

Thematic Article

Wind Bands for Hungarian Community Music

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Abstract

The scholarly study of community bands as music communities can be considered a relatively young trend even on an international level. Despite this fact, there is more and more research done on the potential effects they may have on society and music education. Our national literary records on wind bands, however, are mainly focused on their historical background and their legacy in the military. Thus, there is an insufficient amount of information provided on the aspects of sociology and pedagogy. Besides the literary comparison done in our research, we also study the resupply of our national bands in music schools, using available data from the the 2016/2017 Statistical Yearbook of Public Education. This paper serves mainly as a tool of problem identification, laying the groundwork for further researches done in this area.

Keywords: community band, music communities, music education

Potential interpretations of „a community”

Nowadays researches done about the power of a community are given increasing academic attention, due to the fact that in most cases the most significant periods of one’s life can be connected to certain communal relationships. A person’s life – irrespective of his or her occupation – in the majority of cases is spent in some kind of social formation, with members being in constant connection with each other, either in a direct or indirect way.

In her study on communal relations Adrienne Sz. Fodor investigates the meaning of the concept a community from several different aspects. In the process of its etymological study she discovered that there are numerous shades and synonym equivalents of European languages used for marking the various types of communities (Sz. Fodor, 2017).

Gorman (2002) explains, that while the conceptual use of a community and community development in Northern Europe is deeply rooted in its history, in the 2000s in Italy it is still considered to be a relatively new expression. The French language also interprets it in a peculiar way, as, for them, the notion of „communitaire” holds a rather negative undertone. Due to its secondary meanings associated with segregation, exclusion and forced integration, French, like Italian, uses the collocation of „local development”. In English-speaking territories, the term „community” is used (Sz. Fodor, 2017), which while also rich in meaning, on basic levels – similarly to Hungarian language - may refer to a smaller group or narrower environment (Gorman, 2002).

The place of a community within society

According to contemporary interpretation, the foremost power of communities is best explained by concepts related to society. Through these the modern contradiction attempting to understand the simultaneous need for belonging somewhere and experiencing freedom becomes clear (Vercseg, 2018). Ilona Vercseg, referring to Ferdinand Tönnies’s work titled *Community and Society*, explains that even though the concepts of „community” and „society” are often used in pairs, certain slight differences are to be clarified between them. The most basic digression manifests itself within the organization of these two notions: a community is a living organism, having a trustworthy, cozy environment as its natural medium; while society is more of an artificial creation, having publicity as its basic area (Vercseg, 2018).

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Social capital is of unavoidable significance in relation to communities and society. Originally an economic expression, nowadays it is also widely used within the terminology of cultural studies researches. It can be interpreted in multiple ways, there might be found many differences in definition even among the well-known figures of the area. The works of James S. Coleman and Pierre Bourdieu may serve as examples. While the first translates the concept of social capital to whole social groups in a wider context, the latter, narrowing it down, interprets it as relational capital (Farkas, 2013).

Pierre Bourdieu (1999) also points out the importance of community relations. In his work titled *The Forms of Capital* he explains the significance of decisive social benefits, which derive from mutual acquaintances. Belonging to the right group might bring to its members both symbolic and financial profits. However, its long-term realization is only possible if the person cares about the relationship unceasingly, investing energy into that (Bourdieu, 1999). Relying on the thoughts of Bourdieu, taking into account the community researches on the levels of educational sociology also seems valid. Although educational sociology has already covered the effects of unique characteristics specific to a person in detail, still the research of mechanisms deriving from communal mutual relationships can be considered a relatively new subject area. According to certain approaches, these resources originating from the social capital can be even of higher level than the possession of cultural capital (Pusztai, 2004).

Communities in music life

Research on communal groupings is also possible from a cultural historical perspective. The examination of music communities can be viewed as a new research area. At the same time, as it is shown by a number of research results, the results of general community studies can as well be observed in relation to art groups (Sz. Fodor, 2017). Music education plays a key role in human socialization (Szűcs, 2019), besides sharing some basic cultural knowledge its main task is to ensure social equality (Elliott, 2007). Music groupings are based on a dynamic cooperation of the community, thereby its members acquire a number of core values, which are also essential in everyday life (Szűcs, 2019).

