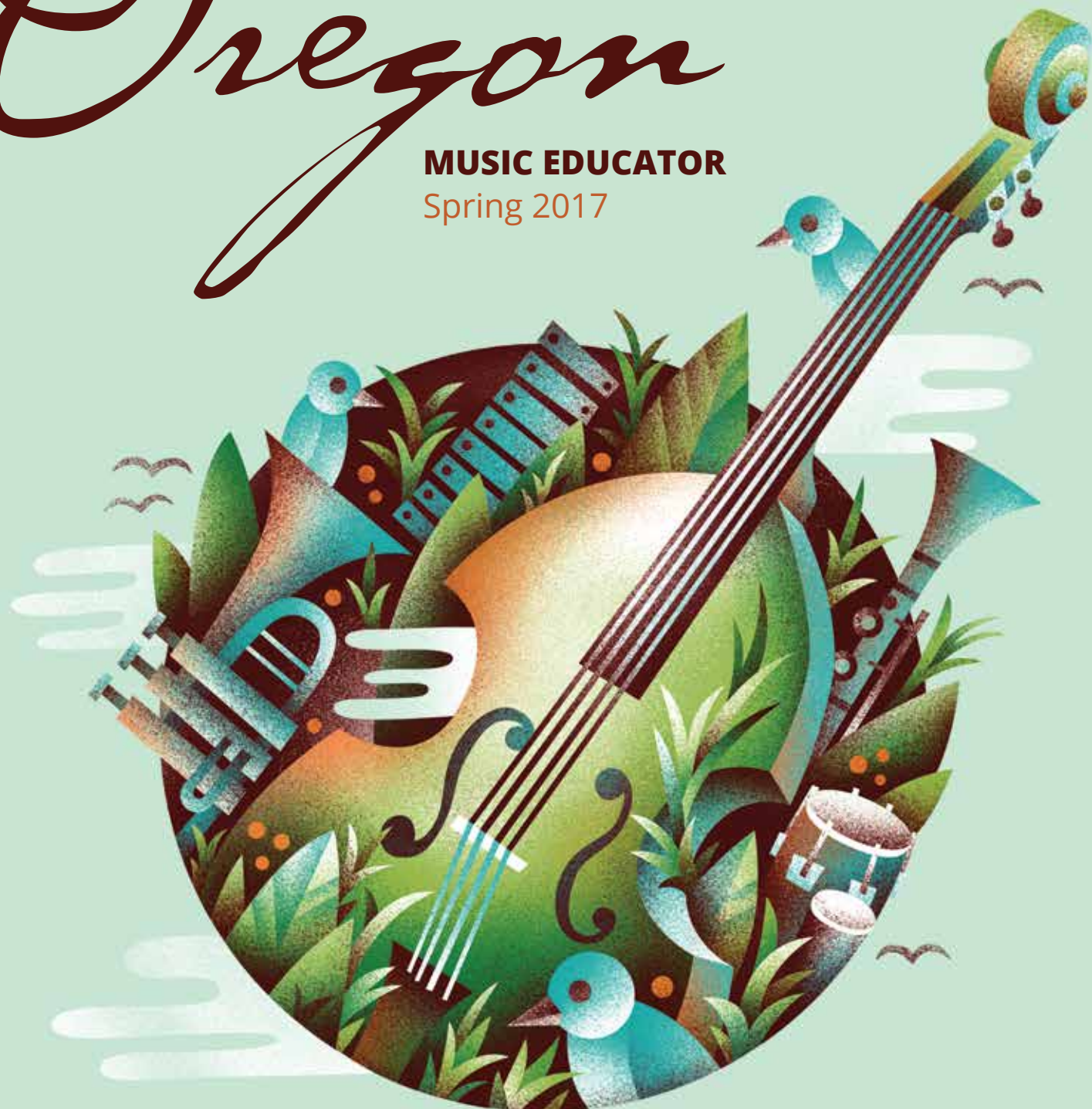


# Oregon

**MUSIC EDUCATOR**  
Spring 2017



**Improvisation: It's Not  
Just for Jazz Band**

**9** Jason M. Silveira

**Elements of Alexander  
Technique**

**12** Tomas Cotik

**Teaching and Learning  
Spiccato in 3 Stages**

**15** Dijana Ihas

**OMEA's Inaugural Day  
at the Capitol**

**21** Jennifer Mohr Colett

**"Great Music Must at  
Once be Surprising and  
Inevitable"**

**26** Jeff Hornick

**Incorporating Movement  
in Choral Rehearsals**

**30** Kathy Briggs

College of Liberal Arts | School of Arts & Communication

# Oregon State University **MUSIC EDUCATION In-Service Day**

**FRIDAY · OCTOBER 13, 2017**

**BENTON HALL AT OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY**

*Featured Clinicians*

**Craig Kirchhoff (University of Minnesota) · Band**

**Kevin Fenton (Florida State University) · Choral**

**Carlos Abril (Frost School of Music) · Elementary/General**

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**Oregon State**  
UNIVERSITY

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jschrepping@pps.net

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tubasat@aol.com

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### OSAA Choral Liaison

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David Douglas High School  
Christopher\_silva@ddsd40.org

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Matthew Strauser  
Retired  
oregonacda@gmail.com

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Lewis and Clark College Retired  
dbecker@lclark.edu

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kevin.durfee@lagrandesd.org

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MCLEAN\_WILLIAM@salkeiz.k12.or.us

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jennifer\_muller@ddsd40.org

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Newberg High School  
tannerj@newberg.k12.or.us

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West Orient MS  
mcbride2@gresham.k12.or.us

### AS-MS Honor Band Co-Manager

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Hogan Cedars EL k-5  
nilsen@gresham.k12.or.us

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Megan Perdue  
Lake Oswego High School  
megan.perdue@gmail.com

### AS-MS Tenor/Bass Choir Manager

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Waldo Middle School  
dreher\_jesse@salkeiz.k12.or.us

### AS-MS Honor Orchestra Manager

Eddy Robinson  
Pilot Butte and Sky View Middle  
Schools  
eddy.robinson@bend.k12.or.us

### AS-MS Honor Orchestra Assistant

Connie Lorimor  
Happy Valley MS  
lorimorc@nclack.k12.or.us

### AS-Elementary Choir Co-Manager

John Hillan  
Lowrie Primary School  
Hillanj@wlwv.k12.or.us

### AS-Elementary Choir Co-Manager

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Hazeldale  
musicputnam@gmail.com

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Grant Union 1-12  
therock@centurytel.net

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BELL\_JENNIFER@salkeiz.k12.or.us

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nowickas\_james@salkeiz.k12.or.us

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solanskr@hotmail.com

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Roseburg High School  
ilgsen614@gmail.com

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Stephen Marshall  
Oregon State University  
marshste@onid.oregonstate.edu

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Rob McGlothlin  
Sandy High School  
robert.mcglathlin@ortrail.k12.or.us

### CNAfME Representative

Natalie Marquette  
Goerge Fox  
nmarquette12@georgefox.edu

### CNAfME Support

Dick Elliot  
George Fox  
relliott@georgefox.edu

## PUBLISHING & PRINTING

### Cover Art & Graphic Design

Aren Vandenburgh  
arenv.com

### Printing & Mailing

Shelton Turnbull  
3403 W 7th Ave  
Eugene, OR 97402  
stprint.com

## EDITORIAL BOARD

Jason Silveira  
University of Oregon  
jsilveir@uoregon.edu

Tina Bull  
Oregon State University  
Retired  
tinamariebull@gmail.com

Jim Howell, Jane Howell  
PO Box 1235 La Grande, OR  
97850  
admin@oregonmusic.org  
541-962-6262

# The New Normal

**Camille Blackburn**

NAfME Northwest President



We are now well into the new year. How is it going for you so far? There is a lot happening in the world. Many things are changing and it's uncertain where we are heading. At least that is how I feel. And to make myself more miserable and anxious I've become somewhat of a news junkie. I feel that I am becoming very much like a character that I greatly admire from the musical, *Man of La Mancha*. Of course there was no TV to watch or NPR or BBC to listen to when this story took place, but there were books, and my hero did a lot of reading....

