

## Transcript of Oral History Interview with Zack Davis and Cece Chavez

Interviewer: Santos Mencio

Interviewee: Zack Davis and Cece Chavez

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Abstract: This is an audio interview with two members of the St Mary's wind ensemble. It goes into how they were feeling when the university shut down, and their potential fears for the band program. It also goes into their experiences during online rehearsals and outdoor rehearsals.

Santos Mencio 00:06

Okay, hello, this is Santos Mencio Today I'll be interviewing [Prompts them to introduce themselves]

Zack Davis 00:10

I'm Zack Davis.

Cece Chavez 00:12

I'm Cece Chavez.

Santos Mencio 00:15

Okay alright so to start off with a few we're going to talk about like but what were your kind of your thoughts when COVID started you know what were your your like your main concerns way back when.

Zack Davis 00:26

I think my biggest concern was like obviously not getting sick but I really didn't want to spread it to my family. I have family who have like, other illnesses. So I guess that was my biggest like fear and concern like you know, spreading it to them, so.

Cece Chavez 00:40

I guess my biggest concern is how long it was going to take us out of school, essentially exploring like any person. Not doing labs and not getting hands on things that are critical to like your major or like any other major I thought I was really concerned about that.

Santos Mencio 01:01

So what about like the band program then like how do you feel when band was cancelled and all that? Were you guys like worried about it?

Cece Chavez 01:05

Um, at first it was a pretty rocky transition to online. We all kind of went together on Zoom for that. The mid semester, I guess when we were back on lockdown after spring break. But then Dr. Mireles kind of made sure that we were all pretty safe and he did a very good job of making sure

that we were all following protocols afterwards. When we did come back in person, so getting the instrument coverings, but I was really worried initially which is why I didn't go in person a lot last semester about catching it and spreading it to my other family members.

Santos Mencio 01:41

How did you feel in the university close them like what did that tell you? You know, did it set off alarm bells or was it just like oh, I kind of expected them.

Cece Chavez 01:47

I personally kind of expected it. Just because this is a private university. They do make a lot of decisions on their own. And we're small and it's not the first time you'll get but like student safety over kind of convenience and financial aspects of it.

Zack Davis 02:04

Yeah I do think um it picked up very well compared to other universities around us. I know I started that fall, like when COVID happened. I have friends at UTSA and other schools who like didn't go on lockdown right away. And like from what I heard, like the school [St. Marys] was like we're done. We're shutting down so I think that was really cool

Santos Mencio 02:26

Alright, so then we were you guys like worried about the Band program then like you think something was gonna happen to it like it might not come back or it might not come back the way it used to be.

Cece Chavez 02:34

I was worried that we're gonna lose a lot of our music majors to other schools, bigger schools that kept performing and kept going. Our music department was small to begin with, and before we came back from the pandemic, it was smaller than it is right now. So I was a little concerned that we wouldn't have the amount of ensembles or just the presence of the music leaders. When we came back, I figured some of them would transfer because they're frustrated with the way that we handled the pandemic.

Santos Mencio 03:09

So how did you guys feel about virtual practice? You know, do you guys like it? Do you have problems with it? You know, what were maybe some of the challenges you challenges you guys faced with kind of dealing with it?

Zack Davis 03:18

I think it was really frustrating at first. When we started doing virtual Wind Ensemble is really hard. Like we were trying to like play through music, but I me personally, I didn't have like the venue to play my instrument during virtual Wind Ensemble. So I it was very frustrating and difficult at first and then I guess we all just kind of get used to it. I don't know. I think I find it very frustrating.

Cece Chavez 03:41

I agree. I thought it was really weird, especially already having been in the Wind Ensemble and knowing how it like had gone is just how the in person rehearsals are especially with everyone else. I personally also got really frustrated with the aspects of that and also like Wi Fi isn't always reliable and stuff lags so it's just really frustrating, not a seamless as one might think it was.

Santos Mencion 04:08

Technical, technical issues I'm sure were prevalent. Alright, and then how did you guys feel about outdoor practices? You know, did it seem exciting? Was it kind of like a new revolutionary thing? Or did you kind of maybe expected to go that way?

Cece Chavez 04:26

I kind of was surprised that we were doing outdoor practices because when we were going into the semester I heard from other people that we were going to do indoor practice. And then I think the Delta variant kind of took us back outside because the university changed their protocols. I figured we were going to do the bell coverings again, but I guess not. I think just this social distancing was enough. I don't care for it too much. Honestly. It's not too bad but I would very much rather be inside rehearsing and it's much better for everyone. But we've been dealing with dealing with it for the year.

Zack Davis 05:02

I think the weather like we did really well with the outside of rehearsals, but I think the weather kind of limited us but we probably could have done even better. Had we not had to deal with the weather all day long. Especially the wind.

