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2017 Arizona MEA Conference, Tempe, AZ – February 2017

The Big Picture: Deeper Connections in the Orchestra Class

What 'stories' do you relate as a teacher and leader? The stories a string teacher relates can be compelling, motivating, and powerful for orchestra students, especially when film, drama, visual art and other disciplines are incorporated. This session explores an interdisciplinary approach to the orchestra class as a vehicle to engage students, and also to teach improvisation, composing/arranging, ensemble skills, musical form, and many other musical topics. Such an approach provides a means to discover and analyze how music and other art forms express personal feelings and creativity. A variety of interdisciplinary orchestra projects will be presented. Here's a session to stir your imagination! Bring an instrument!

Who is your favorite teacher? Why? What are the characteristics of your favorite teacher? Did you see them as a leader? Have YOU become your favorite teacher !?!?

Telling Stories

Reference: Howard Gardner [(1998). *Leading Minds: An Anatomy of Leadership* (New York, Basic Books).]

- Case studies of eleven individuals, including: Margaret Mead, J. Robert Oppenheimer, Pope John XXIII, Martin Luther King, Jr., Margaret Thatcher, Mahatma Gandhi
- "Leaders [read: favorite teachers?] achieve their effectiveness chiefly through the stories they relate. Here, I use the term *relate* rather than *tell* because presenting a story in words is but one way to communicate. Leaders in the arts characteristically inspire others by the ways they use their chosen media of artistic expression, be they the phrases of a sonata or the gestures of a dance... In addition to communicating stories, leaders *embody* those stories... People who do not practice what they preach are hypocrites, and hypocrites and hypocrisy mutes the effectiveness of their stories... The *ordinary* leader, by definition the most common one, simply relates the traditional story of his or her group as effectively as possible... The *innovative* leader takes a story that has been latent in the population or among the members of his or her chosen domain, and brings new attention or a fresh twist to that story... By far the rarest individual is the *visionary* leader. Not content to relate a current story or to reactivate a story drawn from a remote or recent past, this individual actually creates a new story, one not known to most individuals before, and achieves at least a measure of success in conveying this story effectively to others... Visionary leadership is far more readily achieved in specific domains (like particular arts or sciences) or in specific institutions (like a university or a corporation) than in the guidance of an entire society. What links the eleven individuals who I [studied]... is the fact that they arrived at a story that worked for them and, ultimately, for others as well. They told stories—in so many words—about themselves and their groups, about where they were coming from and where they were headed, about what was to be feared, struggled against, and dreamed about... The stories of the leader[s]—be they traditional or novel—must compete with many other extant stories, and if the new stories are to succeed, they must transplant, suppress, complement, or in some measure outweigh the earlier stories, as well as contemporary oppositional 'counterstories'... Leaders and audiences traffic many stories, but the most basic story has to do with issues of *identity*. And so it is the leader who succeeds in conveying a new version of a given group's story who is likely to be effective." (p. 9-14)

This is a day and age where the popular narrative/story is one of: (1) instant gratification, (2) endless choices, (3) immediate access to information, (4) social networking, (5) veneration of technology, (6) minimal self-reliance

Whereas, string teaching and playing traditionally and primarily (but not totally) has reflected a world of:

- (1) sequential & deliberate progress (10,000 hours to expertise);
- (2) minimal choices (limited repertoire, leader as "director") with most choices outside of popular culture;
- (3) thankfully, immediate access to information (recordings, sound);
- (4) isolation;
- (5) primarily 300-year old technology;
- (6) tremendous emphasis on self-reliance.

*****What stories did your favorite teacher relate? What is the story you are relating as a string teacher?
What are the counterstories being told about us as string/music teachers?*****

What can we do to become visionary leaders and ‘favorite teachers?’ Relate a vision and stories by:

- Teaching comprehensively – employ comprehensive musicianship, address the National Standards
- Focusing regularly on expression as well as technical achievement, creation and flawless replication
- Expanding the palette of repertoire and performance experiences – move beyond traditional performance contexts
- Ceasing to teach in isolation, both in curriculum and in fact – **making connections!!!**

...and always being conscious of the story being told!