Basic art education, which provides opportunity for students between the ages of 6 and 22 to identify and unfold their artistic skills within the frames of schools, also plays a very important role in the formation of music communities. As it is part of public education, basic art education is organized into traditional school form. However, it is not subject to compulsory schooling, which means that the decision of starting art studies is up to the student (Váradi, 2017). Similarly to traditional learning strategies, the three basic types of education – namely the formal, non-formal and informal - also come true in music learning. The criteria of formal education are accomplished by music school education, following the fulfillment of requirements the students are given certificates. Within the framework of such institutions musical ensembles are common, contributing to an experience-based form of education.

„Community music” is also commonly used in international terminology. The term is considered to be widely accepted, yet the interpretation of its exact definition may result in a diversity of possible answers. According to K. K. Veblen (2007), thematically community music is absolutely disapproved by some sceptics. They say that communal music-making is just another sound concept, concerned with the destruction of traditional frameworks of music education, and thus cannot be viewed as an innovative trend. According to certain opposing approaches, many researchers try to confirm the legitimacy of the concept of communal music-making with the help of various definitions. As Veblen explains, besides these two extreme opinions there are also countless alternative ideas, which follow a mid-way approach. In addition to all of this, he describes that the unique attributes of researches done on community music-making are clearly definable, its recognition as an independent field is well-grounded, despite the fact that it is in fact a very young area of research (Sz. Fodor, 2017; Veblen 2007).

The central element of these music formations in any case is active music-making, including performances, concerts, rehearsals and the creative process itself, and occasionally improvisation. Community music-making may involve the widest selection of genres, which are closely related to both cultural and artistic events, various celebrations, theater plays, and even different scenes of education (Veblen, 2007). The types and directions of communal music-making are very diverse, they are present in music education and musical life in a unique manner. Overall, however, there are more and more researches confirming that besides the efficiency of musical training in ensembles at least as much emphasis is given to the fact that the members would feel more complete, while also enjoying themselves in the given community. Most of the musicians and music teachers agree on the point that the significance of music education goes beyond childhood studies, as its main aim is to help students towards a kind

of knowledge, which contains in itself a lifelong musical inspiration. Nevertheless, several studies have approved, that in spite of any efforts made, upon finishing their school studies pupils also stop their participation in different ensembles (Vial, 2015).

The various forms of community music-making affect a vast number of people around the world, regardless of one's age, gender, cultural background, skill level, social-economic status, political and religious views. Thanks to its versatility, it also offers an opportunity for the education of disadvantaged people. As a result of this, the alignment of music therapy and community music-making is considered to be a relatively new research field. Researches conducted under the term of „community music therapy” investigate the problem of channelling music therapy and community music into one single direction, which by now have been looked upon as two distinct tendencies. From a historical perspective both directives originated from a common point, and have reached two different areas as a result of a process, the basis of which lies in the fact that music therapy is mainly concerned with the individual, while the other is concerned with the community (Ansdell, 2002).

There is a sharp similarity in message between „community music therapy” and what is called El Sistema, i.e. an innovative music education trend. Originally coming from Venezuela, the basis of the idea is to help the most severely disadvantaged children in social adaptation and commitment through their classical music training. One of the significant novelties of El Sistema is that the teaching of children begins straightaway with some community instrumental play, music playing with orchestras and singing in choirs. Certainly at first it is done through a lot of repetition, in a way that the emphasis is put not on the difficulties, but rather on enjoyment. For musicians who have been socialized in Europe, playing with an orchestra without any previous experiences might seem unusual, yet the idea is a great success in itself, surpassing all expectations. So much so, that since its founding in 1975, the concept is practiced in any form in over 55 countries worldwide. It is present in Hungary as well, under the notion of Szimfónia Program. Its aim is the same in national environments: aiding the social integration of underprivileged children with the help of the potentials given by community music-making (Kecskés-Vértesy, 2016).

Community music can also be a resolution to a serious problem of the 21st century, which is the proper free-time management schedule for children. Undoubtedly, today's modern technologies facilitate the lives of millions of people. However, it is also present as a potential source of danger, as far as the majority of children spend way too much time in front of the screen. In her work Katalin Kovács (2011) describes that there is a digression between the amount of screen-time of children living in rural and urban areas; it might not be surprising, that children in urban areas spend more time with their IT tools, than kids from rural areas are. In addition, her studies also show that regardless of the type of settlement, i.e. both in towns and villages the least amount of time is spent on art and cultural programs (Kovács, 2011) Community music can again serve as an option for the sake of its counterbalancing, which due to its preferences is able to address children more easily, while also educates them in a „hidden” manner (Sz. Fodor, 2017), and encourages them to get to know art and culture.

