

String and Orchestra Rehearsal Techniques

The Beginning: Priorities and Outcomes

A. Position and Tone

B. Pace

1. Pizzicato start
2. Guitar position (violin / viola)
3. Rote (slightly) before Note
4. An early “tune”

C. The “Demonstration Concert”

I. Rehearsal techniques

A. Tuning Elementary Strings

1. use a tuner / drone / technology
2. students line up, or you work your way around room
3. have them do as much as possible
 - a. bowing open strings
 - b. plucking open strings
 - c. raising hand if out of tune
4. call and response on open strings
5. comparing 5ths, even if between sections

B. Tuning Middle School / High School Strings

1. Strings: tuning must happen first. (unlike band warm-up)
2. Concertmaster/student leads tuning
 - a. Builds leadership
 - b. Frees you up for other tasks
3. Double check open strings
 - a. second chance to adjust to unison / octaves
 - b. students begin to watch and listen

C. Warm-up (Middle or High School)

1. Scale letter names on board
 - a. Key Signature
 - b. Identify and mark half steps (fingerboard geography)
2. A conductorless “scale pattern”
 - Half notes
 - Hooking four 8ths
 - Separate four 8ths (spiccato?)
 - Frog – tip
3. 1 Octave Major Scale in a Round (don’t repeat top note)
 - a. 3 – part round = triads
 - b. 4 – part round = some 7th chords
 - c. Low instruments first = root position
 - d. Mixed order = inversions
 - e. With tempo changes = watching / interpreting gesture
4. Chorale (with or without conductor)
5. Other Warm-up
 - a. Ear training Call and Response
 - b. Bowing style / articulation
 - c. Rhythm pattern

D. Rehearsal Techniques unique to strings

1. One section *arco* (with bow), others *pizzicato* (plucking strings)
 - a. Keeps all involved while hearing another part
 - b. Establishes balance
2. All play *pizzicato*
 - a. Points out moving parts
 - b. Requires rhythmic precision
 - c. Transition through “some pizz.”
 - d. Apply all to clapping / chugging option
3. Hold a note or chord to tune (no endurance issue)
4. Compare pitch to an open string
 - a. Their own (like home practice)
 - b. From another player / section / source
5. Subdivide rhythms, fill in with constant notes
 - a. Requires understanding of rhythm
 - b. Internalizes subdivision
6. “1-inch rule” of bow placement: 0 - 100
7. Counting out loud (can be done by string players)
8. standing up (violins and violas)
9. Selected students with memorization may stroll
10. Other strategies
 - a. Outstanding String Bass on a Cello part
 - b. Advanced String Bass or Cello in thumb position
 - c. Less advanced Cellist on a String Bass Part
 - d. Advanced Violinists on Violas for a piece
 - e. Advanced Violists on Violin part (treble clef and higher range)

II. Big Picture - Performance Preparation sequence

Sight Reading

Rhythms

Bowings

Notes

Details

A. Sight Reading

1. Things to look at before playing
 - a. Key
 - b. Meter
 - c. Tempo
 - d. Road map
 - e. Quick scan for anything else
2. Priorities while playing
 - a. Find "1"
 - b. Go for rhythms
 - c. Play boldly, assertively (allow *forte*)
3. At or close to tempo first (briefly), or at some point for reference
4. Second chance without much detailed critique
5. **What can (should?) you introduce in warm-up by rote? **

B. Rhythms

1. Analyze
2. Clap, chug, scat
3. Project on screen (doc cam, for-score), all participate
4. Emphasis helps (on a beat, downbeats, etc.)
5. Subdivide

C. Bowings

D. Notes

E. Details (the fun!)

III. Seating Arrangements

- A. Old School Ranked
- B. Stand Leaders
- C. Front Row Rotating
- D. Scattered seats in regular set-up formation
- E. Moving entire sections
- F. Circles
 - 1. One large circle (seated with your section)
 - 2. Heterogeneous (Mixed) Circles
 - a. Quartets – Quintets
 - b. Double Quartets (with stand partner)
 - 3. Homogeneous Circles
 - a. Hear your section
 - b. Check to match style, bow use

IV. String collaborations for the Choral conductor

- A. The “Baton Myth”
- B. No expertise needed
 - 1. Speak in musical terms, not specific instructions
 - 2. Use resources
 - a. Section leaders
 - b. Colleagues
- C. Guest(s) with choral piece (any level)
- D. Choral / Orchestral works
 - 1. Logistics
 - a. Scheduling / Set-up
 - b. Bowings
 - 2. Repertoire