Santos Mencion 05:18

Obviously there now a certain number of challenges that came with it, you know, like the wind and the like, you guys want to talk about that? Maybe you know, did you expect maybe some of the solutions like the instrument coverings or the little glass panels.

Cece Chavez 05:30

I kind of hoped that everyone could kind of follow in what the horn section did and use a binder. I feel like that would of ceased a lot of people's frustrations but I'm assuming people just don't care for the binder anymore. And would rather deal with the wind and music flying everywhere. Personally I'm really glad I didn't have to deal with plexiglass that seems really frustrating especially since all of our parts were split up page by page and the page turns are really weird. Paperclips did help so they were good regardless of the binder usage.

Santos Mencion 06:07

Of course obviously almost dying. I'm sure that was a fun experience.

Zack Davis 06:09

What were they? The little acoustic panels fell over on us.

Cece Chavez 06:13

That was kind of just like so it was frustrating because we needed those. I guess in order to hear ourselves better being outside. And then they became a safety hazard because of the wind. And now we can't use them.

Zack Davis 06:27

They literally like stopped us for 15-20 minutes and to try to move them and put them down

Cece Chavez 06:32

We're very very lucky that nobody go hurt

Santos Mencion 06:34

How does it compare them to like indoor indoor practice, you know, would you say it's like radically different or is kind of the same, but obviously, you know, slightly unique by being outdoors.

Zack Davis 06:45

I think it's um, I think indoor rehearsals are probably held a little more professionally than outdoors. I do think when we're outdoors. It's a little more chaotic and you can tell because, you know, sometimes he does give instruction and a lot of people are talking and stuff and I don't I don't feel like that would have happened inside. So I do think it's a big difference. And I think it's just the atmosphere.

Cece Chavez 07:06

I agree when we have a rehearsal, there is a class like 100 yards away from us, literally screaming we're right next to the trash cans are constant distractions and people are just not paying attention as much as they were the inside. When we did rehearse inside my first year. Like Zack said, everything's super professional. Everyone kind of took it a little more seriously. But I do think kind of letting loose a little bit in rehearsal was good for morale in general, in terms of being outside and dealing with it because it is frustrating for everyone else. Because everyone kind of deals with it.

Santos Mencion 07:43

Okay, lastly Then what were you most excited about for the Dia de los Muertos like performance?

Zack Davis 07:49

I think I was just excited to get to perform again. I'm a transfer student and I had taken like three years off of playing horn and performing so no, I did the fall and the spring semester and we didn't do a performance. So coming back here and doing this semester finally getting to do a performance no matter what we all went through with the weather, being outside, COVID It was just really nice to perform again. I think it really boosted my spirits as a music major.

Cece Chavez 08:13

Yeah I agree. I think kind of the way that the event went down, making it a bigger event. Our last concert before we shut down was rhapsody in blue which was a great concert and we all did

really well but also the turnout wasn't nearly as great as the turnout for the Dia De Los Muertos festival. And I think that really helped all of us get kind of back into the groove and kind of get excited about performing again. So I think what I was most excited to see how everybody would react in terms of students in the crowd to our first concert.

[Plane flies overhead, slight laughs, speakers are waiting for background audio to quite down again]

Santos Mencion 09:06

Alright so then what were maybe some of your worries about it. Were you worried it might be canceled. I know the weather wasn't exactly the most hospitable it might have possibly supposed to rain then.

Zack Davis 09:14

I kind of thought that if it was gonna rain Dr. Mireles was gonna figure out a way to make this happen because he seemed like he had actually put a lot of work into this kind of celebration. So I think I wasn't worried about it being canceled, but I was worried that it was going to have to move to the pecan grove and it wouldn't have sounded as good. And probably wouldn't have had as good of a turnout.

Cece Chavez 09:33

I yeah I agree, I had my eye on the forecast the whole time just because I really like to be prepared like that. But as soon as I saw them starting to set up and the forecast had gone away. It was better, but it was pretty cool. Especially since we're on an elevated platform.

Santos Mencion 09:55

Alright and then what would you say was your favorite piece of music that was performed within the wind ensemble or in any of the other bands? I know we didn't get to hear very many of them perform but you know, maybe if you liked one of their pieces instead.

Zack Davis 10:12

I like the Danzon that was probably my favorite. It just had a lot of energy to it. So that was really fun.

Cece Chavez 10:19

I also really liked the Danzon. But in terms of stuff that I guess we didn't have to see or I caught the last bit of the jazz combo playing and then their last performance they kind of brought it into the middle of the audience and I thought that was really neat. I really enjoyed that. I think they did really well overall.