

**Not Anointed by Rosin, No Problem:**

**Thriving in the Orchestra Classroom as  
a Non-String Player**

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*Perry Holbrook – Walton High School*

*Artistic Director of Orchestras*



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**I. The Ongoing Need for Teachers in the Orchestra Classroom: what, a guaranteed job in music?**

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A. National shortage of qualified string educators

B. Growth of string programs nationwide

C. The prevalence of hiring non-string players

D. Smaller programs and schools hiring one teacher for both band and orchestra

E. Obvious conclusion: non-string players will continue to be a part of the field



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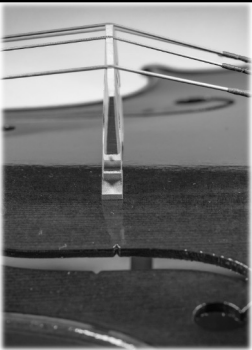
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**II. My Journey into String Education**

A. From trumpet performance to orchestra—30 years in 4 minutes and 33 seconds

- Jr. High – trumpet player, bluegrass guitar
- Orchestra/Band Structure, picked up bass
- Majored in Trumpet Performance 3 degrees, professional orchestra experience
- Taught Youth Symphony in Rochester, Minnesota
- Army Band to pay off student loans
- Let's teach! Student taught at Lassiter HS under Alfred Watkins
- Fork in the road, band or orchestra job?
- Began career at Chattahoochee HS and Riverwood HS



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## II. My Journey into String Education

### B. The 2005 Midwest Clinic and my Jacqueline Dillon moment

- A bit about Jacqueline Dillon
  - Legend of the field
  - Architect of string programs in Kansas and Oklahoma
  - Most non string players in field lack a mentor – find one!




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## III. Establishing Effective Warm-Up Routines

### A. It's not band! What makes an effective orchestra warm-up routine?

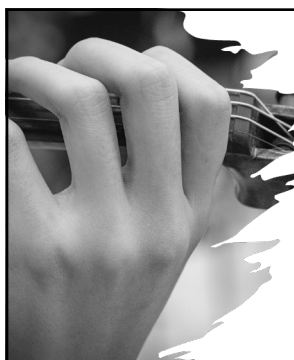
- Work out of a method book, so many good ones are available
- Blend of Left Hand/Right Hand Skills - Michael Allen Daily Warmup
- Perform Routine with metronome. You will be changing strings, signing passes, any number of myriad things
- Write your own. My Portato example

### B. About those finger patterns: the purpose of scales in the orchestra classroom

### C. Lessons from being a Suzuki dad—posture, bow hold, and setup

### D. Pedagogical essentials for different grade levels

### E. Separating left- and right-hand technique




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## IV. Selecting the Right Repertoire: There are Odd Things Out There!

- Choosing well-edited works
- Navigating educational string literature
- No fear: programming for evaluation




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## V. An Introduction to Score and Part Preparation for Strings

### A. Students need a well-marked part

- Professional parts are meticulously marked
- Advanced high school: Marked parts save time
- Middle school/9<sup>th</sup> grade level – Do you want to teach marking or techniques?




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## V. An Introduction to Score and Part Preparation for Strings

### B. Mark bowings, fingerings/shifts, extensions, bow placement, and more

- Small number above note for fingering, - for a shift
- Roman numeral under note denotes string used or position
- Don't over mark, cluttered parts aren't helpful

### C. Bowings should be consistent through orchestra




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## V. An Introduction to Score and Part Preparation for Strings

### D. Directors need a well-marked score

- Score marking is very personal
- Make sure to include markings from parts
- My markings, general and string specific




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## VI. Learning a String Instrument as a Non-String Player

- Don't worry if you aren't Hilary Hahn, virtuosity isn't required—just familiarity
- What YOU should practice
- Faking it until you make it, demonstrating as a non-string player
- Join a community orchestra for hands-on experience
- Play through your repertoire—even if you are awful




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## VII. Stolen Moments: What to take from Band into your Classroom

- Rehearsal Culture
- Be a part of school culture
- Empowered Student Officers
- Booster Groups
- Social Events
- Rhythmic Emphasis




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## VIII. Lifelong Learning and Professional Development

- A. Stay curious and engaged
- B. Expanding your teaching toolkit—resources for growth
  - Conferences
  - Performances
  - Be Patient
  - You will improve




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### IX. Final Thoughts and Practical Advice

- A. Build relationships with string player colleagues
- B. Connect with a trusted luthier or repair specialist
- C. Avoid isolation—stay connected with the string education community
- D. Welcome to wonderland, the music is amazing!

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### Contact Information

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*Dr. Perry Holbrook – Artistic Director of Orchestras, AP Music Theory*

**Things you must know how to do before you start teaching:**

1. How to tune all instruments, by ear, with open fifths, with a tuner, harmonics, anticipate bad tuning days
2. How to change strings on all instruments, how to wind, change one at a time
3. How to diagnose repair issues that need a luthier:  
open seams, fingerboard issues, cracks, endpins, soundposts, bow rehairs
4. How to put up a bridge that has fallen (if soundpost is still in place)
5. How to size a student for an instrument
6. How to reattach chin rest

**Things you must know how to teach**

**Before the first class, must teach items:**

1. How to open case correctly - How to pack up
2. What items students cannot touch (bridge, bow hair, pegs)
3. How to hold instrument in rest position
4. How to carry instrument when out of the case (esp important for low strings w/ 1 hand on neck and one on c bout)

**Daily class procedures that must be taught:**

1. How to walk in the room
2. How rehearsal starts
3. How to raise your hand
4. What to do if something breaks
5. how to tune (procedure based on level)

**Daily care items that must be taught to students:**

1. Loosen bow (+ how much to tighten)
2. Wipe off rosin
3. Retract endpin
4. Avoid putting instrument in extreme weather, especially cars
5. Use your case
6. How to use/adjust rock stop
7. Don't use rando cleaners on the wood

**Information for parents**

1. All of the above
2. Reinforce above daily care items
3. No "home" repairs!



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Resource List:

State Repertoire Lists

Texas “UIL”, New York, Virginia, Ohio, Georgia

Facebook – School Orchestra and String Teachers, started by Dr. Gail Barnes

American String Teachers Association (ASTA)

Midwest Clinic (keep coming back!)

Texas Orchestra Directors Association Convention

National Association for Music Education (NAfME)

The Orchestra Teacher Podcast, Charles Laux

String Teacher Workshop at “The” Ohio State University, Dr. Heather Lofdahl

The Art of String Teaching, Michael Hopkins

Strategies for Teaching Strings: Building a Successful String and Orchestra Program,  
Donald Hamann and Robert Gillespie

How to Design and Teach a Successful School String and Orchestra Program, Jacquelyn  
Dillon-Krass

Orchestra Bowings and Routines, Elizabeth Green

Teaching Music through Performance in Orchestra, David Littrell and Laura Reed Racine

Basics, Simon Fischer