Wind band, as a music community

The definition of a wind band in more simple terms is a type of a band, consisting of members of woodwind, brass and percussion families of instruments. Although the term wind band may refer to a certain subtype of orchestras, we are going to use it in more general terms for marking the bands composed of wind, band and percussion instruments as follows. The structure of these bands is highly variable. The number of staff members is widely mobile, therefore both a smaller band consisting of 10-15 members and a huge wind orchestra made up of 100 people can be called a wind band. Instrumental composition of these bands raises another specific problem. Although nowadays the main instruments and groups of instruments correspond to each other, it is another fact that musical instrument equipment highly depends on the type of the band, its general appearance, function (Kostagiolas et al., 2013) and the above mentioned staffing limitations.

Wind bands, as an important pillar of community music, have long been known in our country as well. Still, very little is said about its positive effects in scholarly terms. These bands are still often thought of as identical with performing while marching military bands. Though it is a fact, that marching bands can be regarded as the ancestors of wind bands, still the role performed by the latter have been significantly more complicated than playing traditional military marches in ceremonies, ever since the second half of the 19th century. During this period, the diverse repertoire of marching bands was often the only means for familiarizing the everyday person

with classical music, thus also an important music mediator role being placed upon the wind bands (Marosi, 1994; Hartz, 2003).

Music studies overseas are often preoccupied with several aspects of functioning of wind bands, so the area also owns a special definition under the name of „community band”. The reason for this is that American education system pays very close attention to the propagation of instrumental music studies as widely as possible, thereby exploiting the opportunities offered by community music. According to certain views, community band education is so deeply rooted in American society that without it there would be actually no music education (Miller, 2008). Due to the extended effect of community band programs a vast number of students could participate in some kind of music education, and so both the number of professional and amateur musicians increased rapidly (Hartz, 2003). International Society for Music Education (1974) also calls attention to the significance of the latter layer, saying: „Amateur music-making has a cultural function; due to a critical engagement it results in the appreciation of musical tradition as well as of modern music. At the same time the formation of groups and clubs fulfills an important socio-political function. Under the training of a good instructor [. . .] the voluntary work with traditional or modern music means a considerable cultural deepening of human life.”

Characteristic of the diversity of amateur community bands is that its members often come from absolutely different socio-economic, social and educational background. This way it also becomes completely acceptable that in the majority of community bands amateur and professional musicians can fit side by side, while it may hold positive benefits for both parts. During joint rehearsals and concerts an amateur musician can learn a whole lot of things from his professional (or soon to be professional) fellow, through which he can more easily absorb the joy of music; while for the professional player the exemplary engagement of his amateur fellow may constitute an extra challenge, as a result of which he can develop his skills directly, as well as gain a lot of experience (Kreitner, 2003; Hartz, 2003).

Community music bands also play a huge role within catching up. Within his study Timothy J. Groulx examined the community bands of traditionally segregated types of American highschools, consisting of African-American students. In the history of American education segregation is regarded as a specifically studied area, the primary query of which is concerned with equality of opportunity. Music education based on American community band participation has also pervaded the segregated types of schools, made up of mainly underprivileged Afro-American pupils. With reference to his results, Groulx (2018) states that in institutions examined by him community band based music education became successfully integrated. General social judgement of African-American students has been improved by their active participation on competitions and festivals, while in addition it also provided them a relationship and cultural capital that helped them overcome the shackles of unfortunate situations, and secured their chance towards achieving equality of opportunity and desegregation (Groulx, 2018).

Roger Mantie (2012) specifically studied the impact of community band membership on music education, society and band members. Moreover, he sought to answer what is the mainstream motivation among the adult members of the band, why do they attend such ensembles, and what are the general demographic features of community band musicians. In the process of his research he analyzed the questionnaire responses of 275 musicians from 9 community bands. Referring to his results Mantie mentions, that the average respondent comes from white, well-educated upper-middle class, therefore there might arise a lack of equality of opportunity, or a question might come up whether it can be considered a general practice. In relation to music education and brass bands it also points out a specific correlation, according to which band members having learned playing on an instrument in a school environment, tend to spend less time on individual practice on average than their fellows, who became involved in music as adults. This might indicate a kind of community approach of the members, according to which the processes of collective rehearsals are much more valued by them than individual learning processes (Mantie, 2012).

