

The 2009 Midwest Clinic

An International Band and Orchestra Conference
Chicago, IL

We All Perform on the Same Stage:
Improving the Ensemble Skills of
Your Secondary String Players

Joe Brennan, Clinician

Meeting Room W181
McCormack Place West Level 1
Wednesday, December 16, 2009
4:00-5:00 p.m.

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I. Goals in each rehearsal for each student: Skills vs. Content, and Ears vs. Fingers

- A. Develop basic ensemble characteristics
- B. Improve execution and understanding of specific instrument playing skills
- C. Improve ensemble listening skills
- D. Improve individual listening/practicing skills
- E. Improve interpretation of conducting skills

II. Basic Ensemble Characteristics

- A. Layout of the ensemble
- B. Rules of the rehearsal
- C. Responsibilities of each member

III. Ensemble listening skills vs. Individual listening skills

- A. Aural and Visual Awareness
- B. Judgments/Discernments
- C. Submitting and Integrating

IV. Rehearsal techniques

- A. Rhythm: right arm
 - 1. bow rhythm on open strings
 - 2. use of metronome
 - 3. counting system and/or rhythm syllables
 - 4. use of bar lines and beat 1
 - 5. reading right to left
 - 6. rhythm enharmonics

- B. Intonation: left hand
 - 1. melodic patterns
 - 2. tuning familiar intervals
 - 3. tuning to the bass line or common tones
 - 4. use of duets and trios
 - 5. use of a tuner or pedal notes
 - 6. enharmonics

C. Artistry: right arm

1. exploring the possibilities by manipulating
 - a. bow weight/energy
 - b. bow speed
 - c. bow contact point

2. understanding bow control for various effects
 - d. tone production
 - e. articulations
 - f. dynamics
 - g. phrasing
 - h. musical nuances and expressions

D. Conducting Interpretation Skills

1. relating conducting to the right arm; rhythm/tempo & artistry
2. understand the prep
3. increase awareness of upcoming musical units & peripheral vision
4. conducting with the metronome
5. conducting and varying the tempo with and without metronome
6. varying the artistry with and without conducting

VI. Other tools to assist with developing ensemble skills

- A. Technology: hardware & software
- B. Internet
- C. Recordings & YouTube - artistic references
- D. Supplemental Printed Materials
- E. Assessments
- F. Chamber groups

VII. Conclusion: Discussion & Questions

Quotes and Analogies to use in rehearsal

1. hear the beat with your eye
2. the umpire effect
3. rhythmic traction
4. the rain gutter effect
5. the metronome is your best friend
6. I am your best friend
7. the big truck on the highway
8. what you don't want to practice is
what you probably need to practice
the most
9. vocabulary words
10. just because you can play it by
yourself doesn't mean you can play it
with us
11. own the music or it will own you
12. that's the stuff!!
13. you and the beat
14. rhythm is like football
15. if you can't add, please don't take
away
16. stay in the piece
17. the posture checklist
18. if you have room in your brain
19. listen around the room & find
someone to listen to
20. sound filtering
21. execute by design, not by chance
22. get your brain in the room
23. intonation is like baseball
24. accuracy is your goal, not speed
25. speed is not your friend
26. train your brain
27. it's like bench-pressing
28. duet with the metronome
29. stay in the room
30. artistry is like synchronized swimming
31. marinate your brain
32. who's talking about you?

Listing of Items from this Session

Software

Audiation Assistant – from GIA
Tune Assistant – from GIA
Sibelius
PowerPoint
iBeat*
MetroGnome*
MetronomeX*

Hardware

Computer
Speakers
Document Camera
LCD Projector
Keyboard
Metronome
Tuner

*internet available freeware you can download from my website

Websites

www.practicespot.com
www.practicesightreading.com

Published Materials

Fine Tuning - Kjos
Variables – Kjos
String Techniques for Superior Musical Performance - Kjos
Orchestral Bowing – Alfred
Symphonic Rhythms & Scales – Claude T. Smith

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Clinic Synopsis:

"We all perform on the same stage" and "Just because you can play it by yourself, doesn't mean that you can play it with the rest of us". If these phrases apply to you and your students, then this session is for you. Learn ways to improve rhythmic accuracy, intonation, and artistic expression of string players in secondary ensembles. Give your students the skills necessary to participate more fully in the ensemble.