Teaching aurally/comprehensively through alternative/eclectic styles – including improvisation, arranging
ex.: *Bonny James Campbell* (*Basic Fiddlers Philharmonic – Old Time Fiddle Tunes*)

Connecting with expression in methods & repertoire – examples: example: *String Explorer*: New World Symphony
theme; Dabczynski – *Sweet Suite – Saccharine Suspension Sarabande*

Teaching comprehensively through daily methods and routines – example: *String Explorer* Activity Pages; *String Explorer* Teachers Resource Kit – Listening supplements; *String Explorer* Teachers Manual – Interdisciplinary lessons

Connecting with expression in literature and drama – example: Dabczynski – *Dickens Christmas Carol Suite*

Connecting with history and culture – examples: Bach/Dabczynski – *Sheep May Safely Graze*; Dabczynski – *Lincoln at Gettysburg* exploring: How can music express or enhance a story? What role does orchestration play in conveying characters, mood, story? What is the feeling that the music conveys about the story.

Connecting music/composition with original student film – discussion: Fairbanks/Dabczynski – *1-800-Orchestra*

Focusing on merging the school string orchestra curriculum with both original and existing film music provides students an opportunity to: (1) gain cultural literacy in terms of standard music and themes; (2) engage in interdisciplinary studies of film, visual art, history, drama, language arts, and other areas; (3) experience and analyze composing and arranging techniques; (4) engage in hands-on experiences with editing and other aspects of film making technology. In addition, focus on film develops the following extended benefits: (1) student leadership, self-motivation, and self-direction; (2) a popular vehicle for advocacy for music and the arts; (3) means for recruiting students; and (4) audience development.

Teaching across the disciplines – examples: National Parks productions – Ferde Grofe/arr. Dabczynski – *“On the Trail”* (from *The Grand Canyon Suite*); *Acadia First Light* – exploration of the National Parks

- Film and production by BYU students – funded by the Laycock Foundation for Creative Collaboration in the Arts
- Interdisciplinary focus
- Historical/archival – iconic – photographs, paintings, texts (BYU Museum of Art, BYU Harold B. Lee Library, Grand Canyon National Park, Public domain image sites)
- Educational materials to guide student interdisciplinary learning – study guide
- How do the arts (music, film, visual art) convey the meaning of: (1) The animals – the humor and utilitarian nature of the mules; (2) one of the natural wonders of the world; (3) the size, colors, and grandeur; (4) the history of the park; (5) the park as a natural treasure; (6) the feelings people had – and have – about it?

***** What are the stories we are telling as teachers? *****

***The most effective teaching always has and always will embody visionary leadership.
I suggest that our effectiveness – and our leadership as string teachers –
is indelibly connected with the stories we decide to relate, and how we relate them.***



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2017 Arizona MEA, Phoenix, AZ – January 2017

IT'S ABOUT CHOICE – DEVELOPING MUSICAL INDEPENDENCE AMONG YOUNG STRING PLAYERS

A basic challenge for all string teachers lies in providing students with sufficient skills to become musically independent. This session will present specific strategies and materials for developing such independence that can be employed by teachers on a daily basis. Come learn about simple, do-able tools for improving ear-training, musicianship, creativity, personal expression, chamber music, and other fundamental string playing skills that will liberate your students from the yoke of instructional bondage! Bring an instrument and join in.

What is “Musical Independence?”

Consider on a continuum – related to developmental level, age, concept (National Standards - Content Standard)

We strive to develop independence in all musical domains, in every National Standards - Content Standard area, especially:

- Rhythmic organization
- Aural/melodic organization – Audiation
- Technical skills
- Musicality/expression
- Musical decision-making

Paired with the sequential development of technical skills

Formula: Sounds like → Feels like → Looks like

Developing Rhythmic Organization

Beat internalization – Movement

- Large motor skills
- String-playing motor skills (airbow)

Differentiating macrobeats from microbeats (Gordon) – subdivision

Developing Aural/Melodic Organization

- Audiation – Hierarchy
- Listening
- Singing/Solfeggio
- Pitch Matching – pitch manipulation
- Ear-to-Hand
- Harmonic Contexts

Navigating Notation

Reading

Writing

(see “Sight-Read It!” handout)

Arranging/Composition

Allowing students the locus of control

Choosing from a menu

Always paired with self/peer/teacher assessment (“Did it work?”)

