

Executive Statement: Clarinets for Conservation

The Need: The African Blackwood, Tanzania's national tree, is extremely valuable to musicians, the economy, and the environment. Prized for its tone and resiliency, the black heartwood is used in the manufacture of many instruments including: clarinets, oboes, piccolos, violins and guitars, and piano keys. One cubic meter of African Blackwood is sold for an average of \$20,000 in the international market and commands one of the highest prices of any timber in the world.¹ The international musical instrument trade brings more than \$1.5 million dollars of revenue to the Tanzanian economy each year.² During the 2012 Clarinets for Conservation program, participants planted over four hundred African Blackwood trees at twelve public schools and one orphanage. According to the current estimated value, the harvest will be worth over one million U.S. dollars at harvest time in approximately 70 years.

The Idea: The universality of music makes it an effective and creative tool that is easily adapted for interdisciplinary educational experiences. The extra-musical benefits of music instruction stretch beyond musical skill and into many areas of cognitive development: improving reading, literacy, and hearing speech-in-noise. These benefits make music a possible solution for success in any learning environment. Within the Clarinets for Conservation program, music instruction serves as a structured model of learning, easily transferrable to any other academic discipline. It is designed as a creative and encouraging educational approach whereby students are motivated to continue learning based upon hands-on experience and musical practice. Students participating in Clarinets for Conservation spend part of each day learning the discipline of music performance on the clarinet and part of the day learning basic principles of sustainability and

¹ "The African Blackwood Conservation Project," accessed November 5, 2012, <http://www.blackwoodconservation.org>

² Ibid.

conservation of indigenous trees. Each student plays a part in both public performance and public speaking; they travel to schools and teach other students and community members about sustainability and conservation with a musical product grown in Tanzania.

Mission: The mission of Clarinets for Conservation is to use music instruction as an interdisciplinary approach to sustainability through music education. The primary goals are to inspire creativity, to foster musical education and the transfer of its benefits to other educational areas, and to encourage the protection of natural resources. The program is a socially engaging and cognitively beneficial tool for adolescent students and their communities in the United States and the developing country of Tanzania.

Impact: The latest report published by UNICEF, titled “Progress for Children: A report card on adolescents,” asserts: “There is a crucial need for educational opportunities that are meaningful for young people as future wage earners, parents, and citizens.”³ Implementing a creative educational opportunity in the public education system of developing countries may increase the students’ chances of learning amid the socioeconomic disadvantages that characterize their schools. The Clarinets for Conservation program is an example of how music instruction can be used as a creative and multifaceted educational tool, combining an environmentally beneficial community program with music instruction for a sustainable future; a sustainable future for education and the environment.

³ United Nations Children’s Fund, Progress for Children: A Report Card for Adolescents. New York: United Nations Publications, 2012: 22, 39.