

YOU, TOO, CAN BE A STRING TEACHER!

Dorothy Straub and Jeff Albright
Midwest Clinic 2009

A Band Director or non-string players can become a highly successful Orchestra Director. It's not that difficult.

Retool your skills as a musician. Learn to play the violin and then other orchestral string instruments.

WHEN?

The summer is a good time.

Weekly lessons during the school year

HOW?

Begin by learning to play the violin.

Then learn to play the cello, bass, and viola

Learn about string pedagogy as you learn to play the instrument.

Transfer those skills and knowledge to your students.

Find a String Mentor

Become familiar with string lesson materials

Become familiar with school orchestra music.

WHY?

There is a shortage of string and orchestra teachers.

Band Directors or Choral Directors may be needed to teach a String or Orchestra class in their school.

Teaching Orchestra is musically and personally rewarding.

Hear from someone who has changed his musical career to become a String and Orchestra teacher. Find out how he did it and why he loves it.

A Few Tips from Jeff:

Attitude! It's got to be fun!

Get a private teacher.

Hang out with string players

Is it the Chrysler Highway or the Kreisler Highway?

Shoulder rests

End pin straps

Rosin

Tuning

Play in a group

Basic skills for playing string instruments.

Holding the instrument:

Left hand set-up	Producing accurate pitches (intonation) no frets!
Right hand set-up	Producing a sound (tone quality)

Beginning sequence for skill development - violin

By rote, pizzicato each open string.

Find the 1st finger (a whole step) on the A string (B)

Play the first 2 bars of Twinkle – DDAABBA

Find the 1st finger on the other strings (Identify the pitch names.)

Place the first finger and find the 2nd finger on the D string (whole step) Add the 3rd finger, touching the 2nd finger. (half step)

Play the first half of the D Major scale. (4 times each) ascending

Play the same pattern on the A string. (the rest of the D major scale)

Play the D Major scale descending (4 times each)

Play the second phrase of Twinkle

Play the third phrase of Twinkle

Begin holding the bow - at the balance point (early bow hold)

With easy strokes, play each open string several times..

Play D Scale and Twinkle with early bow hold

Play G, and A Major scales (4 times each)

Begin reading music (new skill) in the method book

Combining three skills – left hand, right hand, reading music

Emphasis on reading.

Proceed in the lesson book, but

Continue to practice and refine scales and Twinkle

Introduce all new skills by rote.

Planning and organizing your string classes

By grade level

Like instrument classes or

All string instruments together as a String Orchestra (Use a method book)

Suggested repertoire for your first concert of Beginners

Unison, by rote, with piano accompaniment

Scales, repeated patterns

Twinkle

Melodies from the method book, with piano

Scales in rounds – playing in harmony

Teaching the Middle School or High School Orchestra

How to approach intermediate and advanced students who play better than you do.

SOME OF THE CHALLENGES

Tuning

So important, especially for beginning students
So different from Band – “A”, not “Bb”, 4 strings – not 1 pitch
How to tune 200 strings in 4 minutes

Bowing (rhymes with "mowing")

Down-bow and up-bow, but patterns can be complex
Two different rhythms - left hand and right hand
Don't ask students to "play without slurs."
Do practice the rhythm of each hand separately

- pizzicato in rhythm
- air bow in rhythm
- arco! - the two rhythms together

Don't think pieces in triple meter are easy.
DO look for music with "even bowing" to teach students to bow together as a section.

Dealing with advanced students. Keeping them involved (“This is too easy.”)
“I need you.” “I need your leadership” “Shift” to a challenging position

Dealing with broken strings, broken bridges, fallen sound posts

Instruments: What is a quality instrument? What is good or good enough for students?

RESOURCES:

MENC, The National Association for Music Education HYPERLINK
"http://www.menc.org" www.menc.org

ASTA HYPERLINK "http://www.astaweb.com" www.astaweb.com
National Conference, Atlanta, Georgia, March 18 - 21, 2010

*Summer Workshops: Listings in MENC and ASTA Journals
Eastern String Educators Workshop – Villanova University
July 18 – 23, 2010 www.music.villanova.edu

Teaching Music Through Performance in Orchestra – GIA, Volume I, II, III
HYPERLINK "http://www.giamusic.com" www.giamusic.com
Six chapters on important, practical topics
100 pieces for String Orchestra and Full Orchestra, Grades 1 – 6
Analysis, Historical information, Teaching strategies for each piece
CDs of Grade 1, 2, 3 selections

Dorothy Straub retired as K-12 Music Coordinator for the Fairfield, Connecticut Public Schools. She served as President of MENC from 1992 to 1994 and is currently a member of the Board of Directors of the Midwest

Clinic She is the conductor of the Concert Orchestra of the Greater Bridgeport Youth Orchestra and is a violist in the Greenwich Symphony and Greater Bridgeport Symphony. She is active as a string and orchestra clinician and workshop presenter for string education. (dastraub@aol.com)

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