Social forms of music-making, thus involving community bands, play a central role in lifelong learning, by that means these form an important part of the key area of adult education as well (Shansky, 2010). Besides it can also be demonstrated, that the proportion of adult participation in such ensembles generally shows an upward tendency (King, 2009). So, the examination of the subject area can be viewed as more and more actual. It is also supported by the idea that the greatest influence on the development of musical life is exercised by adult orchestras (Hartz, 2003).

Tyler C. King (2009) in his study examines the demographic data of adult musicians in community bands and the factors affecting participation in ensembles. What he discovered from 128 filled questionnaires was that musicians are less influenced by external factors, their primary motivation lies in musical self-expression. As it

turned out from the questionnaires related to the study, musicians tend to appreciate and enjoy common music activities in their adult years more than they did during their music education as children.

There are also more personal, quality-based researches done about the effects of community band music. Some partly structured interviews were made with 9 adult members of 3 community bands in a survey overseas. Issues were mainly connected to membership related motivation of the surveyed, individual technical skills and their experiences so far, with specific attention being paid to the similarities and differences between school- and adult-age music-making. In the process of analysis of the interviews all of the inquired emphasized the stress-relief feature of music as a central motivating factor. Besides, many of them mentioned that bigger differences in age between members (which in certain cases can reach as far as 30-40 years) also do not serve as negative experiences for them. What is more, younger musicians often tend to look up to their older fellows, expressing their future hopes of still playing music at a similar age (Vial, 2015).

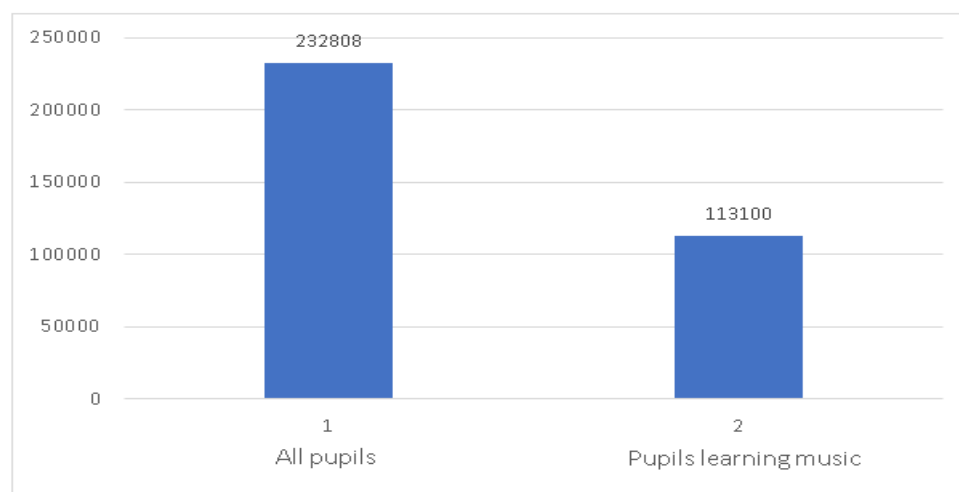
Although international literature studies historical rootedness and functioning of community bands in details, it can be stated, that the research of the effects these bands have on music education and local musical life is very much deficient as a subject area (Miller, 2008). To try to compensate this, Miller made interviews with eight community band conductor, looking for answers concerning the connection of the two areas. Drawing conclusions, he claims, that bands have affected local cultural life in all of the cases, even though on different levels. Furthermore, he states, that community bands are significant components contributing to the success of music education, however, for the sake of deeper comprehension and use of opportunities further detailed studying is needed (Miller, 2008).

Opportunities of community bands in Hungary

As we have already mentioned, Hungarian community bands as a layer are a rarely examined scholarly area, though it makes up an important part of music education and culture. This study is the first step of a planned, much greater research, in which the current position of Hungarian amateur community bands and the motivation, socio-economic background of its members are to be investigated. As the first step in this research, we would like to present the relevance of its continuation through some music educational figures.