*"Being retired, he has much time for books. He studies them from morn till night and often through the night and morn again, and all he reads oppresses him; fills him with indignation at man's murderous ways toward man. He ponders the problem of how to make better a world where evil brings profit and virtue none at all; where fraud and deceit are mingled with truth and sincerity. He broods and broods and broods and broods and finally his brains dry up. He lays down the melancholy burden of sanity and conceives the strangest project ever imagined.... to become a knight-errant, and sally forth into the world in search of adventures; to mount a crusade; to raise up the weak and those in need. No longer will he be plain Alonso Quijana, but a dauntless knight known as Don Quixote de La Mancha!"*

Ah, how I wish I could do as Don Quixote and sally forth to right the wrongs in the world and help those in need. Just this week the students in one of my choirs and I were talking a bit about world events and I had an epiphany of sorts. As I looked at the faces of my singers I realized that even though it is good for me to be aware of world events and it is good for me to care, I don't have a lot of control or even influence on what may or may not happen and that I should probably, before my brains dry up, deal with my news addiction. Even more important I realized that where I did have influence and perhaps even a big influence was right there in my own classroom.

So, I told the students to be of good cheer and that we would focus on creating an experience for ourselves right here in choir that would enrich our lives as individuals, solidify us as an ensemble, and bring joy and perhaps comfort to those for whom we would sing. I felt so much better after that and I think they did too. It reminds me of a great poem, *The Work of Christmas*, by Howard Thurman, American author, philosopher, and theologian.

*"When the song of the angels is stilled,  
When the star in the sky is gone,  
When the kings and princes are home,  
When the shepherds are back with their flock,  
The work of Christmas begins:  
To find the lost,  
To heal the broken,  
To feed the hungry,  
To release the prisoner,  
To rebuild the nations,  
To bring peace among people,  
To make music in the heart."*

Music in and from the heart; that is the answer for me and for my students.

This past February 16–19, 2017 we had the opportunity to attend the NAFME NW Division Conference. There were a lot of great sessions to choose from and great concerts to enjoy and great opportunities for our students who were selected to participate in the NW Honor Ensembles.

But surely the greatest opportunity of all for us as Music Educators was to spend time with each other; rekindling our friendships and rejuvenating our souls so that we can continue to help the young people who trust us to teach them. Teaching is a privilege and a calling and the greatest responsibility is for us all, students and teachers, to learn to "make music in (from) the heart".

I hope you found sessions, performances, and moments spent with friends at the conference that spoke to you. If you have comments or suggestions regarding the schedule for teachers or for students at the conference, please communicate that to me via email. We know that by working together we can always make improvements. I wish you much success in making Heartfelt Music!

# Post-Conference Update

## Todd Zimbelman

OMEA President

I hope everyone is having an outstanding spring. Thank you for attending the OMEA 2017 Conference and encouraging your students to participate in the All-State Honor Ensembles. Congratulations to Corey Alston and the Conference Planning Committee for running a successful and meaningful conference. Kathy Briggs will be in charge of the 2018 OMEA conference. If you have any thoughts, recommendations, session ideas, please email Kathy as soon as possible (kathy.briggs@smapdx.org). She will do an amazing job.

### OMEA Communication

Please contact me if you have any ideas for OMEA. I will take them to the OMEA board and represent everyone to the best of my ability. Please visit the website regularly. This is an incredible tool for calendar planning, policies and procedures, updates, and sharing information. Make sure your membership information is up to date as well. This is critical for us to reach you through email and regular mail.

### From The Band Room: MUSICALITY!

Students have “Unlimited Expressive Power.” Even when building tone and technique, play musically with shape, direction, style, and character. Often, students will only use a portion of their power and potential. Each phrase is contextual, but I try to establish some basic rules. The following are some of the rules I try to instill.

1. A line is going somewhere, arriving, or going away. Find the main peak of any line, crescendo toward it and decrescendo away from it.
2. Listen to the harmonic motion. It will often guide you to crescendo or decrescendo.
3. Longer phrases are always better.
4. The accompaniment needs to listen to the shape of the melody and help support that shape.
5. Musical lines/phrases are like sentences. If you accent a certain word in the sentence, it can change the meaning or the intent of the message. Practice a line/phrase and change the emphasis.
6. When approaching a cadence point, slow down a bit. It's like approaching a stop sign in a car. Stretch the ends of phrases when appropriate.
7. Always do more than what's on the page.

Interpretation can be a moving target. Encourage students to be independent music makers. If the musicality is too defined and



contrived, the music can sound less alive and mechanical. There must be some spontaneity and wonderment. Practice phrases or chorales and have them follow your dynamics and pace. Mix it up constantly so they are watching and responded in the moment. Anything could happen and any point in time. Widen the dynamic range. Practice playing extreme soft and loud levels. Explore the full width of their dynamic range and then use that to be more expressive individually and as an ensemble.

### HAVING A CLEANER ENSEMBLE SOUND!

I teach the band that there are three basic parts to any note; attack, body, and release. Too often, I hear bands that only focus on the articulation. The body of the notes are inconsistent and the release points are undefined. One of the quickest ways to clean up your ensemble sound is to define what they are doing with the body of the note (crescendo, decrescendo, stay the same, fp, fp-crescendo, etc.), then define where the exact point of release is or it connects into the next note. Take this bar by bar and part by part until everything is clearly defined. Everything will start to clean up and there will be much more transparency in your ensemble. Define how to start the note (placement of tongue, accent, heavy, light, etc.). Match the articulation and the length of the body across the ensemble (lower instruments need to play shorter, smaller instruments need to play longer). Sing various articulation styles. “Toh” for a crisper articulation, “Doh” for a smoother articulation. One example would be to take a passage and have students sing it on “OHs” and “TOHs.” Two slurred notes would be “Toh-oh.” Two slurred notes followed by two staccato notes would be “Toh-oh, Toh, Toh.” Whatever syllable you use, more clarity across the ensemble will emerge and the students will start to tongue much cleaner and more together. Students often compress faster passages. Practice faster passages with different articulations, groupings, and dynamics. I tend to take faster passages at  $\frac{1}{4}$  tempo,  $\frac{1}{2}$  tempo,  $\frac{3}{4}$  tempo, then full tempo. Sometimes changing the articulations will clean up the rhythmic passage across the ensemble. I try to stay true to the intent of the composer, but sometimes I make adjustments to make it sound cleaner and make it more together. I like to “bop” ensemble passages to hear the counter point and if the ensemble's composite rhythms are lining up. “Bopping” is just playing the front of every note (nothing sustained). This can clean up the fronts of the rhythms in short order.

# 2018 OMEA Conference "Louder than Words"

**Kathy Briggs**  
OMEA President Elect



Our annual state conference is an opportunity to learn and celebrate music education, our students, and our profession. As I look back on a decade of coming together in Eugene, I have fond memories of meeting most of you for the first time and creating a network of colleagues – and now friends – with whom I can learn, share, commiserate, and grow through our common bond as music educators. Our state has a deep wealth of experienced music educators and exciting new teachers from whom we can all learn, honing our craft as educators, conductors, and musicians.

The 2018 conference theme is "Louder than Words," an homage to music's incredible ability to speak in a way that words cannot, and also inspired by the phrase, "actions speak louder than words," as a nod to our hard work of creating music and performances with our students, along with the importance of advocacy work in our schools, districts, and state. There is much work to be done for our students and our profession. To speak of ideas and dreams is one thing, but to take action – whether it be attending school board meetings or advocating at the state capitol for better funding for our schools – is another. Along with the hard work, there is reason to celebrate. In the midst of conference sessions and days filled with learning, we gather at our annual banquet to honor those in our profession who are doing exceptional work and to celebrate with our colleagues. I am thrilled to announce that this year we will be celebrating with Oregon's own internationally famous Pink Martini who have graciously agreed to perform at the banquet for all of us music educators.