E. Musical Theater Pit Orchestra

1. Optional orchestrations
2. Key signatures
3. Professionals, ringers, piano / keyboard(s)

V. Assessment

A. Four – Point Scale: 1) **Baseline** 2) **Developing** 3) **Proficient** 4) **Advanced**

B. Quantifiable and Objective vs Qualitative and Subjective

1. Rubric
2. Technical descriptions

C. How we assess

1. Visually
2. Aurally
3. Written exam
4. In class
5. Individual playing exam
 - a. In person
 - b. Recorded (audio or video, one take or infinite)

D. What we assess

1. Playing ability
2. Ensemble playing ability
3. Participation, Attitude and Behavior (now “Etiquette, Ensemble Standards”)
4. Categories
 - a. Tone
 - b. Vibrato
 - c. Intonation
 - d. Dynamics
 - e. Right Hand Position / Bow hold
 - f. Left Hand Position
 - g. Shifting
 - h. Range
 - i. Fast technique
 - j. Theory knowledge
 - k. History knowledge
 - l. Composer background

E. Technology

1. SmartMusic
 - a. Orchestra / Band / Choir Solo applications
 - b. Individual use at home
 - c. Individual use in a practice room
 - d. Use in a large ensemble rehearsal
 - e. Sight Reading
2. Google Classroom / Hapara
3. Alfred Essentials of Music Theory
 - a. Students may work ahead independently
 - b. Teacher may track work easily

F. Assessment tied to Teacher Evaluation

1. Danielson “A Framework for Teaching”
2. PERA
3. SMART Goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-Based)
4. Tied to evaluation status, job security and/or pay

VI. Odds and Ends

- A. Big/Little Buddy System
- B. Professional Development and memberships (NAfME-ILMEA / ASTA)
- C. CMP (Comprehensive Musicianship Through Performance) ilcmp.org (See Appendix)
- D. Colleagues and teamwork - Facebook group: *School Orchestra and String Teachers, v.2*
- E. Student Centered
- F. Advocacy
- G. Greatest Job in the World

References and Resources:

41 Chorales for [full] Orchestra (42 Chorales for band) – arr. Philip Gordon

Essential Elements for Strings (red book I and blue book II) Hal Leonard

Essential Techniques for Strings (green book), Advanced Techniques for Strings (gold book) Hal Leonard

ASTA Curriculum 2011 Edition (www.astaweb.com or from Alfred publications)

Teaching Music Through Performance in Orchestra, Vol. I, II and III (GIA publications)

CMP (Comprehensive Musicianship Through Performance) A Brief Overview of the Model

Music Selection

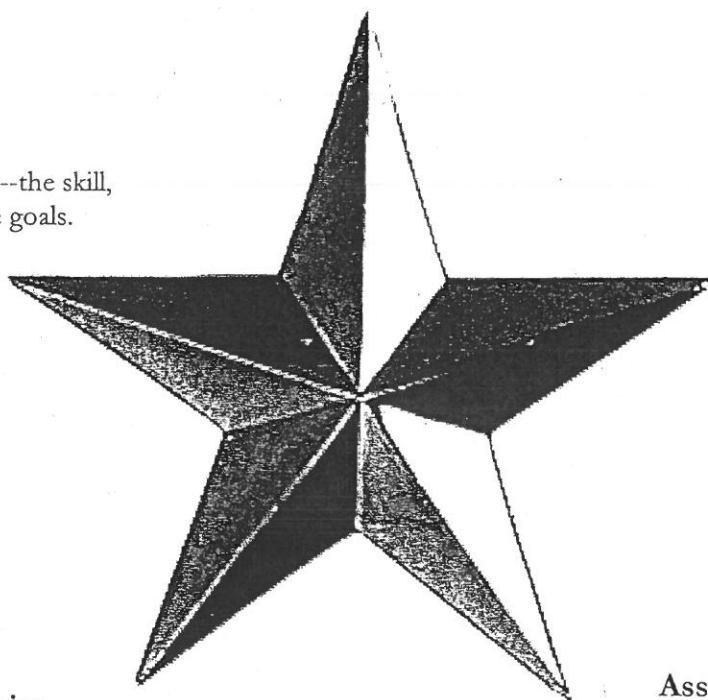
Choose well crafted, quality literature that fits the unique needs of each ensemble.

Analysis

Learn as much as possible about the music through detailed score study and background research.

Outcomes

What the students will learn--the skill, knowledge and affective goals.



Strategies

How the students learn--all the activities, questions and tools involved in teaching the outcomes.

Assessment

The process of gathering information about what students know and can do, evaluating the data and then determining future actions.

One paradox of master teaching is that it comes across as organic and easy, even though it is thoughtfully and carefully crafted. Similarly, this model for planning instruction seems quite simple and intuitive, but contains the possibility for infinitely complex and rich thinking.