

Music in Everyday Life Interview – Synopsis & Reflection

Richard Yang (MUS 1802B, Winter 2025)

I interviewed Mr. Dan Horner, Head of Music at St. Andrew's College. He is my former high school music teacher and used to be the Head of Music at Bayview Secondary School for 17 years! He still conducts the TYWO Symphonic Winds. [Click here for the video.](#)

I first asked him about his musical education. To oversimplify, he started the trumpet in grade 7 and hasn't put it down since. He attended strong music programs and went to Queen's. His choice to take a gap year to develop his skills but also to work at Harknett Music was enlightening for me. It allowed him a head start on meeting music teachers and exposing himself to repertoire. He also volunteered at local schools throughout high school and university, building his teaching chops far before most people. For me, this all reflects Mr. Horner's drive and work ethic and has got me thinking about finding my own enrichment opportunities while in school to prepare me for my eventual career as a music teacher and/or conductor. *If you want to be successful and do something well, you have to take the steps that others are unwilling to take or don't think of.*

Despite being a music teacher, Mr. Horner still listens to music on a regular basis (he's "on a Mahler thing right now"), and he still dusts off the trumpet once in a while to do a musical, wedding, etc. Mr. Horner believes that continuing to play is important even if he's now "just" a music teacher, since it gives him context for what his students experience.

On music advocacy, Mr. Horner stated that this was important to him because this is how he justifies his career and is what drives and motivates him. For students, music as a brain exercise is unbeatable, and he thinks that developing the dedication to achieving excellence continues to be important despite modern-day life.

I would like to reflect on Mr. Horner's mindset here. It is incredibly healthy and disciplined. He cares about excellence and living with drive, discipline and purpose, as demonstrated by what he chose to do in his gap year, by volunteering in local schools, by continuing to play in ensembles, and by his philosophy on music advocacy. Mr. Horner is a role model for his focus and drive, but in my own experiences, also as a leader who will take initiative to do what others aren't willing to do and create his own opportunities.¹

This mindset is one I believe he tries to instill in his students, by presenting them with opportunities for leadership and ownership of the program they are a part of. Since it is up to

¹ Society's definition of "success" (and consequently who should be our role models) is hard-wired to productivity and high achievement. This can be good but can be particularly bad for those who are not afforded the opportunity to develop a mental model for how they are meant to amalgamate into this societal framework (or "box") and the emotional regulation skills demanded by this amalgamation. But this is the system we're working with. 🙄

the student's own agency whether they take advantage of these opportunities, those who take it will find it more valuable than if leadership was prescribed and assigned. This model encourages students to develop the drive and respect to want to better themselves, the mindset I believe Mr. Horner has for himself.

Nobody is perfect – Mr. Horner has struggled with burnout. But he takes a disciplined approach to solving the problem by first acknowledging that his brain needs a break from the constant immersion and monotony, then finding an appropriate activity to take that break with (i.e., Korean, golf, reading).

It's a system that works for Mr. Horner, and I think we all need to develop such a system that will not only drive us, but also allow us the mental breathing room when we need it.

Some information is taken from clips that didn't make it into the final video.