String Players vs. Rhythm: Let the Battle Begin!

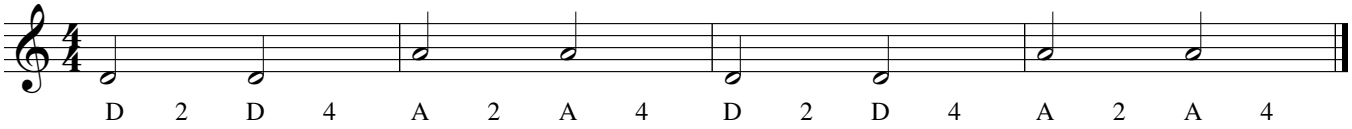
Jeremy Woolstenhulme • The 2012 Midwest Clinic

But wait! There's no time for a battle today… or tomorrow.
String players have the perfect equipment and strong voices to create a rhythmically strong team. Add to it a wealth of great teaching tips and games to make them confident rhythmic readers and counters. Soon, you'll have a winning collaboration that will quickly catapult them into more advanced learning and literature.

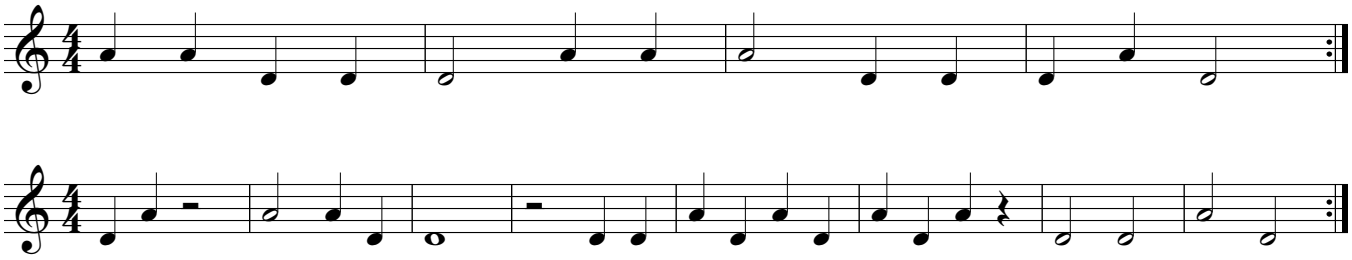
Rhythm is the first step in establishing the basic needs of the orchestra.
A right note in the wrong place is still a wrong note.