Currently there is no precise database available in Hungary, which would be primarily concerned with the staff number of band members contributing to community bands. What makes data identification even more complicated is that only a certain number of community bands function as part of an art school. There are many formations operating in an independent organizational form, thus embodying the non-formal component of music education. Thereby, the key significance of music education institutions in resupply trainings for community bands cannot be underestimated. Based on the data of the Statistical Yearbook of Public Education of 2016/2017, which is the latest one, there are 232 804 people now studying in elementary art institutions, out of which 113 100 are doing some kind of music education.

Figure 1. Number of pupils participating in basic music education

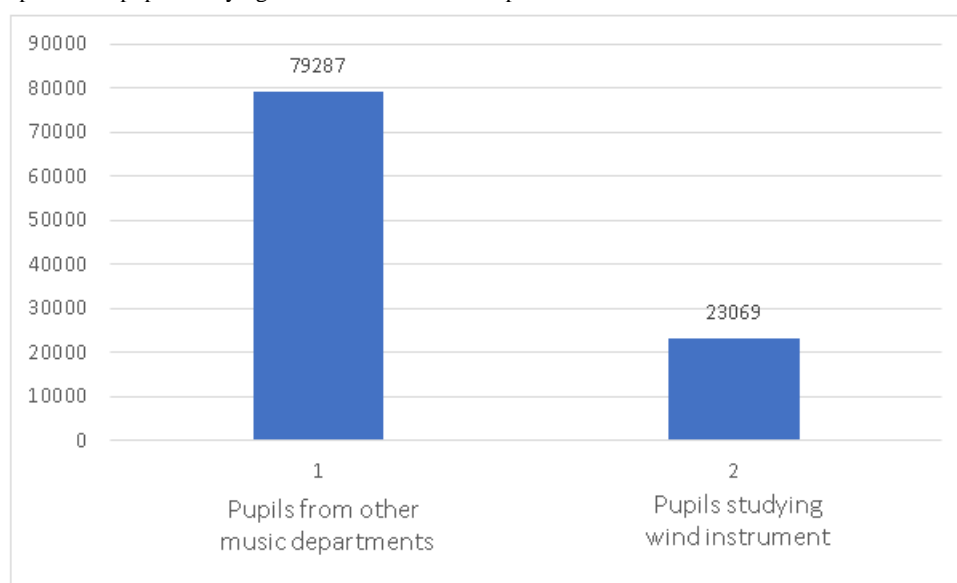


Source: Statistical Yearbook of Public Education 2016/17

A significant difference can also be shown between music departments. In comparison to classical, folk, jazz and electroacoustic departments, classical music presents some outstanding data. From an optimistic point of view, this may be an allusion to the successfulness of classical music training, but it must be pointed out, that in a number of institutions there is no opportunity for introducing non-traditional faculties.

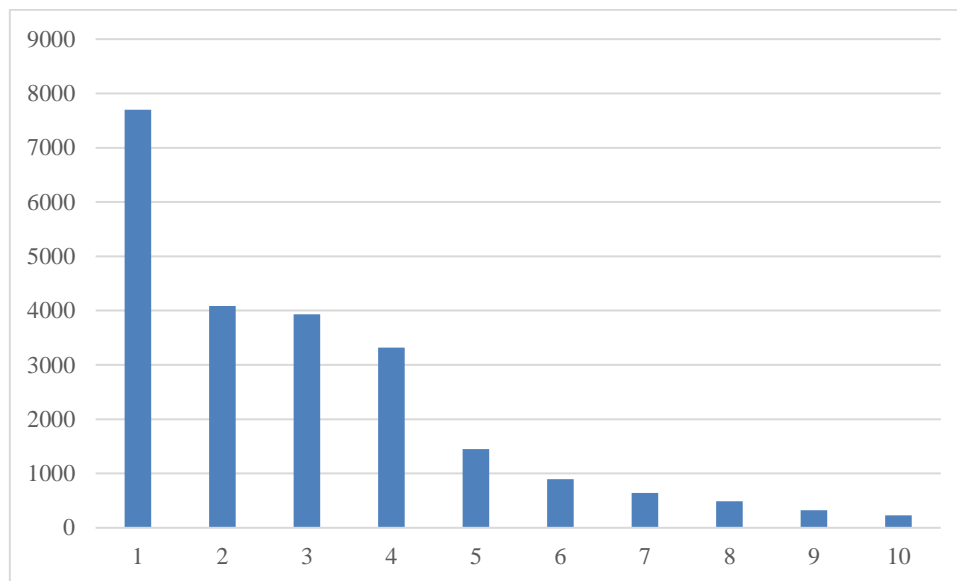
On the following figure the distribution of 102 356 pupils taking part in classical music training can be well-observed. The label of „other music faculties” includes not only instrumental trainings, but singing and theoretical trainings as well. Thus, an obvious difference can be seen in comparison to those playing on brass band instruments. We decided to include in the latter category the classical community band instrumentalists, i.e. those children playing the flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet, trombone, tuba, saxophone and percussion. Proportions might be considerably influenced by the 143 377 students playing recorder, who have been listed into „other category”. Although the class of blockflöte is an independent instrumental training, still it is considered to be usual, that after 2-3 years of practicing the students are directed by their instructors to a kind of wind instrument, which can help them with successful participation in community band work.