What will the audience take away from this clinic?

Rehearsal techniques, conducting gestures, use of technology, assessments, and chamber groups will be discussed. Rehearsal techniques demonstrated are rooted in the concepts of Music Learning Theory with the goal being that each student has an ownership of the musical content and skills necessary to perform better by design rather than by chance in any type of ensemble setting. Many of these rehearsal techniques can also be adapted for other types of instrumental, as well as, vocal ensembles.

Is there anything else you would like attendees to know about this clinic?

A hierarchy of musical skills and how they are manifested in the playing skills of an orchestral stringed instrument will be discussed. Musical examples are used to show how these skills are developed in each rehearsal.

Some personal thoughts on this session topic

I have always enjoyed making music, especially while I was growing up. What a treat it would be to play my violin along with my sister playing cello accompanied by my mom at the piano. It was fun; much more fun than playing by myself. It was a special time that occurred only when we were together. Now, I still enjoy the opportunities to play along with my family members and to feel the joy of making music together. I appreciate the fond memories, and am so grateful to have had the opportunity of making music with so many different people in so many different situations. The feelings of those situations cannot be put into words, since words would be limiting. It is for this reason, that I began to develop a way to teach my students skills so they could experience the tremendous fun of making music with others with the hope that they would carry remnants of those experiences with them for the rest of their lives. There are very few activities for students to join together in a collaborative, not competitive effort that can bring such a fun-filled and truly humanistic experience that transcends all ideological, social and cultural barriers. If group music making has been around since the beginning of man's recorded history, then it must be something powerful, meaningful, and necessary.

About Joe Brennan:

Joe is the director of the string program at Haverford Middle and High Schools, located in suburban Philadelphia; a position he has held for 24 years. He directs three orchestras at the secondary level and also teaches general music at the Middle School. While at Haverford, Joe has brought many string chamber ensembles and orchestras to perform at the Pennsylvania Music Educators Association (PMEA) annual state convention. The Haverford High School Orchestra has participated in a "Side-by-Side" rehearsal and performance with the Philadelphia Orchestra, as well as having represented the State of Pennsylvania by performing in ***America's 400th Anniversary***, a national event, with President Bush in attendance, to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the first permanent English settlement in the US, namely Jamestown. Prior to coming to Haverford, Joe taught a Suzuki program in Readington Twp. School District in New Jersey

Joe received his Bachelors and Masters degrees in Music Education from Temple University while studying violin with Julian Meyer. While at Temple University, Joe also participated in small ensembles on Trumpet.

Joe has presented sessions at past American String Teachers Association (ASTA) national conferences, Music Educators National Conference (MENC) conferences, PMEA Conferences, as well as an MENC sponsored string workshop at Temple University. In 2006, Joe was recognized by the PMEA with the Citation of Excellence Award. Joe has been a guest conductor for various Pennsylvania intermediate String Festivals.

Joe is the former music director, organist, and choir director at St. Pius X Church in Broomall, PA. He continually performs as a violinist and trumpeter throughout the Philadelphia area, especially for events throughout the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Joe sings regularly with the Chorale of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Hainesport. In addition, Joe is a former quartet singer and Music Specialist with the Wilmington chapter of Barbershop Harmony Society (BHS). Joe lives in Hainesport, New Jersey with his wife and children and enjoys doing many DIY homeowner projects. Since being a kidney donor, Joe, has been an advocate for organ donor awareness. Joe and his family reside in Hainesport, New Jersey.



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