I. Rhythm with Beginners

A. Pulse: Show students how to count through the note.

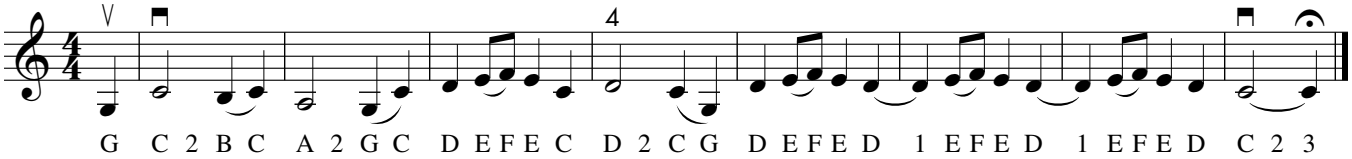


B. Note values: Use different note values and rests early in the year—it works!

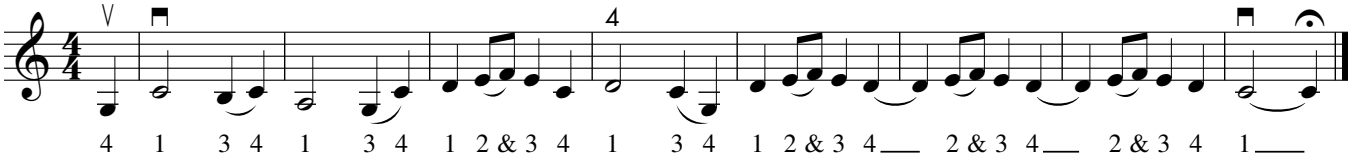


C. Note Name System with Numbers vs. Number System (Only Numbers).

1. Note Name System with Numbers (Example: "Symphony No. 1 (Brahms) - *1st Movement*)



2. Number System (Only Numbers)



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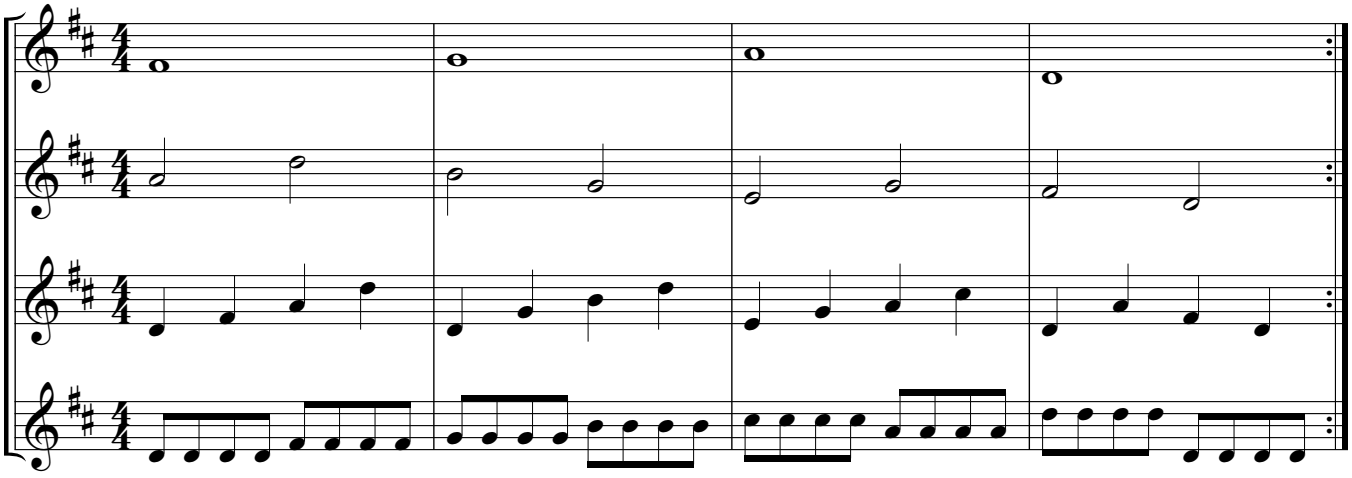
D. Relationships between long and shorter valued notes



II. Counting Systems

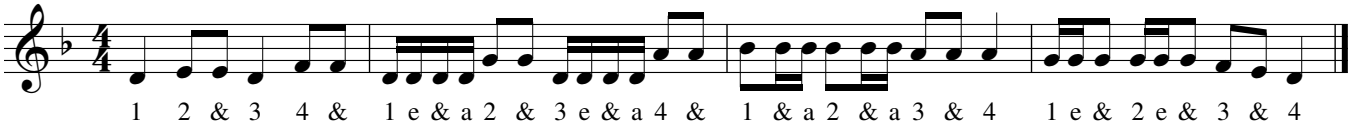
A. Count aloud everyday choose new lines of music to count—comparable to a sight reading experience.

B. Use different counting systems. Why not?

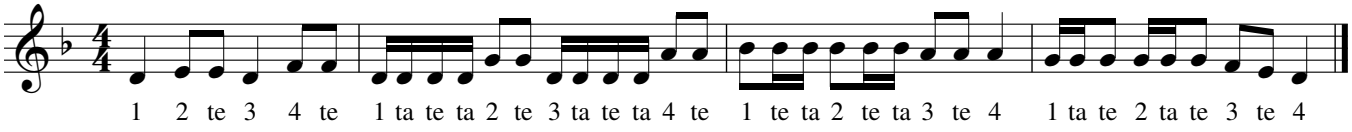
or

C. Use a single counting system that works for you and the age and/or sophistication of your class.

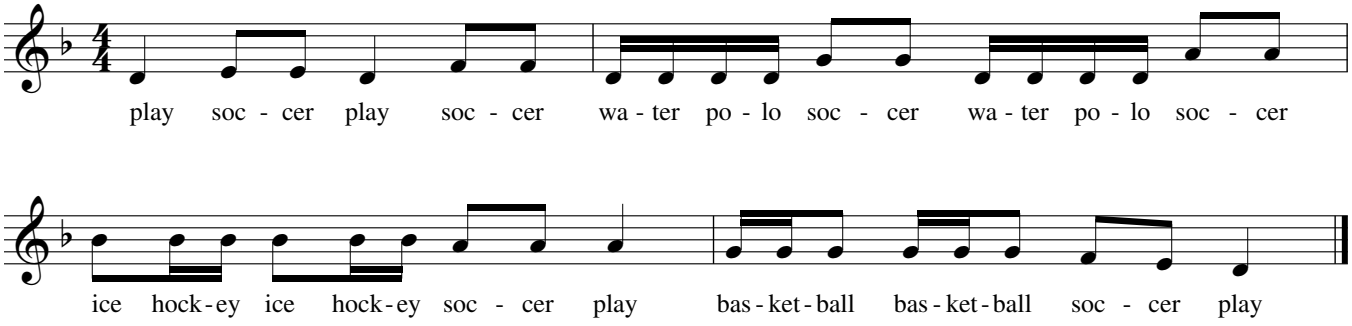
1. Traditional System using "one-ee-and-uh"



