

## 2023 Midwest Presentation

How to use chamber ensembles to enhance your band or orchestra.

In the process of selecting your symphonic music, look at the same time for chamber ensembles (flute trios, woodwind quintets, brass trios etc.) that will support and enhance the basic fundamentals of the concert/contest selections. This process can take-in any and all aspects of teaching fundamental musicianship: rhythms, harmonies, chord movement, direction of motif (motival) patterns, accompaniment, style, composer etc. NOTE: Obviously this can and should be applied to every concert work you perform or even read.

Small ensembles are more intimate and allow each member to be a soloist and star. I am sure this is not an original concept. It came to me back in the early when I was teaching in East Texas. We were working on Grundman's Fantasy on American Sailing Songs. In a rehearsal of a clarinet quartet one of my students said, "Hey, this sounds like the cat food commercial" and she started singing meow meow meow meow, meow meow meow meow.... We all laughed and a few minutes later it hit me that it really didn't sound like the cat food commercial but like the Grundman. However, it was a series of 8<sup>th</sup> notes like the introduction of the cat food commercial and the Fantasy. So, I pointed this out and then we all started looking for other similarities – and found them! That was some 50 years ago and from that point I started looking for small ensembles that I could use as reference points to bring the symphonic music (and reverse – tie the two together in both rehearsals) together so I am teaching the exact same point and concept.

### **Rehearsing the chamber ensemble and connecting it to the symphonic work(s).**

Teaching balance with a small ensemble (or an ensemble smaller than your symphonic performing band or orchestra) is obviously simpler than teach 60 or more students. With your small ensemble, take the time to stop and "play" with the balance to demonstrate to the student how lack of balance effects the intent of the composer.

Equally, teaching intonation (or intonation problems) are more obvious in a trio than in a full band. Of course, this assumes that the students have been taught how to match pitch and the band/orchestra uses a daily warm-up that involves pitch

matching exercises. Matching pitch **MUST BE TAUGHT**. Again, you can “play” with the intonation the same as with balance, allowing the student to hear chords in and out of tune.

**NOTE:** You will never be able to correctly balance a chord if the pitch is not correct.

Look for simple similarities between the symphonic work and chamber work. If there is a passage in unison using the same instrumentation – ex. Octaves in the flute, oboe, clarinet – take the time to stop the rehearsal, if the intonation is bad, you should point out that “in the woodwind quintet in yesterday’s rehearsal the pitch was perfect,” **AND** ask the students to apply the same ability and concentration as they did with the small ensemble. **OF COURSE**, not everyone in the band is in the woodwind quintet, however, it is an opportunity to use the small group to demonstrate the passage in the full ensemble rehearsal. **YES, IT TAKES TIME, HOWEVER, THE BENEFIT IS WORTH THE TIME. NO, IT IS NOT A ONCE OFF OR OVERNIGHT FIX.** It takes consistency and repetition.

The goal is to “kill two birds with one stone” and use every possible opportunity to connect everything the band/orchestra does: daily warm-up, section rehearsals, rehearsals for solo and ensemble contest (chamber music), full symphonic rehearsal – even references to a marching band rehearsal or performance or a previous symphonic concert or contest. **MAKE EVERYTHING YOU DO RELATED TO THE FUNDAMENTALS THAT YOU ARE TEACHING IN EVERY REHEARSAL AND EVERY OPPORTUNITY.**

At this point, I can hear you thinking, “when will I have time to do this?” Fact is, once you establish this procedure and musical connections, your students will start to automatically make the connections. If you make this a “way of rehearsing everything” your students will become actively involved in trying to find connections!

Finding the music.

The better you know your state solo ensemble list the easier finding works will be. **OR**, here is an idea, go the extra step and invite composers to write chamber music for your band that will be, in some musical way, connected with your symphonic concert/contest selections. **THIS** way, you give your students a much more intense learning process. Think of the options! You can bring the composers into your rehearsals – even if only on Zoom. **OR**, you could have a student composer write

something for you... maybe go to your local university and invite composition majors to write music for you. If I remember correctly, as a student composer, I would have jumped at the opportunity to have my music played. Of course, if you want to only confine your selections to your state performance list, this would not be very effective.

But here is an idea, why not make chamber music/ensembles part of your performance series? I would use small groups to perform in the entrance area to the auditorium before every concert. This would even include the beginner band concert. We used a tryout or merit system to select various beginners to do trios and quartets before the concert.

In other words – we are indoctrinating them into understanding the importance of chamber music and how to relate it to the “over all concert experience”. From the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, my students were taught the connection between the two! It became an honor to be selected to perform in a “pre-concert” ensemble.