Expressivity/Musicality

Developed simultaneously with standard foundational technical skills)

- Posture and instrument position
- Bow hold, left hand finger patterns, note recognition
- Fundamental *detache* and *marcato* bow stroke

Dynamic Contrast

- Begin with the concept of opposites (loud/soft)
- Awareness of *how* to correctly address dynamic levels – three determinants:
 1. Bow weight
 2. Bow length
 3. Bow placement
- Developing an awareness of dynamic gradation (use of 1-10 volume scale, etc.)
- Students decide upon and assign appropriate dynamics

Basic vibrato skills can be approached in the very initial stages of instruction, as soon as position is established

- Sequence of instruction based upon Rolland, Fischbach, et al

Discovering phrasing and melodic contour

- Determining phrase structure (antecedent/consequent, phrase length, direction)
- Recognition of melodic contour and melodic benchmarks
- Basic combining of dynamics with melodic contour (*crescendo* on ascension, *diminuendo* on descent)

Exploring speed, *ritardando*, *tenuto*, *fermata*

- Determining differences between speed and dynamic (slow doesn't equal quiet, fast doesn't equal loud!)
- *Ritardando* at obvious ends of tunes, phrases – with *fermatas* and *fade-out* – cultural expectations

Experimentation with a repertoire of bowings and articulations

- Experimentation with a repertoire of common bowing styles (*staccato*, *legato*, *marcato*, off-string strokes, etc.)
- Experimentation with a range of accents/ articulations (*colle*, > , *sfz* , *sf* , “ . “ , “ — ” , ^ , etc.), and how to play them
- Recognition of appropriate stylistic application of bowings – starting with Baroque and fiddle tunes

Understanding tension and release

Recognizing and applying differences in style stylistic differences among specific tunes and repertoire

- Importance of listening to recordings—starting with broad differences (Baroque vs. Atonal vs. Jazz)
- Use of fiddling and other alternative string music to identify differences in style
- Recognition of stylistic performance traditions (i.e., Baroque vs. Classical vs. Romantic)
- Developing ability to predict and apply appropriate stylistic performance practices
- Experimentation with non-traditional stylistic elements (what works, what doesn't?)

Exploring Color - What is color as applied to music? Requires ability to think and apply abstract terminology

- Need to develop common terminology and understanding of color (i.e., warm, dark, light, bright) and the technical requirements for *how* to accomplish these

Connections with History, Other Disciplines, Other Arts

Multidisciplinary lessons

Awareness of string music throughout life (movies, Muzak, dancing, pop music, etc.)

Experiencing other arts – performing for dance, soloists, silent movies, theater, etc.



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IT'S ABOUT CHOICE – DEVELOPING MUSICAL INDEPENDENCE AMONG YOUNG STRING PLAYERS: *SIGHT READING ADDENDUM*

Teaching reading skills to young instrumentalists – and particularly ensemble sight-reading skills – is a fundamental, and sometimes daunting, responsibility of any string teacher. Recent developments in music psychology and learning theory – along with common sense and traditional common practice – provide important insights into this process. In this session, these findings will be discussed, and an instructional framework will be presented that moves students effectively from 'rote-to-note' while accurately assessing students' reading skills. New materials and strategies will be explored and shared that address common note-reading problems.

How do Johnny and Janie learn to read?

- Parent reads → Image/verbal association → Symbolic association → Phonetic association → Phonetic construction/analysis → Constructed meaning
- Common approaches to reading provide a parallel to a successful music reading sequence.

Framework for reading as an extension of memory -- Dr. Donald Hodges, University of North Carolina-Greensboro

- Three principles of memory development (Hodges):
 1. Repetition
 2. Lack of interference
 3. Establishment/creation of meaning
- Used as a metaphor or parallel for learning/reading

Audiation/Music Learning Theory – Principles from Dr. Edwin E. Gordon

- Audiation – cognitive process by which the brain gives meaning to musical sounds; the musical equivalent of thinking in language
- Occurs when we hear and comprehend music for which the sound is no longer or may never have been present
- Takes place when we assimilate and comprehend music in our minds that we have just heard, or have heard in the past, or that we are reading in notation/improvising/composing
- Gordon differentiates five stages of audiation: Momentary retention → Conscious prediction of patterns
- Eight non-hierarchical types of audiation (some types depend on others for readiness): listening, reading, writing, 2 types of recalling/performing, 3 types of creating/improvising
- Differences between audiation, aural perception, musical imagery
- "Sound becomes music only through audiation."
- Reading or writing music may take place without audiation as *decoding of information*.
- Audiation of the musical syntax associated with the notation is critical for comprehension.