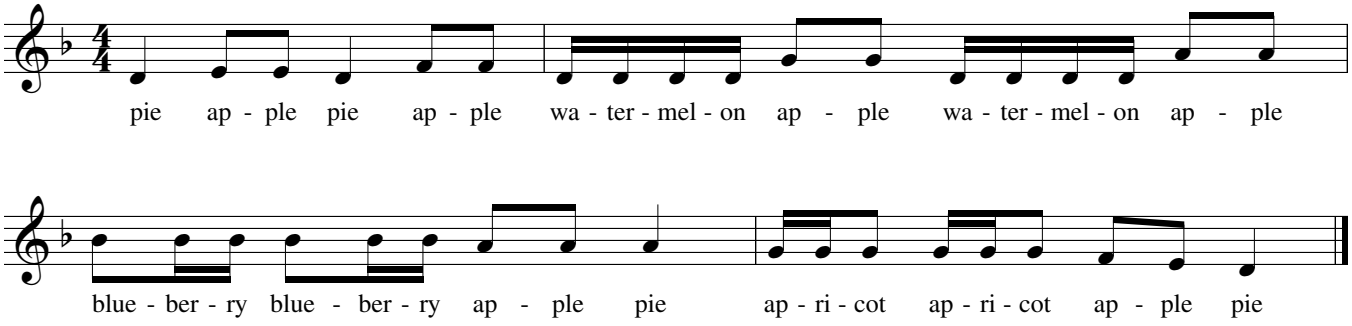
2. "Eastman" Counting System



3. Word Association Counting: Sports Theme

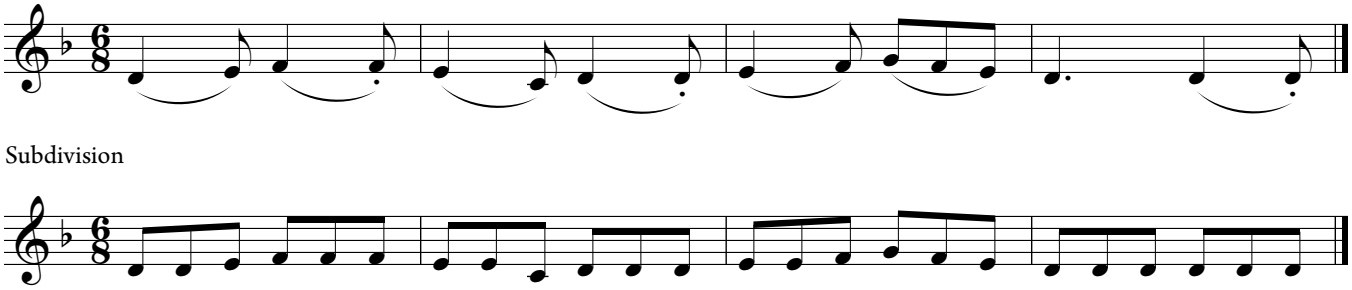


4. Word Association Counting: Food Theme

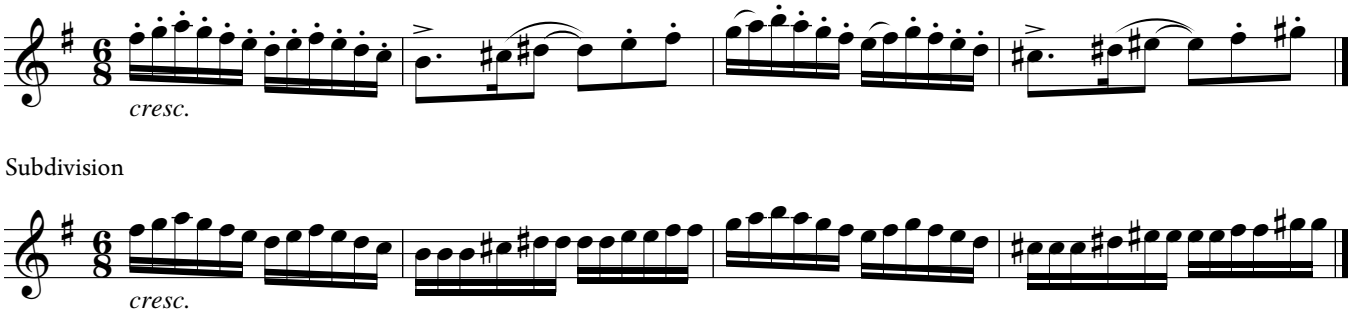


D. Incorporate subdividing as part of your counting system because it helps students understand musical time.