There is so much great teaching happening in our state and I encourage you to contact those educators you know are doing exceptional work and ask them to speak on a topic and present a session at our conference. What do you want to learn? From whom do you want to learn? What questions do you have about your field? What have you done in your own classroom that has worked really well? New teachers – what are your big questions? Experienced teachers – what advice can you share? This is your conference and I want the sessions offered to fill your cup with inspiration and concepts that invigorate your teaching, giving you ideas you can take back to your students. Please do not hesitate to let your area chair on the OMEA Board know of any requests you have for session topics or speakers, or contact me. Session proposals can be submitted online at the OMEA website.

I'll conclude by sharing that I am grateful to have assembled another excellent team of managers for the 2018 conference to ensure the conference runs smoothly and our students have a wonderful all-state experience. We will be in need of volunteers, chaperones, screeners, presenters, and so on over the coming months and the weekend of the conference. If you are interested in serving as a volunteer or becoming involved in our conference, please reach out to your area chair on the OMEA Board or me.

Financial aid available!

Auditions held in June and August!  
Registration opens in April at [www.playmys.org](http://www.playmys.org)

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# 2016 OMEA Awards

## Tom Muller

Past OMEA President

### OMEA Outstanding Contributor Award

Larry Chamberlain



Quotes from nominators:

*"Larry has been a key component to the development of school programs and music education in the Oregon and beyond since he began his position. He has spent countless hours on the road traveling to schools to provide guidance, assistance, and support. He has been instrumental in developing regional summer camps and support for various festivals and conferences."*

*"He worked his entire career to build key relationships with music stores and directors all for the betterment of music education in our region."*

*"Larry has always gone above and beyond to help band directors from Oregon. His tireless efforts have helped so many band directors from getting the necessary supplies to be successful, to helping to assemble equipment so everything works smoothly."*

*"Without his leadership and service in this area none of the performers he arranged to come would have visited here, The value of having the very best performers and educators in the world performing for, teaching, rubbing shoulders with, and simply hanging out with educators and students in our area cannot be measured and how many students and educators have been inspired to continue further in music and music education due to this influence cannot be counted. Rather, he truly cared about the educators and students in the region and was genuinely excited to bring these people to our region and watching the difference they made in school programs and students. As he deservedly retires this person will truly and deeply be missed - not just for what he did for us, but for who he was with us."*

### OMEA Exemplary Service to Music Education Awards

John Day, Mary Ann Vidourek



This is why nominators thought Mary Ann deserved this award:

*"Mary Ann's tireless efforts for OMEA have made her an indispensable part of every All-State conference. No one really sees this individual's effort, but without it, our conventions would not be able to function."*

*"Each year, there is one thing that we all can count on, and it is everything that has to do with how this person organizes her piece of All-State. Her genuine compassion for kids, her amazing organizational skills, and her hard work enables hundreds of students to have a smooth transition into the honor groups. To say the least, it is a well-oiled machine."*

*"She and her team present themselves very professionally. It is so amazing to see the hours they keep. She is always moving, always adjusting, and always wanting what is best for our All-State student participants."*

*"Mary Ann has persevered to keep the music program alive in John Day. Her music students have enjoyed all the advantages of larger schools. Her students have participated in All-State bands and choirs: They have performed in the State Band and Choir Championships, as well as solo and ensemble contests. She usually drove them there and made them believe they could be successful!"*

*"Her service to OMEA has involved long-term commitments in difficult jobs. She has long been building community among music teachers in her OMEA District, along with the OMEA board for many years. Mary Ann reminds us all how important stepping up to take all the little and not-so-little jobs at every level of OMEA are."*

### OMEA Outstanding Administrator

South Albany Principal, Brent Belveal



This award is presented to individuals who not only support music education, but also help these programs to thrive during challenging economic times. Teachers at South Albany High School have said this about this year's recipient:

*"In April of 2014, an arsonist set fire to the South Albany campus ending in complete destruction of the band and choir rooms. This administrator consistently made sure that the teachers who lost their classrooms were getting the absolute maximum amount of money through insurance. This administrator represented stakeholding teachers very vigorously to the district office, architecture firm, and general contractor. To the best of his ability, he fought to ensure that our ideas and input were valued, heard, and heeded. Much of what was advocated for was put into the final construction designs at his insistence. This administrator also made sure that donated funds stayed firmly in our band and orchestra accounts."*

*"Beyond the fire rebuilding, this administrator has over many years helped to scholarship music students to All-State, and appropriating funds to pay for OMEA dues, and to send students to district music events. He has always been an ardent supporter and creates an environment where students can learn music, where their efforts are recognized"*



and appreciated, and where excellence is the standard . Brent and his wife have attended numerous concerts at performances around town, and around the state when the schedule allows.”

“To sum it up, this administrator is a champion for our music students, and stands up for his music teachers.”

### Excellence in Elementary Education

The Dalles, Chenoweth Elementary School,  
Corin Parker



Her peers have said the following about this year's recipient:

*“She is phenomenal. She is dedicated to her students and to creating an outstanding music program. It is amazing to see kids grow in confidence and self-esteem. This individual has set up a scholarship program on her own so kids moving up to middle school who do not have the funds can participate in the middle school band. She is by far the most student-oriented music teacher I have ever worked with.”*

*“Corin works with students who have difficulties in school and/or difficult home lives. Under her guidance, these students not only excelled at performing, but became more confident in themselves and learned social skills that have stayed with them. She has a selfless love of helping students become their best selves through the art of music.”*

*“Corin does not shy away from leadership and has a good sense of when to step up to the plate. She has an amazing ability to connect with people, and is a strong role model that kids feel they can relate to. She requires her students in her programs to do their best and has inspired them to do well. Her leadership style is based on mutual respect, communication and the ability to allow others to be involved in the process. She has the ability to make anyone in her presence feel confident and comfortable. She has a it can be done attitude, a love of students, a love of music and a love of growing people through the arts.”*

### Outstanding Music Educator

Redmond, Ridgeview High School,  
David Sime



Here is what the peers and former students said about Dave:

*“As someone who screened their student teachers, I was assured he was a good musician and he seemed like a nice kid. I wasn't totally sure he was going to go on and be a teacher It was a pleasure to watch Dave grow into one of the top directors in the state.”*

*“Dave taught me about life, respect, honor, and success. I always had a place where I belonged I appreciate all of the time, and energy he selflessly invested into the music program. He has always been there to lend an ear about career and life decisions, and he is the reason I am a band director today.”*

*“Dave takes the extra time to show he cares deeply for the progress and growth of his students, and is able to achieve tremendous results because his work ethic is transferred to students in a manner that elicits their best response. His goal is the overall music appreciation for all his students.”*

*“I have had the opportunity to work with a host of dedicated, highly trained and wonderful music educators over my career. This individual is easily at the top flight in my estimation.”*

### Outstanding Music Educator

Corvallis High School, Marcia Stevens



Here is what peers had to say about Marcia:

*“Marcia is a lifelong learner who helped to create a sense of comradery in her classroom. She created a sense of pride for the students and faculty, and I have little doubt that the high school's concert hall was built specifically for her and her award-winning band. She understands people and how to treat someone with dignity and respect. She is well deserving of all the accolades that come her way.”*

*“From the moment I met Marcia, I was impressed with her dedication to their craft, her persistence and ability to uplift the people and musicians around them. I saw her dive deep into everything and do everything at 150%. She taught me how to work with colleagues, never burn bridges, strive for perfections, and most importantly always be positive. She was constantly thinking ahead about the school year, the best and most efficient way tot get things done, and what was the best path for her students to achieve success in the program.”*

*“It was always clear to me that she taught students not only to be competent instrumentalists, but also more importantly, competent musicians and leaders Marcia has inspired me in their absolute dedication to music educations, and their perseverance and often downright stubbornness to never quit.”*

*“Marcia has had great success directing high school bands. However, she has had this success while caring deeply for her students and performing the highest level of literature. It is easy to see her musical success through competition, but her success in building a community of caring students is harder to see but is more impressive and important.”*

Our final award is to honor those with a lifetime of service to music education with a highly distinguished record of professional accomplishments. John C. McManus defined the standard of service for music educators through a life of selfless service to his students and colleagues.