Figure 2. Proportion of pupils studying at the classical music department



Source: Statistical Yearbook of Public Education 2016/17

Distribution of pupils learning on community band instruments also presents a specific image, which is more or less proportionally corresponding to the structure of an average Hungarian ensemble. By taking these proportions into account the popularity of flute might be eye-catching, with its 7701 students doubling the number of pupils at the second most liked department, percussion (4087). Classes of trumpet (3930), clarinet (3318), and horn (1452) are also well balanced in terms of community band ... The number of pupils learning to play oboe, bassoon, and tuba may seem alarming, yet keeping in focus the composition of community bands their numbers can be considered acceptable. Music education-wise, the number of those playing saxophone and trombone can be thought of as objectionable, because contrary to the proportions of their presence provided here, traditionally, in a well-functioning community band, they tend to be present in larger numbers. Moreover, the Statistical Yearbook of Public Education does not mark pupils playing tenor horn, even though they are actively present both in music institutions and wind bands. This might be due to the fact that specifically there is no tenor horn department in higher music education institutions, accordingly, there are no teachers with tenor horn qualifications either. To fill this deficiency, tenor horn teaching is done by brass teachers on a national level, so presumably the data presented in the database also includes the number of pupils playing tenor horn.

Figure 3. Distribution of pupils learning on wind band instruments

Source: Statistical Yearbook of Public Education 2016/17

As it can be extracted from what was previously said, staff numbers of elementary music institutions altogether provide a good resupply basis for the favourable functioning of Hungarian community bands. Certainly, this does not involve musicians, who have already finished their elementary musical trainings, but are actively playing music on everyday basis as members of a community band. As we mentioned before, there is no precise statistics to be found about this latter category, however, it can be assumed that it increases the overall number of people playing brass instruments in a significant way.

Objective research is made harder by the fact that there is no accurate data found about the staff number of operating Hungarian community bands either. However, initiatives have already been taken to make up for these shortcomings. The main purpose of the Hungarian Association for Symphonic Bands, Ensembles and Majorettes is the widespread distribution of national brass values, improvement of operating conditions of bands, and performance of a high level professional advocating function. Under its patronage many other bands can be found from all over the country and abroad. Membership within the association in any case is conditional, with the President of the Association deciding on that. Based on the data provided by the Association in 2015, it includes 68 ensembles altogether. Due to the lack of precise data we can only make estimates, but it is sure, that this falls behind the total number of community bands.

Although our national community band staff number is documented quite sparsely, brass music is a traditionally active area within the scenes of musical life. With the cooperation of the Association a vast number of national and international community band conferences, festivals grant performance opportunities all over the country. For the sake of professional development there are prestigious competitions organized on a yearly basis, where ensembles can compete in categories corresponding to their own levels. Also, the Association provides an opportunity for further training of conductors standing at the forefront of orchestras, thus indirectly helping qualitative development of bands.

Conclusion

Vast amount of ways to interpret the concept of community have affected many researchers, thus the subject area has much deeply rooted literature. Thanks to the diverse definition options, community can be investigated from the points of view of cultural studies and music education as well. Despite its relative youth, scholarly examination of music communities has prestigious and lots of documentation. However, from a national community band aspect, it can be considered virtually untouched. The aim of this paper – which is the very first element of a planned, longer research – was to call attention to this deficiency, while also laying the groundwork for further investigations. In conclusion, it can be stated that the pedagogical study of Hungarian community bands

and their members is well-grounded. We hope that with the help of further researches we can improve the general judgement of brass bands, and complete this segment of our national music studies as well.

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