1. Example: "St. Paul's Suite" (Holst) – *Jig*



2. Example: "Serenade for Strings" (Tchaikovsky) – *1st Movement*



III. Rhythm Dictation

A. Rhythm of the Day: It only takes a few minutes.

B. Dictation: Learn it backwards!

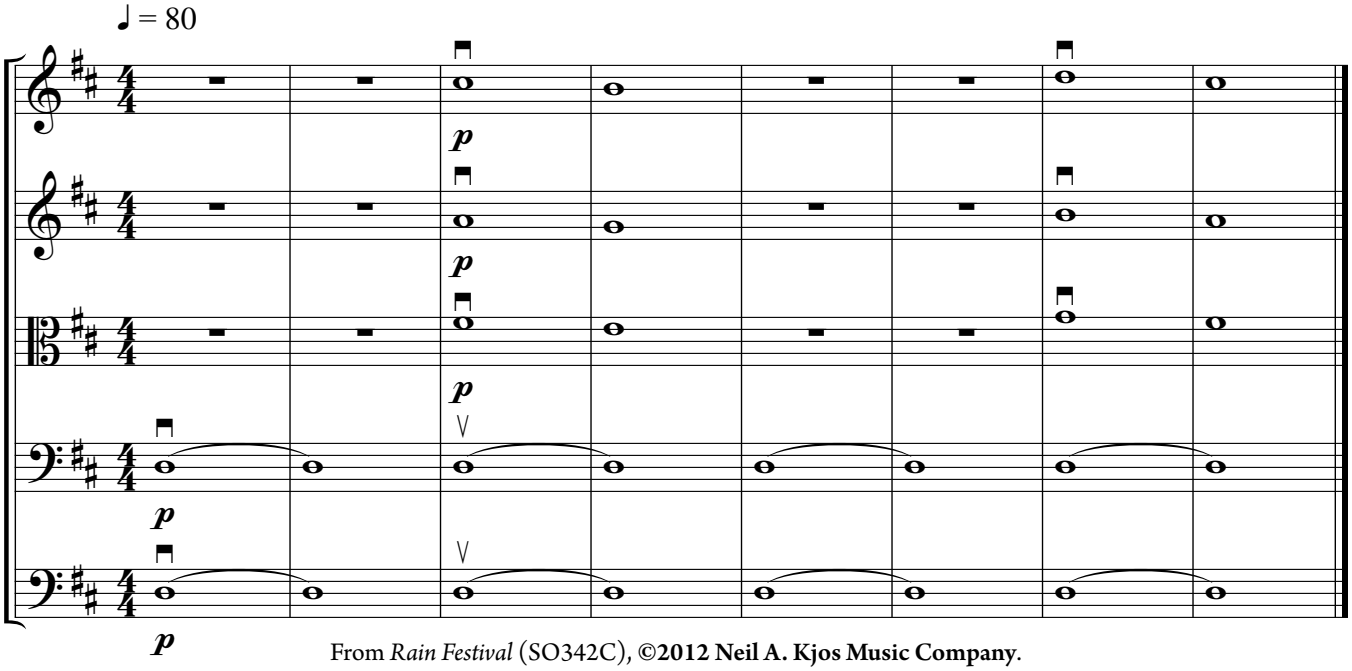
C. Writing: Taking dictation helps students to be better listeners and readers.