**John C. McManus Award**

Professor Emeritus, Oregon State University, Dr. Tina Bull



Tina served five years on the OMEA board shortly after arriving in Oregon, focusing on music teacher education and issues at the state level impacting music education. For NAFME, Tina served for seven years on the national board for the Society for Music Teacher Education, as Northwest chair. To top that off, she served another six years as president-elect, president, and past president of OMEA. Additionally, she served on the board of the Oregon Choral Directors Associations as well as various state and national accreditation committees.

Here is what colleagues have said about this year's recipient:

*"Upon arriving in Oregon, colleagues of this individual were very excited on the initial impact she was having on the profession. Her presence in discussions clearly showed her breadth of knowledge, commitment to music education, level-headedness, and tireless energy. She quickly became one of Oregon's most knowledgeable voices and clear thinkers about the impact of state reforms on music education."*

*"I am thoroughly impressed by this individual's quantity, quality, and breadth of work. She has achieved a great balance in serving and developing her students for the future. This view was echoed by her colleagues, her students and faculty members. Students from her program have gone on to several teaching positions in Oregon and beyond. I have been extremely impressed by their skills and enthusiasm."*

*"From my perspective, Tina's significant accomplishments have been to earn the respect of the music education community, and its leadership, through the numerous presentations, adjudications, performances, and accomplishments by her graduates."*

*"Tina was a steadying force and advisor during my time in leadership in OMEA. She helped me to learn the ropes of being president, helped me through the development of conference planning, and was always available when I had questions or concerns. The advice and counsel I received from Tina was invaluable, and I cannot think of a better recipient of the McManus award. John would be proud."*

*"I was fortunate to have John McManus as a teacher and mentor during my years at the U of O. Based on my admiration for John's work, I believe this person exemplifies what we celebrate in honoring his career of teaching and service."*

# Improvisation: It's Not Just for Jazz Band Anymore

Jason M. Silveira

Assistant Professor of Music Education, University of Oregon



Improvisation has been defined as the manifestation of musical thought (Azzara, 1999), and the spontaneous, creative generation of melody, rhythm, and phrases without specific preparation or premeditation (Campbell, 1991). It is a multidimensional construct consisting of technical, expressive, and social elements. Additionally, improvisation involves a great deal of cognitive effort, especially when anticipating musical events while improvising (Biasutti & Frezza, 2009). It is considered to be an important creative musical endeavor, and a foundational tenet in music making (Webster, 2002). Improvisation plays a major role in music pedagogies including jazz, Orff, Kodaly, and Dalcroze. Its importance in the public school music curriculum is reflected by its presence in the National Core Arts Standards, and researchers and music philosophers have documented the importance of improvisation in music curricula (Alexander, 2012; Azzara, 1993; Elliot, 1995; Gordon, 1997).

Despite its ubiquity in the history of music and its benefits as a vehicle for creativity and higher-order thinking (Wing, Piaw, & Chang, 2014), improvisation is not always taught in public schools outside of the jazz band setting. When it is taught, it is often only marginally successful and sometimes lacks depth (Azzara, 1993, 1999; Woody, 2007). Teachers' lack of improvisation experience and lack of improvisation pedagogy in teacher preparation programs have been attributed to in-service teachers' difficulty in implementing improvisation into their music programs in general and in their ensembles specifically (Azzara, 1999; Byo, 1999; Della Pietra & Campbell, 1995; Reveire, 2006). However, when improvisation is explicitly taught in music teacher education programs, students find the experience beneficial in overcoming their fear of improvisation, and become more open to regularly improvising as part of the creative process (Snell & Azzara, 2015). Given that not every student participates in jazz band, it seems incumbent upon music teachers to find ways to allow students the opportunity to improvise in the large ensemble classroom as well.

Much of the literature on improvisation in the classroom suggests that teachers start simply, using exploration as the first step. Exploration typically begins with listening, imitating, learning rote songs in band rehearsal, developing tonal and rhythmic patterns, one-note solos, varying rhythms, and repeating patterns (Bitz, 1998; Liperote, 2006; Volz, 2005). After the exploration phase, students can then solo over a neutral harmonic background before moving to a tonic-dominant background, then finally using repertoire as the basis for improvisation (Riveire, 2006). While there are a number of resources for teaching improvisation

in the music classroom (see Volz, 2005 for selected articles and print resources), and sample curricula and exercises (see Azzara & Grunow, 2006, 2010a, 2010b), the purpose of this article is to focus on a few techniques large ensemble directors can use or revise for classroom implementation.

One exercise that I have found useful in teaching young students to improvise is by using SmartMusic's "Play by Ear" feature. One of the important skills in developing young improvisers is to listen and imitate (e.g., the exploration phase). While SmartMusic is a useful teaching tool for this purpose, of course, it's not necessary. A simple call and response exercise with teachers and students can function similarly. As students become more comfortable with playing by ear, I use an "all-purpose" improvisation tool like the Pachelbel's Canon Chord handout (see Figure 1), which can help students in the exploration phase of improvisation. Please note that this handout can be transposed to allow students

Figure 1 Pachelbel's Canon Chords Handout for Large Group Improvisation

improvisation experience in a variety of keys. The following steps may be used for implementation:

1. Start by having the group play through the handout emphasizing musical elements of balance, blend, tone quality, and intonation.
2. The teacher (T) models a simple improvisatory line while students (S) play the chord accompaniment.
3. T explains that notes from the concert B-flat scale can be used to create the melody. The written pitches above each measure are chord tones.
4. T demonstrates that even “wrong” notes will eventually become “right” notes if held for subsequent measures (e.g., The “wrong” note G in measure 1, becomes a “right” note in measure 2).
5. T demonstrates using non-chord tones (e.g., neighbor tones/passing tones) in each measure to create variety.
6. T selects pairs (or small groups) of S to improvise over the accompaniment. (Repeat this step as necessary)
7. T selects individual S to improvise over the accompaniment. (Repeat this step as necessary)

The next two examples use specific pieces of band music (*Overture for Winds* and *American River Songs*) to allow students to improvise in the large ensemble setting. In the *Overture for Winds* example (see Figure 2), the first eight measures of the piece (with a harmonic analysis) are provided for students. The following steps are suggested for implementation:

1. Percussion loops the first four measures of worksheet.
2. Add winds on top while both (B) teacher and students play an E-flat major scale in half notes and percussion loops.
3. Remove 4th and 7th scale degree (don't repeat octave)
4. A. B play 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 5, 3, 2, 1 over percussion loop.
5. Call and Response: Percussion loop while T models four measures on E-flat pentatonic scale, and S respond.
6. Call and Response: T improvises on E-flat pentatonic scale, S improvise whatever they want. (Note: While this may sound chaotic, the idea is that students are getting their feet wet improvising in the “safety” of the group.)
7. Repeat step 4, but in eight-measure chunks.

8. S play lead sheet (melody parts tacet) while T improvises using E-flat pentatonic scale.
9. T asks for S soloists while others play lead sheet.
10. Add melody parts with improvisation solo and others playing lead sheet. (Note: Students can also use the blank staff to compose over the accompaniment.)

The *American River Songs* example (see Figure 3) uses the same principal as *Overture for Winds*, but uses a block chord accompaniment. The first page can be used to introduce the B-flat pentatonic scale (the “solo” line) while the rest of the ensemble plays the SATB parts. Once the scale is introduced, students take turns improvising using the B-flat pentatonic scale in a similar manner as in *Overture for Winds*. The second page, rather than providing the pentatonic scale, provides a harmonic analysis with block chords in the “solo” line. This can be used for more advanced students who are ready to experiment with improvising using chords and chord symbols rather than simply using the pentatonic scale.