So, let’s look and listen to examples. For THIS workshop, as a composer, I wanted the students to have the experience of not only learning works that relate to the symphonic works but to have the experience of doing a world premiere performance, work with (and possibly meet) a living composer and understand the creative process.

I asked 4 composers to write an ensemble using 4 standard symphonic works from the Texas UIL performance list.

The composers invited were:

Éloïse Daoust (French Canadian)

Kennith Booker (American)

Gabe Musella (American)

Amaury Léon Sosa (Mexican)

The symphonic Works selected were:

**Grundman - Fantasy on American Sailing Songs** (Woodwind Quintet) - **Éloïse Daoust**

**Reed – A Festival Prelude** (Brass quartet) – **Amaury Léon Sosa**

**Smith - Sonus Ventorum** (Clarinet Quartet) – **Dr. Kenneth Booker**

## **Carter – Overture For Winds (Flute Trio) – Gabe Musella**

**Composer Gabe Musella** – chose to use direct quotes from Charles Carter. This clearly shows the advantage of commissioning a work.

The band will perform rehearsal letter “F” (ms. 100 through 109) then perform rehearsal letter “E” (ms. 75 through 83).

Those two passages are the essence of the Carter and the Musella works. **The Flute trio will now perform Rondo-Fantasia on Themes by Charles Carter.** I think you will clearly hear the connections.

### **Reed – A Festival Prelude (Brass Quartet)**

**Composer Amaury León Sosa** (from Merida, Yucatan), will use a combination of chords, rhythmic and melodic material, using the same DIRECT approach as the previous trio.

**Band will play measure 1 of Reed’s A Festival Prelude** (only the opening 2 chords). Now here is the opening measure of the work by Amaury León Sosa titled “A Paraphrase of Reed”

(Band and brass quartet perform ms. 1.)

Immediately following the first chord composer León Sosa uses the triplet pattern from the Reed work. Throughout the brass quartet you will hear the dotted 1/8 – 1/16 rhythm used by Reed, as well as the triplet movement in the melodic line. As the Reed Prelude draws to an end, he uses a very strong syncopated chord rhythm (measure 72) and, of course, composer León Sosa applies this to his work close to the end in measure 90.

**LIKE THE FLUTE TRIO, THE COMPOSERS CHOSE TO BE VERY DIRECT AND THIS MAKES IT EASY FOR THE STUDENTS TO SOPT THE CONNECTIONS.**

Now, the brass quartet will perform Amaury León Sosa’s “A Paraphrase of Reed.”

### **Smith “Sonus Ventorum (Mixed Clarinet Quartet)**

Dr. Kenneth Booker used the shifting of 4/4 to 7/8 as the main similarity between the quartet and the symphonic work. Ex: 4 measures before rehearsal letter “A” to letter “B”. Those of you familiar with Smith’s Sonus Ventorum know that throughout the work, Smith uses the 7/8 as a “cadence” point. Dr. Booker does the same AND uses some of the basic rhythm patterns from Smith as well.

Here is the band performing from rehearsal letter “A” to rehearsal letter “B”.

Now, this work is not as “in-your-face” obvious as the previous two. However, you will clearly hear the connection. At this time the mixed clarinet quartet will perform Dr. Kenneth Booker’s “Modos Soni Ventorum”.

### **Grundman - Fantasy on American Sailing Songs (Woodwind Quintet)**

French Canadian composer **Éloïse Daoust** will use almost every rhythm and concept from the Grundman work, however, it will be so cleverly disguised that you will really need to see the score to make the connections! But they are all there from the very first trill in the flute.

With this ensemble, we will perform quintet first. So, listen to the textures, rhythms and chord development (8va usage). Here are a couple of places that I want to point out in the quintet.

Quintet:

Flute plays ms. 17

Then... Bassoon, clarinet and oboe play ms. 17 and 18

The Grundman work is well known for the 8va leaps. Composer **Éloïse Daoust** has several 8va leaps hidden throughout the work. Ex. Bassoon ms 54 then clarinet ms. 55 – there are many many more.

So, here is L’heureux matelot by French Canadian (16 year old) **Éloïse Daoust**.

**At this point the quintet performs and the band follows with a full performance and the clinic is over! Thanks to everyone.**

THE FOLLOWING 4 PAGES WILL BE THE COVERS OF EACH OF THE 4  
CHAMBER WORKS (ALL PUBLISHED BY ALRY PUBLICATIONS) AND A  
PHOTO AND SHORT BIO OF THE COMPOSERS.