(see page 7 for rhythm dictation sample)

IV. Strategies to Strengthen Weak Rhythm Readers

A. Challenge #1: Students must count silently to themselves, especially during rests or long valued notes!

Rain Festival Jeremy Woolstenhulme



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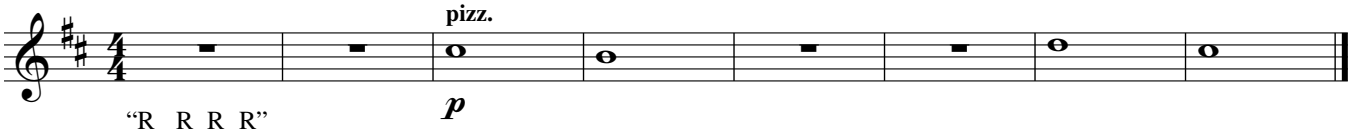
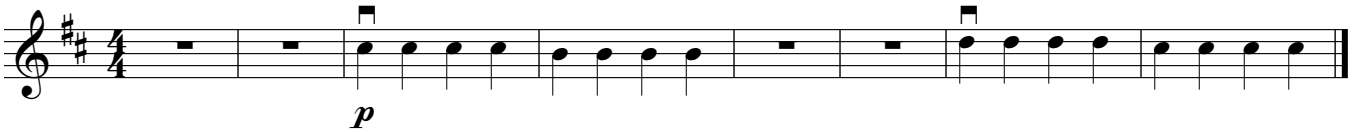
1. Pizzicato is a great tool to fix rhythm problems



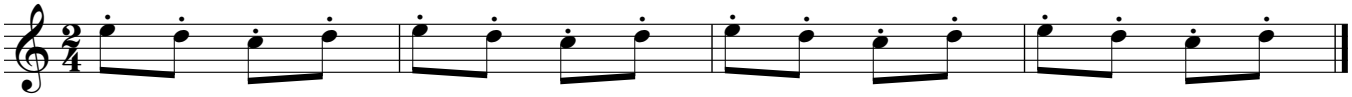
2. Subdividing will assist towards accurate counting and steady pulse



B. Challenge #2: Avoid the tendency to mimic what they hear.

C. Challenge #3: Strengthen bow skills that otherwise hamper ability to coordinate note lengths with bow usage/bow speed.

1. Example: St. Paul's Suite (Holst) – *Ostinato* – 2nd Violin



V. Page to Stage: Assess and Apply Knowledge of Rhythm.

A. Teach music through math *and* visa versa!

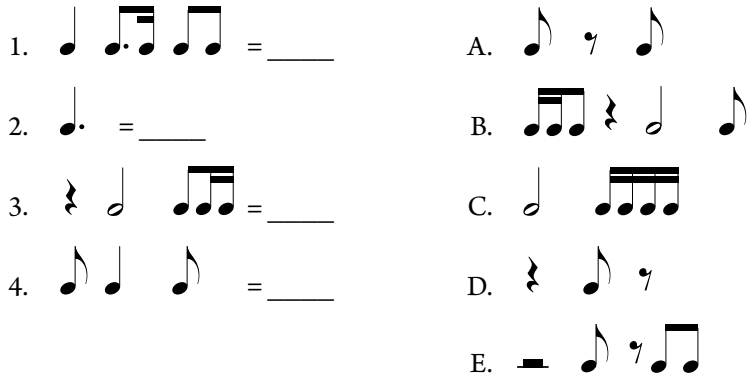
Examples

Complete the equations:

Write in the bar lines:

Write in the note(s) or rest(s) to complete the equation:

Match the rhythms to complete the equations. Four letters will be used only once, and one letter will not be used at all.



B. Bring basic composition to students' musical experience by having them compose and perform their own rhythm lines.

From *String Basics, Steps to Success for String Orchestra, Book 1—Teacher's Edition*, page 395 (115F)

Compose a rhythm line that has repeated patterns and different patterns so it is both predictable and interesting. Use quarter notes, eighth notes, and half notes. Be sure the rhythm comes to rest in the last measure so it has a sense of "the end."

Play your rhythm line on an open string. Can you hear the repeated and different patterns? Listen and make revisions until you like how it sounds.