Improvisation need not be a daunting task for teachers or students. It can also be seamlessly introduced in the classroom by using it as a warm-up/concluding exercise (e.g., Pachelbel's

Figure 2 *Overture for Winds* “Lead Sheet” for Improvisation (E-flat Pentatonic)

**Figure 3** American Riversongs “Lead Sheet” for Improvisation (B-flat Pentatonic)

Canon Chords), or connected to the literature being rehearsed (e.g., *Overture for Winds & American Riversongs*). I have used these and similar improvisation exercises to introduce the concept to my public school students. Teachers are encouraged to vary and develop these techniques to provide all our students, not just those in jazz band, opportunities to improvise.

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# Elements of Alexander Technique

## Discovering a Natural Approach to String Playing

**Tomas Cotik**

Assistant Professor of Violin, Portland State University



This article covers a wide array of techniques and simple ways in which performers of all levels can achieve a more natural approach to instrumental playing by improving ease and freedom of movement. Practicing these exercises will refine and heighten kinesthetic sensitivity offering the performer a control, which is fluid and lively, enhancing performance and helping avoid unnecessary tension, pain, and potential injuries. Identifying the subconscious habits that interfere with the operation of our innate coordination is the first step and more than half of the work in cracking them. An usual interference is the “startle reflex,” a movement-stopping reaction that kicks in when we are suddenly frightened. This is a very useful resource when we are about to step on a cliff, but counterproductive when we introduce it into our playing due to fears of a difficult shift, an audition, or an important concert. Other people tighten to set their bodies before they move with the unconscious assumption that this will improve their accuracy.

To help correct this, the teacher can ask the student to stop in the middle of the piece, leaving the bow on the instrument. The next step is to tell the student to unlock the knees, release the neck, release the jaw, allow the arms to flow out of the back, release the twist to the left in the torso, and then continue to play. The techniques in this article will help in being aware of and releasing those tensions.

It is more important to practice taking care of the body than only focusing on getting the passage right. Every time you practice putting the goals ahead of the body, bad habits will be triggered, because habits are subconsciously associated with the goals. Patience is essential; not getting emotional about mistakes. Trying hard and wanting too much tend to only lead to reverting to old habits.

When we watch very good players, we can observe different bow grips, positions, etc. It is not as much a matter of position but of the inner kinesthetic feeling and directions: What remains the same is their freedom of movement and being in balance.



Imagine that the top of the head is being pulled up gently from a string. Allow that direction to lead the head, neck and spine. Lengthen and widen the body in all directions; experience a lightness, as if the body is moving itself. Simultaneously, feel the gravity and the weight of the body going down.



Raise and let your shoulders fall, like a coat hanging from a hanger.

### TECHNIQUES AND EXERCISES



Ask a student to push you while you resist the push, staying stiff and not allowing yourself to move from your spot. Now ask again, but be flexible and allow yourself to move. This will help convey the concept of how releasing can allow movement.



Raise your arms and let them fall making sure you are not holding while they fall.



Have the teacher take the student's hand and move it in any direction. Allow the movement without any interference.



Rotate your head and move in all different directions while playing.



Leave your jaw loose, don't crunch your teeth, practice with an open mouth, or put a cookie between your teeth.



Lean the left elbow on a piano or stand. Let go of the weight of the arm and enjoying the support. Ask someone to hold your arm and let the weight go.



Have someone support your instrument at the scroll and practice feeling the weight of your arm hanging off of the fingerboard by your fingers.



Especially release tension in the moment of shifting up. Practice arpeggios with one finger, releasing before and during every shift. Practice shifts with your elbow on a piano or held by your teacher.



Release your left thumb every once in a while to make sure it's relaxed.



Squeeze around the right armpit with your left hand. Move your arm in all direction to check that the muscles your hand is squeezing don't contract involuntarily.



Move your forearm to make sure the hinge of the elbow is loose.



Hang a bag on right shoulder to make sure it doesn't tense up. You can also use the image of a warm, dripping wet towel hanging from the shoulder.



Place your right elbow on a piano or stand. Enjoy not needing to hold up your arm. Move your forearm freely.



Hold the bow from the screw with the thumb, index, and middle fingers. Release your weight into your legs in order to get a good sound without adding any pressure.



Grab your bow with your full hand and play. Now, do it holding the bow with your middle phalanges. Now go to your 'normal' holding position. The idea is to hold the bow in a fancy-free way, allowing the energy to flow through your lower back, shoulder, arm, forearm, hand, and fingers, to the bow to the string.



Squat with your back against a wall. Feel all the weight on the soles of your feet. Your thighs will be working hard to hold your weight, your gluteus will be relaxed, and your lower back and torso will be flat against the wall without an arch. Realize how your sound opens up and your instrument resonates better with no effort.



Lie on the floor. Feel your shoulder blades resting on the floor. Any superfluous tension in the head, neck, and shoulder blade will become noticeable. Feel your lower back touching the floor and your hips completely free.

Eventually you need to integrate all these new kinesthetic feelings into a sensation for the whole body. Find an image or a couple of words that help you recall that feeling when you play. Doing this ultimately helps us to free our movements, feel physically better, and channel all of our energy into producing a beautiful sound, allowing nothing to interfere with the music.

The following, like any physical exercises, are inherently dangerous and can result in personal injury or damage to the instrument and/or bow. Any injury sustained from the proper or improper use of these exercises is solely the responsibility of the person who follows the exercises. Tomas Cotik and his partners disclaim any liability from injury or damages to the instrument and/or bow caused from the use of these.

**Some concepts are described in greater depth in the following articles:**

Conable, W. (1993). The Alexander Technique. *Journal of the Violin Society of America*, 13(1), 126–132. Charles Jay Stein, The Alexander Technique: Its Basic Principles Applied to the

Stein, C. J. (1999). The Alexander Technique: Its basic principles applied to the teaching and performing of stringed instruments. *American String Teacher*, 49(3), 74–77.

**A full article on this topic will be soon available at [www.tomascotik.com](http://www.tomascotik.com)**

Dr. Tomas Cotik currently teaches at University of Miami's Frost School of Music and Florida International University. He regularly gives master classes and lectures throughout the country. Hailed by Michael Tilson Thomas as "an excellent violinist," Tomas Cotik was a first-prize winner at the National Broadcast Music Competition in his native Argentina in 1997, and the winner of the Government of Canada Award for 2003-2005. An avid recording artist, Dr. Cotik is currently involved in more than a dozen CD, which include Schubert's complete works for violin and piano, Mozart's 16 sonatas. A former rotating concertmaster of the New World Symphony, Cotik has worked closely with members of the Cleveland, Miami, Pro Arte, Vogler, Vermeer, Tokyo and Endellion String Quartets. Dr. Cotik is a currently a member of the acclaimed Amernet String Quartet and the Cotik/Lin duo.

**Credits:**

Photography: So-Ming Kang  
Student, model, and assistant: Patricia Jancova



# Teaching and Learning Spiccato in Three Stages

**Dijana Ihas**  
Orchestra Chair



The sound produced by a spiccato bow stroke is one of the most unique articulations that bowed string instruments can project. This is a short and crisp, yet resonant articulation usually used in faster passages of music composed by composers beginning in the Classical era. The word spiccato is derived from an Italian verb that means “to separate” or “with humor.” Its “liveliness” comes from the energy that occurs when the bow bounces in “drop” and “lift” cyclical movements. Marked with a dot above or below the note head (like staccato), or sometimes simply denoted by the word spiccato written below the passage, spiccato presents itself in three variations: (a) light spiccato that is played right at the division between the middle and upper third of the bow (think of Mendelssohn’s *Simphonia #10*); (b) brushed spiccato that is played at the balance point of the bow (think of Mozart’s *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*); and (c) heavy spiccato that is played in the bow-frog area (think of Beethoven’s *Fifth Symphony*).

