, or issues, please contact Julia Perry at jeperry@mun.ca. Your time and interest are highly appreciated!

1. In your own words, please describe your gender identity. [long answer question]
2. What is your primary instrument? (the instrument you are currently studying/on which you are currently taking lessons) [long answer question]
3. Do you play additional instruments? If yes, please list them here. [long answer question]
4. How do you perceive the association between your primary instrument and your gender identity within your musical or social circles? For example, do you consider your instrument to be "highly gendered"? (highly gendered: to be strongly associated with people of one particular gender). If so, which gender is commonly associated with your primary instrument? [long answer question]
5. Since beginning your musical studies on this instrument, have you ever experienced feelings of gender dysphoria, gender euphoria, neither, or a combination of both in relation to your playing of the instrument? [multiple choice question]
6. If you selected a, b, or d in Question 5: Please describe the context in which you experienced these feelings. [long answer question]
7. If you selected a, b, or d in Question 5: Do these feelings of gender dysphoria/euphoria affect how you view your own instrument and how you view yourself playing that instrument? Please explain your reasoning. [long answer question]
8. Have you encountered gender-affirming pedagogical practices in relation to your primary instrument? If yes, please describe them. [long answer question]
9. Would you be open to a confidential follow-up interview (in-person or online) to further discuss your answers or experiences? If yes, please include your contact email. [long answer question]
10. Please feel free to share any additional comments you have on the topic of gender identity and musical instruments. [long answer question]

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