Composition Checklist

- ❏ One or more quarter notes
- ❏ One or more pairs of eighth notes
- ❏ One or more half notes
- ❏ Each measure has exactly 2 beats
- ❏ Notes are drawn correctly
- ❏ Last measure feels like "the end"

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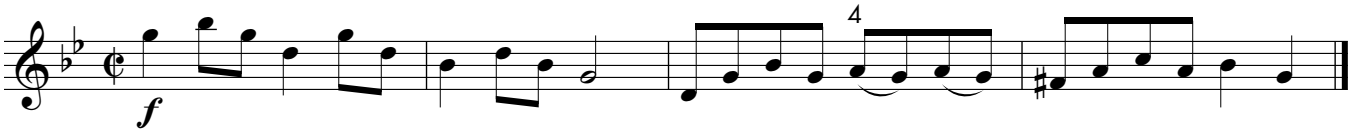
VI. Rhythmic Precision as an Ensemble

A. Bow usage/strokes affect rhythmic cohesiveness and precision.

1. Watching and copying others bow usage.
2. Insist upon the *top secret* "one inch" rule.

B. Use the baton and encourage eye contact.

1. Conduct phrases or passages differently forcing players to look up and watch.
2. Teach games students can do while following the baton.



From *Badinerie*, J. S. Bach/ arr. Woolstenhulme (SO305C), **©2012 Neil A. Kjos Music Company**.
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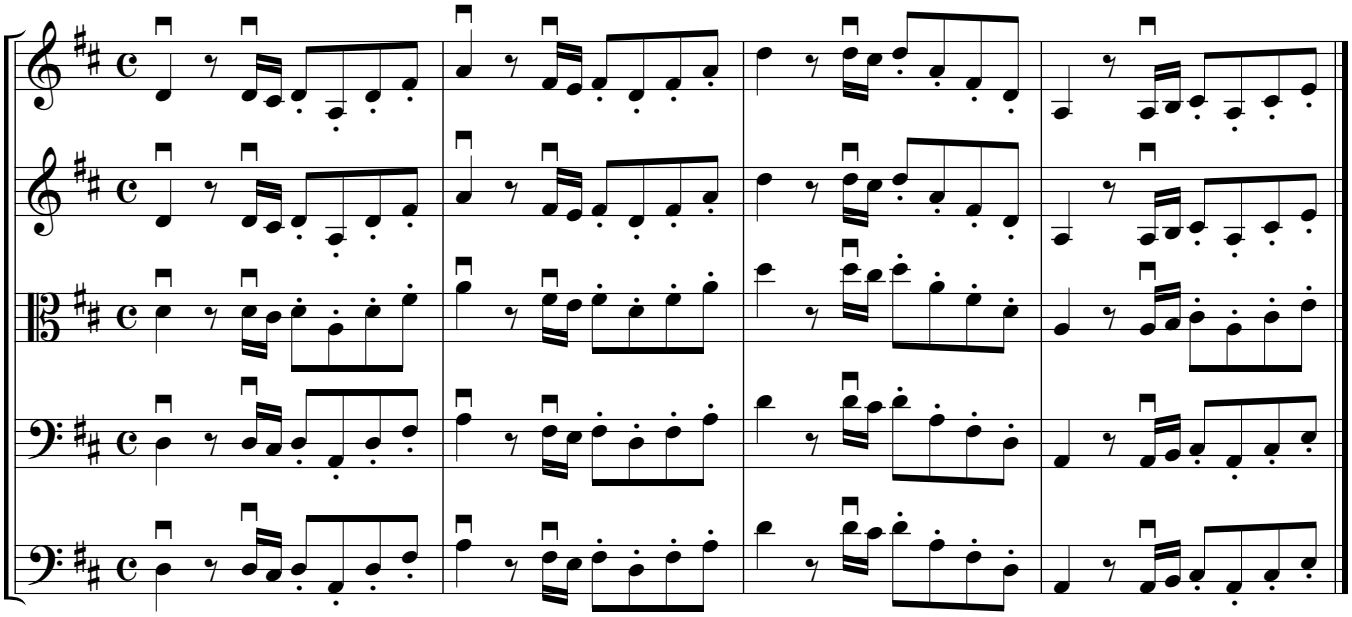

From *Symphony No. 13 in D Major – 1st Movement*, Haydn/arr. LaJoie (SO318C), **©2012 Neil A. Kjos Music Company**.
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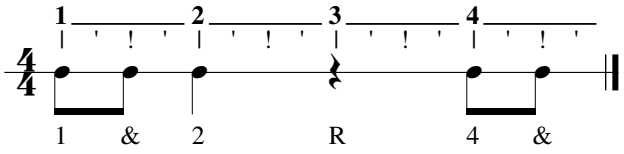
SAMPLE

