

## **In-Class Guest Presenter Reflection – Dr. Colleen Richardson**

### **Richard Yang (MUS 1802B, Winter 2025)**

Dr. Colleen Richardson is an established name in the world of wind band, having been the past President of the World Association for Symphonic Bands and Ensembles, and currently the Coordinator of Bands and Director of the Wind Ensemble at Western University. She brings a uniquely international perspective to instrumental music education and thus I was very interested in what she was going to say.

Dr. Richardson maintained a very engaging and interactive presentation style. She commands the respect of the room when teaching and does not speak in a way that diminishes the prior knowledge and experiences that we each already have. I believe this is one reason why Dr. Richardson is an exceptional educator: she does not lower her expectations or standards just because you are younger or less experienced. Sure, she may adjust her teaching to meet the students where they are, but at the end, the level of achievement she expects remains consistent. The idea that a teacher's expectations for their students determines what type of teacher they are seems central to her presentation. In fact, she repeats this line several times.

She demonstrated this point compellingly with the DVD showing a Japanese elementary school band playing at a level of refinement normally reserved for university ensembles. The point being, is it really too much to expect excellence from children? I appreciate that you mustn't overburden children, but the point Dr. Richardson is attempting to make is there is no cause for a teacher to lower their expectations and standards (and arguably become patronizing) just because they are working with younger people. Instead, when one consistently pushes their students to become greater, the students are given a sense of purpose, resolve, and achievement, something that may be sorely missing at home.

This brings up another interesting point of Dr. Richardson's. School might be the only opportunity for the students to experience a structured, organized environment where they know what is expected of them and exactly how they will be treated. This has given me a different perspective on how a teacher may approach expectations and standards: you're not chasing excellence for excellence's sake (or worse, because you have something to prove and will do anything to get it), but for the opportunity to give the students a greater purpose that they can work towards, a purpose that finishes at excellence. *But!* In order to facilitate this journey, one must first be able to expect great things from their students. There is no cause for a teacher to lower their expectations just because they are working with students.

This was a more philosophical take on Dr. Richardson's presentation, which also focussed on the skillsets required to become a competent *music* teacher. What would improve this presentation is if Dr. Richardson would share how she executes her philosophy – what strategies would she use to teach students what purpose, resolve, and achievement means, and how to maintain it?