## Origination of spiccato

The origination of spiccato is closely related to the innovations that a French bow maker, François Xavier Tourte (1747/48–1835) made to the bow in collaboration with an Italian violin virtuoso Giovanni Battista Viotti (1755–1824) between 1785 and 1790. The innovations included use of premium Pernambuco wood and changing the arc of the bow from convex (away from the hair) to concave (towards the bow hair), thus making the bow stronger and more responsive, both of which allowed the bow to bounce off the string in a controlled way. It is Haydn who first composed pieces that required the spiccato bow stroke (think of Haydn’s *Surprise Symphony*).

## Spiccato principles

- When playing spiccato the bow makes either a “U” or “V” motion depending on whether the music dictates “brushed” (“U” shaped) or “vertical” (“V” shaped) spiccato.
- While a spiccato cycle consists of “drop” and “lift” motions, the “lift” part of the spiccato cycle is just the reaction to the “drop” part.
- Unlike sautillé (French for “springing”) that is considered to be rebounding and therefore a more uncontrolled type of bowing, spiccato is considered to be a controlled bow stroke.

## Pre-requisites for teaching spiccato

- The bow hold should be well balanced between the bent thumb and two middle fingers that are wrapped around the bow stick in the middle part of the middle joint. The right hand pinkie should be positioned on the

side of the bow stick octagon that is closest to the player (on violin and viola) and the right hand pointer should be wrapped around the bow stick in its first knuckle (one closest to the tip of the finger).

- The instrument (violin and viola) needs to be as parallel to the floor or ground as possible because that will prevent the bow from moving around in unwanted directions.

## Helpful hints

- When playing spiccato, the right arm should be at a slightly higher level than when playing a *detache* bowing style.
- The bow hair should be centered above the stick (at least in the early stages of learning spiccato) as that increases the resilient reaction of the bow, which makes jumps from string to string easier to execute.
- The bow hair should be touching the string closer to the bridge as that provides a firmer surface for bouncing against the string.
- The speed of the spiccato passage will dictate what area of the balance point needs to be used. Slower spiccato passages will be played with more control and accuracy if played closer to the frog and faster passages will be played with more accuracy if played closer to the middle part of the bow.

Following is the handbook for learning spiccato in private and classroom learning environments that can be shared with students. Strategies presented in this handbook are adapted from the string pedagogy approaches of Paul Rolland, Mimi Zweig, Rebecca Henry, George Bornoff, and Ivan Galamian.

## LEARNING SPICCATO IN THREE STAGES

*Spiccato*: derived from an Italian word for “separated.”

Spiccato is an off string bow stroke played at the balance point of bow. There are three types of spiccato: light, brushed, and heavy.

## BEGINNING STAGE

Steps #2–8 to be practiced on open strings. Metronome for steps #2–7 to be on  $\text{♩} = 52$ . Step #8 to be practiced without metronome.

### Step #1 “Finding the Balance Point”

Place the stick of the bow on the top of the first two fingers of the right hand until you find the fulcrum or spot where the bow balances. This should be around 6-7 inches away from the frog (about 1/3 of the way from the frog).



### Step #2 “Drop the Bow”

Hold the bow firmly (but not stiffly) and drop the bow onto the D and/or A string at the balance point using vertical motions.

### Step #3 “Drop and Draw” (Jeté)

The same as in step two but this time draw a down bow towards the upper-middle of the bow as soon as the bow touches the string. Follow the elbow movement with the eyes and keep the bow parallel to the bridge (“open the gate”). The arm will make a half circles.

### Step #4

Do step three using the up bow motion. Follow the elbow movement with the eyes and keep the bow parallel to the bridge (“close the gate”). The arm will make half circles.

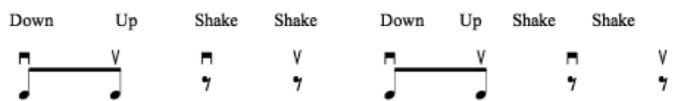
### Step #5 “Drop and Catch”

“Catch” the bow high in the air while using alternating up and down bow motions and making big half circles.



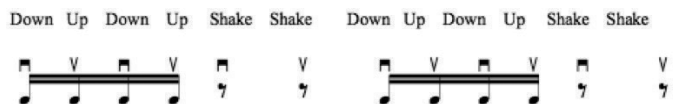
### Step #6 “Down Up, Shake, Shake”

During the “shake, shake” rests, move the arm in down and up bow directions to gain more mobility and control.



### Step #7 “Down Up, Down Up, Shake, Shake”

During the “shake, shake” rests, move the arm to gain more mobility and control.



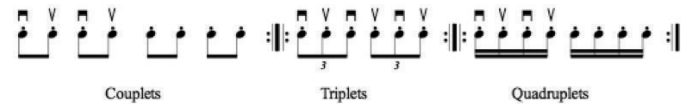
## Step #8 “The Drumroll”

Gradually increase and decrease the speed of the bounces. On the slower notes, move the bow further from the string. When playing faster notes, keep the bow closer to the string.



## INTERMEDIATE STAGE

The following sequence of couplets, triplets, and quadruplets should be practiced on the open string cycle and on scales. Couplets and quadruplets to be practiced with the up bow as starting direction. Metronome should be set to  $\text{♩} = 60$ .



## ADVANCED STAGE

To get more variety of spiccato (e.g., crisp, brushed, etc.), practice this exercise on any selected note in the higher or lower register of the instrument within the specified bow position



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# OMEA's Inaugural Day at the Capitol

**Jennifer Mohr Colett**

Advocacy Chair



This winter, sixteen music educators represented OMEA by presenting our policy agenda to legislators and advocating for better school funding at our inaugural Day at the Capitol. After planning diligently for over two years to create this statewide lobbying event and adopt a formal legislative agenda for our organization, we have reached a significant milestone in capacity-building and hope the Day at the Capitol will be an annual event.

With Oregon facing a serious budget shortfall this biennium, our strategy was to connect with as many state Senators and Representatives as possible to make sure they understand the facts: the Oregon Student Music Access Project (OSMAP) shows that, in the 2015–16 school year, over 10% of our public school students didn't have access to any music instruction by a certified music specialist during their curricular day even at current funding levels. As of February 2017, the Governor and the Joint Committee on Ways and Means had published budget recommendations that would mean a 6–7% average cut to school budgets. As music always suffers when school budgets are cut, OMEA's message was to create new revenue through tax reform, and to invest in education rather than just maintaining the current service level.

Our advocates came from as far north as Hillsboro, as far south and west as Coos Bay, and as far east as Lebanon, Oregon, with representation from all music disciplines including first year teachers all the way through semi-retired. Rather than do all of the organizing ourselves, the team joined over 400 other teachers, health care workers, and community members from around the state who make up the "A Better Oregon" coalition. Oregon Education Association (OEA), the teachers' union to which many OMEA members belong, and Service Employees International Union (SEIU) jointly planned the housing and training and took care of scheduling meetings with legislators ahead of time. Collaborating in this way allowed OMEA to gauge interest and turnout in this initial lobbying event without as much financial outlay. OEA graciously agreed to include all of our members in the event, regardless of whether they were OEA members, and they covered travel and housing costs for their members who came from afar, while OMEA covered our members who are not also OEA members.

Recruiting for the event took the form of a "Call to Action" message distributed via OMEA e-blast to all of our members about a month ahead of time. It summarized the urgent policy issues we faced

and directed interested members sign up on a Google Form created by our Advocacy Committee. The deadline to sign-up was 10 days before the event, at which point our Advocacy Chair relayed registration information to OEA and both organizations sent a confirmation message to participants. We also provided a few more links to read in preparation for the event (OMEA



Clockwise from back left: Mary Lou Boderman, Sarah Perkins, Andie Andeen, Blake Allen, Matt Mueller, Siera Kaup, Linnea Heichelheim, Tawnya Garcia, Kate Warren, Jennifer Mohr Colett, John Hillan, David Adee, DeLee Brown. Not pictured: Cameron Jerde, Raoul Bellis-Squires, Sally Kuhns



Over 400 advocates from the A Better Oregon coalition gather for training on Lobby Day before meeting with legislators.

legislative agenda, Lobby Day FAQ, etc.) and coordinated via e-mail to firm up housing and carpool plans.