Suggested Music Reading Strategies/Habits:

- Teaching songs and instrumental melodies by rote, with emphasis on teacher modeling
- Sequence for teaching reading, combined with sequential introduction of physical/technical skills:
 1. Recognition/association of note values and rhythmic patterns (floating notes)
 2. Recognition of pitches, pitch memory – audiation of pitches (singing, floating notes)
 3. Use of counting systems and rhythm identification ("1-and-2," Gordon, McHose)
 4. Identification of musical and non-musical cues (reading checklist, stylistic awareness)
 5. Identification of broad musical patterns, extension of view (patterning)
 6. Reading ahead (eye-to-hand memory)
- Combination of unison exercises and independence (mixed-part ensembles)

Identification of Reading Problems at the Basic and Intermediate Levels

- Problems identified by sampling of recognized string teachers:
 1. Dotted quarters/eighth rhythms;
 2. Long notes followed by notes of varied lengths;
 3. Rhythmic subdivision
 4. Rests of varied lengths
 5. Ties;
 6. Note values (long-to-short, short-to-long);
 7. Conjunct (stepwise) interval and note patterns;
 8. Disjunct (leaps) interval and note patterns;
 9. Accidentals and key changes
 10. Ledger lines (E-string and C-string)
 11. "Road maps" and related symbols
 12. Accompaniment patterns
 13. Dynamics
 14. Following meter changes and conducting patterns
 15. Articulations and accents

An Approach to Address Music Reading Problems

- Assumes student has been introduced to fundamental reading skills – as developed through ongoing daily instruction
 - Pre-test that allows teacher to assess general or specific problems
 - Subsequent exercises that isolate problems within specific musical contexts – repetition to develop pattern recognition
 - Post-test that allows teacher to assess progress and mastery, or continued problems
 - Opportunities to assess and address reading issues not necessarily related to notes/rhythms
 - Simple ensemble opportunities that places the problem into a realistic musical context, an opportunity for students to "put it all together" and for the teacher to assess progress

Other Ongoing Strategies for Strengthening and Assessing Reading Skills

- Following scores/overheads – with teacher guidance – while listening to recordings (association)
- Use of flash cards – read and associate, sing, and play
- Following parts – "pointing along" – while listening to recordings (association); stopping to identify "where are we now?" to promote accountability
- Following parts with a peer – one points to notes while the other plays
- "Fill in the Blanks" – teacher plays while others follow; teacher stops and individual student (or group) continues
- Reading ahead – working in pairs, one student covers the notes being played with a card, the other plays (being required to "read ahead"); covered notes extend from one beat ahead → two beats → one measure → multiple measures.
- Reorder the measures – teacher re-orders the measures in a familiar melody; students place in order correctly
- Predict the ending – teacher plays an antecedent phrase, individual student chooses from a menu of possible consequent phrases (best when preceded by improvisational rote version of same).

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OF COURSE YOU CAN TEACH STRINGS! STRATEGIES FOR NEW (AND WOULD-BE) STRING TEACHERS

With the national shortage of string teachers, some veteran music educators suddenly find themselves teaching strings for the first time. Others unexpectedly may be assigned to teach a different level of strings. For many of these teachers, years may have passed since that last string methods class! This session will provide clear and “do-able” teaching strategies for all string teachers - and particularly those who aren’t string players. Approaches to teaching beginning skills, intermediate techniques, fiddling, identification of resources, and other issues will be discussed. Bring an instrument-- and concerns specific to your own situation -- and join in! Teachers will receive free string teaching materials from Alfred Publishing Company.

Teaching Strings: Arguably Simpler than Teaching Band!

- Only 4 instruments, 3 clefs – alternate notation systems apply to all
- Instruments can be sized and accommodated to the individual student
- Sound is produced the same for all – pizz and bow
- Pitch is changed in like manner for all (fingering theory)
 - *The teacher, student, and parent **can SEE everything** – including intonation!*
- Open strings for all instruments = 5 notes perfectly in tune on Day 1!
- A plethora of authentic music (traditions, styles, and genres)
- Basic rhythmic structure and agogic accents are enhanced naturally by gravity

Survival – and SUCCESS – will depend on awareness of and adherence to proper, ordered SEQUENCE.

