

THE BRIDGE TO MUSICAL INDEPENDENCE *CONDUCTED SMALL ENSEMBLES*

A musically rich set of conducted chamber music exists for music teachers and conductors to develop in students musical independence, leadership abilities and both strength and sensitivity. At the same time, conductors themselves can improve their focus of gestures and subtlety of interpretive ideas.

What is conducted chamber music? It is about shared musical leadership. Music in which each musician plays an individual role but where there is also a role for a conductor to discreetly direct tempo and *rubato*, monitor balances and dynamics, and encourage articulation clarity while the music progresses. There is no set number which dictates when a piece stops being chamber music and becomes a conducted chamber ensemble. There are sextets which need a conductor and thirteen player ensembles which navigate music well without one.

What is a signal factor that determines whether the music is to be conducted? That the players need a minimal amount of external leadership to be free to express themselves. If they are concerned about staying together or making an entrance at the proper time, then their chances of true expression are low.

Conducted chamber music, when optimally approached:

Allows the musician playing to:

- create musical direction in the music with a minimum of conductor involvement
- be expressive in entrances and exits from the music by virtue of a conductor involved who provides security in these places
- experiments with *rubato* knowing that the conductor will help guide the rest of the ensemble through the changes in motion

Allows the conductor to:

- guide subtle changes of tempo and nuance with a minimum of gesture and effort
- explore spontaneous interpretive ideas
- respond to the ideas of players with a goal of creating a creative environment

What is the repertoire?

While there is a deep repertoire of great music, that which is playable by less experienced players is more limited. .

Is there a definitive source to find music? In just the past few years a wonderful and essential source has been produced by Rodney Winther; his comprehensive volume: *An Annotated Guide to Wind Chamber Music*". **2004 Warner Brothers; Miami Fl.** This exhaustive 450 page book lists music, publishers and rates difficulty.

The steps in incorporating this music into a band program:

- identify the players who are already leaders and who “carry” their sections in the larger ensemble, now might be the time to give them some freedom to lead the music, not just a section
- determine repertoire that fits the available players
 - if the repertoire doesn’t match personnel exactly, are instrument substitutions/arranging musically valid? Yes and no.....
(the history of composers being unwilling to consider re-arrangements versus those engaging enthusiastically in the practice is long and colorful. As Quantz puts it so enigmatically “and then there is the matter of taste.....” The best sources for creating instrumental substitutions are by master composers who have written their own *ossia* parts in pieces or where later editions have changed instrumentation, or where the composer has completely re-arranged music (e.g. Beethoven arranges his Second Symphony for piano trio.....)

- Set up individual or paired meetings in which the player(s) is led through the music with an individual approach:
 - independent musical approaches you wish to see them develop.
 - address the continuous playing and mental focus required
 - develop both solo dynamics and solo sound

- First rehearsal two possible approaches:
 - Set the ensemble in a semi-circle not in rows
 - Work the piece by duets pairings – start the process by having one musician play with *one* other player, then increase the number, finally tutti. By starting the process as a chamber music listening/individual approach, the student begins to think less as a follower/joiner and more of a leader.

- later rehearsal approaches
 - ask players to critique what they hear
 - ask players to determine the composer’s articulation styles (how short? how gentle?) dynamics (what is “piano” here?) how much rubato? The conductor has to LEAD direct this discussion with energy and skill

- conductor approaches:
 - small is not just beautiful, but essential here – prepare gestures that are refined, intimate and encourage musicians to mutually lead
 - **You still have to LEAD** - firmly set up the basics of tempo/energy and style/mood
 - after large sections of music are under way in rehearsal, the conductor should minimize/stop tempo maintenance and conduct phrases and smaller musical gestures – players will then take leadership roles through their own playing

Thoughts on today's repertoire:

Mendelssohn - *Notturmo* op. 24: *Music that becomes a larger band piece*

Written by a 16 year old Mendelssohn, this gem was written as “*harmoniemusik*”, an expanded wind octet with added flute, contrabassoon and trumpet. The band director will recognize this from the full band arrangement by Greissel. Mendelssohn himself added a number of extra instruments to total 27. Using the John Boyd edition, players could perform it as the *Notturmo* in one setting and those same people, could join the entire concert band in performing it at another time. Those small ensemble players bring the chamber experience to the larger group. Holst Military Suites employ the same smaller group OR larger group concept.

Jacob - *Old Wine in New Bottles*

This 12 player miniature classic employs folk like melodies, subtly colorful harmonies and is technically easier play. Separate movements allow for choices in how much music to perform.

Kukla – *Folksongs for Winds*

This octet sets folksongs from different origins (American, French, etc.) for an ob, cl, bsn, hn octet. Technically easy, tuneful and amiable music.

Washburn – *Concertino*

An opportunity for both brass and winds to play chamber music together. The two movements are set for woodwind and brass quintets, optimally played in a quasi-antiphonal set-up.

AN ABBREVIATED LIST OF PIECES OF MODERATE DIFFICULTY*

Works for 8

Steven Kukla	Folksongs for Winds	0222-2000	self-published
Brian Fennelly	Empirical Rag	0222-2000	American Composer's Alliance
Etienne Mehul	Overture in F	1111(1)-121	Swanzy
Camille Saint-Saens	Feuillets d'album	1122- 2000	Master's Music
Gordon Jacob	Serenade	2222-0000	Boosey and Hawkes

Works for 9

Gabriele Faure	Premiere nocturne	1222(1)-2000	Master's Music
Alphons Galman	Intro. and Burlesque	11(EH)1Bsc12-2000	Edition Compusic
Claude Debussy/Sheen	3 from Children's Corner	1111(1)-2000	Kalmus
Hovahness	Tower Music	1111-2111	Broude Bros.

Works for 10

Ruth Gipps	Seascape	2222-2	Warner Bros
Darius Milhaud	Dixtour	2222-2	Kalmus
Robert Washburn	Concertino	1111-2211	Oxford
Vincent Persichetti	Serenade	1111-2211	Elkan-Vogel

Works for 11

Malcolm Arnold	Trevelyn Suite	3222-2	Faber
Otto Luening	Mexican Serenades	2221-1000bass,perc	Galaxy
Wm. Mayer	Essay for Brass and Winds	1111-2211perc	Boosey and Hawkes

Works for 12

Max Reger	Serenade	2222-4000	Master's Music
Gordon Jacob	Old Wine in New Bottles	2222-2200	Oxford
Gordon Jacob	More Old Wine	2222-2200	Oxford
Louis Jadin	Symphonie	2022(cbs)-2210	Hofmeister
Carl Weber	March (in C)	1222-2210	Musica Rara

*Source: *An Annotated Guide to Wind Chamber Music*; Rodney Winther;
2004 Warner Brothers; Miami FL.

Presented at the MidWest Clinic on Friday December 18, 2009 at 2:30pm in room W190.
 Presented by Mr. Charles Peltz and Mr. William Drury of the New England Conservatory of
 Music, with the U.S. Naval Academy Band's Chamber Winds.