When lobby day finally arrived, our team of advocates could not have been more brilliant in the way they represented OMEA and our profession. Everyone was prepared with their talking points, flexible and supportive in working alongside other advocates from inside and outside the profession, and politely assertive in taking opportunities to speak. Of course, none of this is a surprise, nor did it happen by chance. As musicians and educators, thinking on our feet while performing comes naturally. Some of the very skills and habits we teach — teamwork, communication, creativity, confidence — are the reason we were successful in handling the demands and surprises of the day.

Proceedings began early in the morning, with advocates carpooling to Salem by 8:30 AM. Those who lived further than 200 miles away traveled the evening before and stayed at The Grand Hotel in Salem. Registration, continental breakfast, and trainings were held at the Salem Convention Center in

the morning. Our group met briefly off to the side before the training to make sure everyone was clear on our objectives and had copies of the legislative agenda and OSMAP press release to give to their legislators.

The coalition training included facts about the history and current status of funding for vital services in Oregon. We learned that Oregon's economy is thriving, but increases to healthcare costs and state employee retirement liability mean a \$1.8 billion deficit. The problem is expected get worse over the next two to three biennia as more workers retire. Back in the 1970s, Oregon businesses contributed 18% of the general fund via taxes, but that number went down to about 6% after changes to tax law in the 1990s. The Oregon constitution requires education to be fully funded, and the Quality Education Model (QEM) is our roadmap for that, but education has never been funded to QEM since it was instituted in 2001. We need about \$2 billion more for education than the Governor and Legislative Co-chairs have suggested to meet QEM. Large businesses in Oregon still pay the lowest tax rate in the nation. The legislature has the power to create a new gross receipts tax on large businesses to ensure they pay their fair share and generate game-changing new revenue to dedicate specifically to education, healthcare, and seniors this term.

We were then organized in groups according to where we live and vote. Each group met with their Senator and then Representative for about 15 minutes. During the meetings, everyone introduced themselves and said why they came out to advocate, then one or two group members shared a story about how the impending budget cuts would affect them and those they support. Our OMEA team shared about the OSMAP results and emphasized that students deserve a well-rounded education. Kate Warren and Tawnya Garcia talked about what music does for students in the David Douglas School District:

*We teach at an incredible middle school in one of the best school districts for music. We have band, orchestra, and choir full time from middle school through high school as well as full time music teachers at the elementary level. Our district has a high percentage of students that come from adverse environments. With our music programs, we are helping students stay in school, get the best education possible, and become a more empathetic, creative part of humanity! Sometimes, the fight for the most basic ideals feels overwhelming and exhausting. Please invest in the future by providing adequate funding for education.*

Each meeting concluded with an ask, **“Dear legislator, will you choose families over corporate profits by finally making corporations pay their fair share for schools and services in Oregon?”** and the legislator



Kate Warren of Portland and Tawnya Garcia of Happy Valley awaiting their first meeting with a legislator. Both teach in the David Douglas School District.



Matt Mueller of Salem and Linnea Heichelheim of Beaverton attend a House Education Committee meeting at the State Capitol between meetings with their legislators.



was presented with a poster to check and sign. Most groups posed for a picture to celebrate the successful meetings — especially if their legislator signed on to support.

Our coalition covered almost all legislative districts in Oregon, but even within just our organization, we contacted 14 of 60 House Representatives and 12 of 30 Senators. Between meetings, we connected with other educators from our area and introduced friends. A delicious box lunch was provided by OEA and many of us gathered on the Capitol steps for a solidarity rally at noon.

Mary Lou Boderman greeted a local newspaper reporter and shared our OSMAP Press Release. One of our goals is to get the word out about the OSMAP results and to train other advocates on how to use it to push for improved results at the district level. Sarah Perkins, band and choir director at Seven Oak Middle School in the Lebanon School District, mentioned that she and her teaching partner are using the OSMAP to analyze what music programs in similarly-sized districts are offering in preparation for proposing new investments in Lebanon's program to their administrators.

The feedback from participants about OMEA Day at the Capitol was very positive. Trainings were well-organized and meetings flowed smoothly. Shuttles from the training location to the Capitol building were appreciated, but some opted for a brisk 10-minute walk. We'll keep these things in mind for next time, especially if we ever want to go "solo" in planning a Lobby Day.

Due to the large size of our constituent groups, we didn't have time to cover our entire OMEA agenda in the meeting with officials, so we stuck to our first and second legislative priorities – funding. Even so, participants said they found tremendous value in advocating with a coalition, and we decided to proceed with our original plan of joining the coalition for a second lobby day on March 27th.

*"It is advantageous to us as music educators to work alongside our fellow educators. Partnering with OEA magnifies our voice. It also gives us an opportunity to advance our profession in the eyes of our colleagues. Music will be fully funded when education is fully funded. This is certainly worthy work." — DeLee Brown*

Our day concluded with a gathering at Bentley's Grill at The Grand Hotel in Salem. This was the perfect ending to an exciting day, and allowed us to finally sit down as one large group after being split into constituent groups for hours. A few members



Sally Kuhns of Portland and her team of constituents got their House Rep, Jennifer Williamson, to sign the pledge!



Raoul Bellis-Squires of Beaverton asks his House Rep, Sherri Malstrom, about her budget priorities.



Blake Allen is Fine Arts TOSA for the Beaverton School District and lives in Hillsboro. His group included teachers and other service workers who are constituents of House Representative Susan McLain.

had a long drive home and couldn't stay, but the rest of us relished in an hour of "shop talk," sharing reports from our day, and enjoying a much-needed snack.

OMEA has been working hard toward the goal of statewide lobbying for a long time — transitioning to a 501(c)(3) organization several years ago, then organizing an advocacy committee that has met regularly since 2014, completing research on music access in Oregon (OSMAP), building relationships with other like-minded advocates, and crafting a formal legislative agenda. This first Day at the Capitol opens a wonderful new chapter in our history. Now we just need to engage more members in the work of building relationships with elected leaders over the long term and holding them accountable for making the right decisions for our students. You can help by sharing this article with a few friends today. Please stay tuned for news about next year's lobby day!

*Special thanks to OEA President Hanna Vaandering, Organizer Jenny Smith, and Campaign Consultant Emily McLain for their collaborative support as we joined forces on lobby day.*



Clockwise from left: Sally Kuhns, Jennifer Mohr Colett, Blake Allen, DeLee Brown, Matt Mueller, Linnea Heichelheim, Cameron Jerde, Mary Lou Boderman

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# Jazz Column

## Dan Davey

Director of Jazz Studies, Mt. Hood Community College



What an exciting year this has been in jazz education for Oregon! The old OBDA Jazz Adjudication Rubrics have been updated to closely align with the format of the State Band Rubrics. Many festivals across the state have already used these rubrics and directors have seen increased consistency in scoring and adjudication results. Your students should have a clearer understanding of their achievements and their areas in need of improvement.

As a result, OMEA will host its first annual OMEA State Jazz Competition this year. The festival will invite the two highest scoring Oregon jazz ensembles from each division at festivals using the new adjudication rubrics. This year's festival will be held on Saturday, May 20th at Mt. Hood Community College. The addition of this festival will help jazz ensembles gain administrative support and continue to elevate the level of jazz education in our schools across the state.

This year is my first year as your OMEA Jazz Chair and also my first year involved with the All-State Jazz Band. There was an alarmingly low number of students who auditioned for the ensemble this year; enough so that the future of the All-State Jazz Band may be in jeopardy. There are many potential factors that contribute to the decrease in audition numbers, but it is important for our state's music education that we continue to offer this elite jazz experience for our students.

Your students should be aware that they are able and encouraged to audition for both the All-State Jazz and Concert Bands. Understandably, some students may feel their odds are greater for making the Concert Bands because there are more seats available. Auditioning for both would give them the opportunity to choose one if they make both.