Rhythm of the Day

Week 11

Eighth Notes

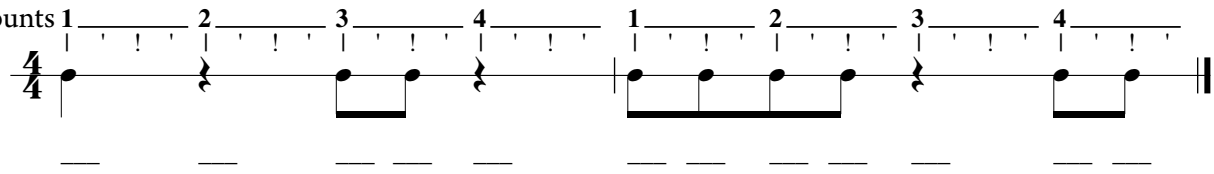


On Every Line:

1. Write the notes & counts.
2. Count the line out loud.
3. Perform the line on a single pitch.

Write counts

51



Write notes

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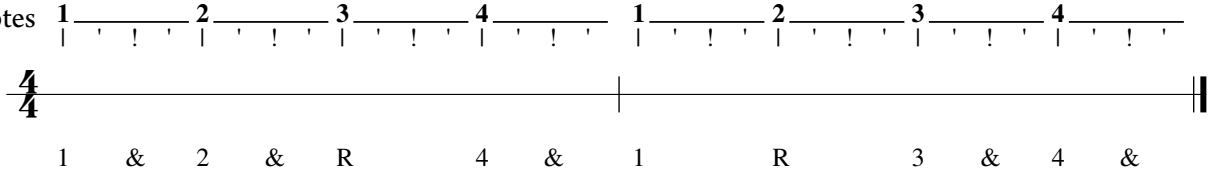

Rhythm Dictation

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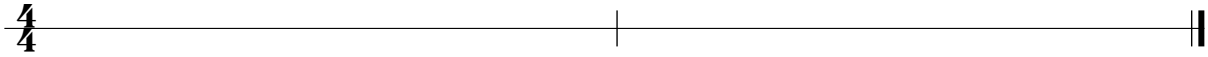

Rhythm Dictation

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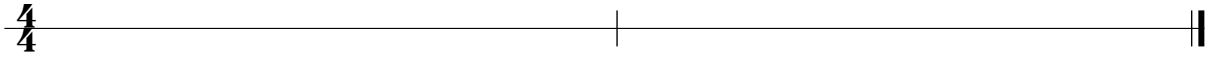

Rhythm Dictation

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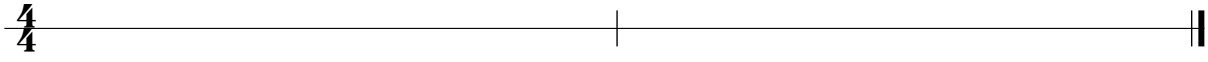

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Jeremy Woolstenhulme received his Bachelor of Music Education degree from Brigham Young University in 2000, and a Master of Arts degree in cello performance from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas in 2005.

Currently serving as the orchestra director at Hyde Park Middle School in the Clark County School District of Las Vegas, Nevada, Mr. Woolstenhulme teaches 400 students daily. His orchestra was selected to play at the 2008 Midwest Clinic, and in 2010 and 2011, at the National ASTA Conference. He has traveled with his orchestras to London, Washington, D.C., Boston, San Diego, New York, and Orlando. In 2011, he was guest conductor for the Queensland Honor Orchestra at Griffith University in Brisbane, Australia. Also in 2011, he received a "Teacher of the Game" award presented by the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, MGM Resorts, Channel 8 News, and the Clark County School District.

Mr. Woolstenhulme is a commissioned and published composer with a number of works to his credit. He is also co-author with Terry Shade and Wendy Barden of *String Basics*, a comprehensive string method curriculum. Included in the *String Basics* curriculum is his popular *Steps to Successful Ensembles,* a collection of elementary-level ensemble pieces.

As a performer, Jeremy Woolstenhulme is a contract cellist in the Las Vegas Philharmonic. He is also a member of the Seasons String Quartet and also performs as a freelance musician at many entertainment venues in Las Vegas. He and his wife, Taryn, live in Las Vegas with their three children, Cadence Belle, Coda Blake, and Canon Thomas.