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Tempo, Time & Tumult: Solutions for Rhythm Issues for Musicians

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Musicians tend to have rhythm issues...

- **when we stop moving while we play**
When we move in a consistent regular way, rhythm tends to be stable.
Ex. Issues involving long notes, rests, and ties all involve lack of motion.
- **when we lack internalization of subdivision**
Causes include a lack of intellectual understanding or a lack of aural processing skills.
- **when we read or play irregular or uneven patterns**
Ex. Trouble spots include syncopation, dotted rhythms, meters other than 2 and 4, meters in uncommon tempi and changing meters.
- **when we are faced with certain technical issues**
Ex. In string playing, spiccato, ricochet, shifting, string crossings, hooked bowings etc. are techniques that can affect rhythm.
- **when we need to multi-process or focus on many things at once**
Our primary mental focus is on our playing. We must be trained to process several things at one in order to be aware of and be able to respond rhythm issues.
- **when we lack awareness of ourselves or our ensemble**
- **when we lack reactive skills based on aural input as we play**
- **when we are faced with issues with the music notation system**
Ex. A dotted half note in 4/4 and in compound meter is visually the same symbol.
While mathematically they are equal, in terms of rhythmic execution or “feel” they are not.
- **when we are either mentally or physically fatigued**
When we lack focus, we tend to default to most our common trained response.
We often change tempo when playing repetitive rhythms.
Tempo is dramatically affected by our emotional or physiological state.

Solutions include

- understanding and acknowledgement of the above issues
- multi-processing instruction from beginning instruction
- sequenced instruction in multiple counting systems
- sequenced training in subdivision processes and aural skills
- sequenced instruction in use of the metronome
- teaching sequences that address visual challenges of the notation system
- teaching sequences that intentionally and sequentially address the above issues

Reminders:

1. Consider beat, rhythm, subdivision, tempo & time in terms in rhythm instruction.
2. First speak, then move, then play when addressing rhythm issues.
3. Separate the skills of accurate rhythmic performance and rhythm sight reading skills.
4. Consider time and tempo concepts and later historical genre when teaching rhythms.
5. Understand the importance of reactive aural and playing skills in regards to rhythmic performance.
5. Always think and play musically when practicing rhythm issues.

Consider

Teaching Multiple Counting Systems

1. *Language-based Counting System (Counting by familiar words and language)*

2. *Single beat/Single Unit Counting System (Counting by a single beat or rhythmic unit)*

Consider the concept of "Spot Counting"

3. *Meter based Numerical System (Traditional numbered counting by measure)*

Metered counting requires an additional skill layer of processing than other systems and thus is more difficult for many people. The intellectual comprehension of this system is different than the practical application of it.

Focus on Ongoing Subdivision Training in Different Meter and at Different Tempi

The internalization of the beat and its subdivision is crucial in rhythmic and musical performance.

Ex. Changes - Play rhythms in unison and change on verbal or visual cue.

Switches - Assign rhythms to different players or sections. Switch on verbal cue.

Canons - Play down a list of rhythms "in canon". Play from visual or from memory.

Understand the Importance and Limits of Training with a Metronome

What is the metronome for? It is a ...

- Reference for a specific chosen tempo (Physiological understanding of influence)
- Tool to develop ability to maintain a steady internal pulse and understanding of subdivision
- Tool for developing performance ability at increasing and decreasing speeds

Including development of muscle memory and control at different speeds

And strength training for the 'small muscle' athlete

In demand as a clinician, lecturer and conductor, Winifred Crock has lectured at numerous music conferences including the Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic, SAA, ASTA, NAFME conferences. She has been the featured string clinician at universities, conferences and institutes in over 20 states and abroad. She has served on national committees for the SAA and for ASTA. She is a registered teacher trainer for the SAA and is a certified Kodaly instructor.

Winifred Crock was the Director of Orchestras at Parkway Central High School for twenty-five years and has maintained a private violin studio in suburban St. Louis, Missouri for far longer. During her tenure, the Parkway Central High Music Department was awarded GRAMMY Gold Signature school status as one of the top high school music departments in the country. Mrs. Crock has been named the Missouri ASTA Private Studio Teacher of the Year, the Missouri ASTA Secondary String Teacher of the Year, the St. Louis Symphony Educator of the Year, the St. Louis Arts Educator Award, a Singer Prize recipient for Excellence in Secondary Teaching, the NFHA Outstanding Music Educator of the Midwest, and the 2014 ASTA Elizabeth Green National School Educator.

Mrs. Crock's publications include the [Pattern Play for Strings Series: A Sequential Introduction to Reading Music](http://www.patternplaystrings.com), Forrester Press (www.patternplaystrings.com) and with Laurie Scott and William Dick [Learning Together Volume 1 & 2: Sequential Repertoire for Solo Strings or String Ensemble](#), Alfred Music. A new volume in the Pattern Play for String Series, [Rhythm Play](#), will be released soon.