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Odello Receives Funding for Musicology Research

Summary: Denise Odello, assistant professor of music, will research American marching bands.

(May 28, 2014)-Denise Odello, assistant professor of music, received both a 2014 all-University Imagine Fund Award and spring 2014 Grant-in-Aid Program funds. She will use these awards to gather information on the history and cultural context behind American collegiate marching band traditions.

Odello's research stems from her interest in the development of marching band traditions over time. To examine the factors behind marching band traditions, she will research marching bands from Big Ten Conference colleges and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Odello will look at the practices and values characterizing marching band performances throughout the country.

"Big Ten universities such as the Ohio State University are fun to watch not only for their music, but also because of their visual performances on the field, and factors such as the internet and social media accompany the way these styles are developed and shared," says Odello. "Historically Black Colleges and Universities such as Grambling State University also have a distinctive style of performance and a tradition of informal competitions."

Despite the prevalence of marching bands in American culture, there has not been much academic analysis on the subject. Because there is little scholarly research on their traditions, her research presents an opportunity to add fresh analysis and literature to music culture.

"Bands are a more recent phenomenon and have been around since the 20th century, meaning that there is little research analyzing the traditions behind them," she says. "Today, we have bands ranging from college marching bands to high school bands to community bands, and they all go to show that they're an integral part of our culture."

Odello plans to research seven different marching bands over the next three years. She also plans on attending the Honda Battle of the Bands in Atlanta, Georgia, in January 2015.

This project is supported by generous funding from the University of Minnesota's Imagine Fund Award Program and Grant-in-Aid of Research, Artistry, and Scholarship Program.

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