

# Understanding Your Band, Orchestra, and Choir Students

## Personality Similarities and Differences and What They Mean for You

**Abstract:** Stereotypes about the personalities of musicians, which have evolved over time, seem to direct our perception of musical experiences that take place in different ensembles. This article presents the stereotypes often associated with musicians' personalities and examines eight personality trends of high school band, orchestra, and choir students that can be identified in research. Personality similarities and differences among ensemble students are discussed. Teaching techniques and strategies that accommodate students' personality types are suggested.

**Keywords:** band, chorus, learning styles, orchestra, personality type, senior high school

Have you ever witnessed an ensemble rehearsal outside your own field of expertise or comfort level and marveled at just how different musicians can be? Band, orchestra, and choir directors, have you peeked in on your colleagues' rehearsals and noticed that the students' personalities, behavior, and nature seem so very different than your own students? Take a moment to consider the following questions: Do high school band, orchestra, and choir students have different personalities? Are students who participate in music ensembles different in terms of personality from their peers who do not participate in music ensembles? Chances are, you answered yes to these questions, and maybe contemplated what differences might exist.

In his book *Rare Birds of the Band Shell*, Tim Lautzenheiser puts an entertaining spin on exposing the way we perceive players of certain instruments. He describes each instrument of the band as a species of bird. Flutists, or "Flutarium Perfectus," are described as perfectionists in everything they do, always behaving well and striving for meticulous performance.<sup>1</sup> Trumpet players, or "Hollywood Screamerium Grandeur," are known to be leaders of the flock. Possessing a brash and forceful personality, trumpet players desire to be in the spotlight and strive to outdo one another.<sup>2</sup> While we can appreciate these stereotypes as inside jokes among musicians, in every joke, there lies a tiny seed of truth.

A question of great interest is what causes us to attach predetermined identities

*Understanding your students' personalities can help make you a more effective music teacher.*

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