Skill-based, Prioritized Sequence of Instruction

Structured upon:

1. Aural skills – including beat internalization and singing
2. Establishment of comfortable position and format
3. Right-hand skills
4. Left-hand skills
5. Rhythm skills
6. Application of skills to varied motivational repertoire
7. Pitch manipulation/intonation skills
8. Skills to facilitate personal expression
9. Note-reading skills
10. Skills to facilitate speed and style

Imbedded in all aspects of instruction:

- Balanced approach to the National Standards
- Development of aural skills (i.e., through improvisation)
- Personal expression and musical independence
- Acknowledgement of individual needs
- Creativity (composition, arranging) & decision-making
- Contributions and commitment to the group
- Humor, drama, and imagination – fun
- Awareness of participation in the tradition

*****An awareness of the intended outcome*****

Primary Basic Skills/Issues Priority Order (heterogeneous class setting – based on *String Explorer* skill sequence)

1. Instrument Selection and Sizing
2. The Bass Issue
3. Position Routine – “Statue of Liberty, Cello Triangle and Hugs,” Bass – sitting vs. standing
4. Banjo Position/Pizz – Echo games, “Open String Blues,” open-1 games
5. Right hand position – Rolland balance point vs. modified bow grip, French vs. German bow for bass
6. Four basic rhythm patterns – Aural/written: “Down-Up, Motorcycle Stop-Stop, Run Pony, Elevator Operator

Primary Basic Skills/Issues Priority Order (continued)

7. Left hand position routine – imagery
8. Introduction to vibrato (continuously revisited, applied, and refined)
9. Awareness of pitch ascension/descension – “high vs. low” (loud vs. soft confusion) – singing, pitch matching
10. The issue of fingerboard tapes – pitch manipulation/slides
11. Pitch names vs. finger numbers vs. solfege
12. 4/4 Time – Duple subdivision (repeated eighths then moving eighths)
13. Quarter/eighth, half, dotted-half, whole – Suzuki: short-to-long – opposite of band
14. Dynamic Awareness (loud, soft) – 3 determinants: bow weight, speed, placement
15. Detache, marcato, staccato, legato
16. Modified symbol system
17. D-Ladder, A-Ladder → D Major (why start in D?) – then G, C, F, A, Bb, etc.
18. String crossings
19. Bass shifting vs. Alternatives (folding the octave, George Vance/Suzuki)
20. Developing finger pattern recognition – Scales, Arpeggios, Thirds, larger intervals
21. Learning tunes aurally
22. Musical Independence – Solo/Accompaniment roles
23. Music Reading (staff notation) – based upon already-known concepts now applied to symbology
24. Rests – Quarter, half, 3-beat, whole, eighth
25. Modified dynamic awareness (*mp*, *mf*)
26. Hooks and Slurs
27. Dotted-half notes
28. Ties
29. Left-hand pizz – 4th finger for violin/viola
30. Swing
31. Double-stops – an issue of the right elbow
32. Sophisticated dynamic awareness – crescendo, diminuendo, accents,
33. Sophisticated time awareness – accelerando, ritard, tenuto, fermata
34. Road map issues – including repeats, D.S., D.C., coda, etc.
35. E-ladder, C-ladder – avoidance of extensions
36. Eighth rest, eighth-quarter-eighth syncopation
37. Dotted-quarter/eighth
38. Natural signs (F-natural)
39. Backward extensions – preparatory to forward extensions

Intermediate Skills/Issues Priority Order (heterogeneous class setting – based on *String Explorer* skill sequence)

****Assumes that basic skills are in place, and can be continuously refined

1. Vibrato (continuously refined)
2. Harmonics
3. Tuning
4. Repeated 16th notes, moving 16th notes
5. A-Major (forward extensions), Bb major, harmonic minor scales and keys
6. Sophisticated extension of dynamic expression (*ff*, *pp*, *sfz*, *subito*)
7. Tremolo
8. 6/8 time signature
9. Shifting – 3rd position (violin, viola, cello), 4th position (cello), 5th position (bass)

For details describing this sequence, see “Skill Sequence Chart” in the Teacher’s Manual for *String Explorer Book I* and *String Explorer Book II* (pp. 12-13), by Andrew H. Dabczynski, Richard Meyer, and Bob Phillips, published by Alfred Publishing Company.

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