As you continue your rehearsals for the year and prepare for upcoming festivals, I wanted to provide some improvisation tips and resources to consider for you and your students.

### Improvisation Concepts

There are so many ways to approach improvisation and even more ways to teach it. Often times, we think so much about teaching the correct note selection that we neglect all the other aspects of improvisation that many of our students already understand. In conversation, we deliver a phrase without considering each word. We use vocal inflection, diction, passion, and our vocabulary to convey our message. Of course note selection is important, but not in place of articulation, phrasing, dynamics, feel, rhythm, technique, tone or most importantly, the groove!

I recently attended the Jazz Education Network (JEN) conference in New Orleans. Victor Wooten, a bass player everyone should know, talked about his approach to teaching improvisation

to young musicians. He described a young baby who uses no words but makes sounds that the parents understand through the emotion behind them. As children learn to speak, they mimic adults and do not always form full and proper sentences. They sometimes use words incorrectly but the meaning within is obvious. Victor suggested that perhaps teaching students to only use the "correct notes" when improvising prohibits them from using and understanding the function of all twelve notes within the key. Why not let your students use the chromatic scale and discover which notes portray the sound they are mimicking? The feel, emotion, and musicality is crucial in making this work. He suggested that, "if the note is right, but the feel is wrong, it will not sound good. If the note is wrong, but the feel is right, it will sound great. EMOTION, INTENTION, and FEEL are the keys."

That being said, students do need to learn how to navigate through chord changes. One way that has proven successful for me is through teaching II-V-I progressions. Your jazz program should flower out of your concert program and connections should be made to what they learn in their concert ensembles. Your students hopefully know their major scales and that they relate to a II-V-I progression, one of the most common and frequently used progressions in jazz and modern music. Help your students identify these progressions – they are everywhere!

The II-7 chord uses the dorian scale (the major scale starting on scale degree 2) while the V7 chord uses a mixolydian scale (the major scale starting on scale degree 5). The Imaj7 chord uses the major (or ionian) scale. Connecting all of these into one progression will yield the fact that the major scale can be used for each of these three chords. Giving them the knowledge of the dorian and mixolydian scale terminology will guide their ears towards that particular sound.

Select a different II-V-I progression to start each of your jazz rehearsals and then turn it into a solo or group improvisation activity. I have found that students who are hesitant to improvise alone are excited to test the waters when no one is listening specifically to them. Create a safe environment for your students to make mistakes and learn which notes sound dissonant verses consonant. Ask other students what they liked about the solo they just heard. Talk about ways to increase or decrease excitement or intensity in your improvisation. Repetition, increasing rhythm, changing articulation, varying volume, and switching registers are ways to increase excitement while doing the opposite will decrease the intensity.

Encourage your students to plot out the “story” of their solo. Are they going to come in hot and heavy and gradually decrease the intensity? Are they going to start simple and gradually build to the end or peak in the middle with a taper to their last phrase? Teach them to develop their storyline. There is no right or wrong answer and your students will be excited to have this creative control!

Saxophonist Jerry Bergonzi has a series of books that deal with melodic improvisation and structures around improvising. His first volume uses a series of permutations for each chord. Scale degrees 1, 2, 3, and 5 are used for major and dominant chords. Scale degrees 1, 3, 4, and 5 are used for minor chords. There is a large number of permutations that can be made using those four notes alone (1345, 3154, 2135, 5132, etc.). As a rehearsal warmup, teach your students the chord progressions for one of your tunes. Have them create their own permutation and play that pattern for each chord while your drummer plays a groove. They will love the challenge and you can assign one permutation for them to work on per week.

For those students who have a difficult time navigating chord changes, there are a few tricks. Circle every fourth chord and have them “check in” on those chords. They can play whatever they want with a good feel for the rest but they have to focus on playing the circled chords correctly. Another option is similar to a cantus firmus approach (yes from your days in counterpoint). Help your student select one note from each chord to outline

a path through the progression. The selected notes could be a guide tone (3rd or 7th of the chord) or a particular tension or color note that the student feels are appropriate. They can then embellish those selected notes rhythmically or with neighbor tones and a great groove.

Sometimes students suffer from a lack of creativity in their rhythmic improvisation. Have them write out a sentence for each phrase of their solo. Play the rhythm of that sentence with their choice of melodic material. They may choose to say, “Last weekend, I went skiing on Mt. Hood and had a BLAST!” You will most likely find that they even deliver the musical phrase with inflection.

If you have a student who tends to play one long run-on sentence of every note they have ever imagined, teach them to develop short melodic motifs. Direct your student to Lee Morgan’s trumpet solo on *Moanin’* and listen to the development of his solo. You can find his solo on YouTube with the notated transcription. Lee plays one simple melodic motif, repeats it adding a few notes, and repeats it a third time with an improvised ending to the phrase. You hear a complete thought and you understand it from start to finish. He then begins with a second motif and does the same. This is all part of the larger storyline and a great way to develop a solo that has continuity.

In the end, it is all about the groove and a likeable melody! Happy improvising!

## “Great Music Must at Once be Surprising and Inevitable”

**Jeff Hornick**

OMEA General Music Chair

To start, I’d like to give a hearty thanks to Corey Alston and the rest of the team for putting on a superb conference. We may not have 47 sessions in each area like some larger states but, having been to both the Texas Bandmasters Association conference and the Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic, I would put the quality of our sessions up against any gathering. It was so nice this year getting to actually attend the sessions after several years of managing honor groups; I know that I came away refreshed and recharged and I hope that everyone else did too.

Regarding the honor groups, once again we had an amazing lineup of masterteachers working with our kids in the honor bands. I had the pleasure of watching all four honor bands rehearse and the things the conductors brought out of the students in just a couple of days were astounding. I would like to give a special thanks to the respective group managers for bringing in such wonderful clinicians for our students. If you’re not in the habit of watching any of the rehearsals, I would highly encourage you to take some time at the next conference and do



so. Yes, it is perhaps a little inconvenient, but it can really be an eye-opening experience.

One of the things that I enjoy most about listening to the honor groups rehearse and perform is the quality of the literature that is usually programmed. The quality of the music we put in front of our kids is the most important decision we make as educators, and I’ve spent a great deal of time thinking about this issue, especially after first reading a reprint of an op-ed piece in the *Washington Post* by the writer Stephen Budiansky. He’s not a teacher, or even a musician. He’s simply a parent (and a writer for *The Atlantic Monthly*) who had kids go through a public school music program, the difference being that he had access to some of the most respected people in the band world, including Tim Foley, retired conductor of the Marine Band in Washington, D.C.

His writings on music education can be found here: <http://www.budiansky.com/MUSIC.html>. If you have time, I'd encourage you to check out the rest of his site as well.

Another bit of writing on this same subject came up around the time of the conference, and I'd like to share it with you in its entirety. It's by the jazz musician and educator David Berger, who has written and transcribed many jazz charts. Mr. Berger has transcribed most of the charts for the *Essentially Ellington* series put out by Jazz at Lincoln Center. The link to the post is here: <http://www.suchsweetthundermusic.com/blogs/news/the-essence-of-art> The entire post, reprinted with his permission, reads:

*I hear so much music every day – songs, arrangements, compositions and solos. What makes some attractive, compelling or absolutely great? Honestly, for me, most music doesn't rise to even these levels. I've been told that I'm a musical snob, a purist, and a bunch of names that include 4-letter words. I'm OK with other people regarding me as an elitist. I don't want to spend my listening time on music that doesn't thrill me and that I can't learn from. You are what you eat. I firmly believe that my music is as good as it is because I have spent tens of thousands of hours listening, transcribing and studying the best music that I can find. But what makes this music so great?*

*One important truth is that great art of every kind must define the culture from which it came. Albert Murray said that Duke Ellington best described what it felt like to be an American in the 20th century. The same can be said of Hemingway and Jackson Pollack. The masters use the same basic material and techniques as their contemporaries, but their art transcends the styles of their day. Orson Welles said that geniuses are out of step with their times, yet they define their cultures more deeply than everyone else.*

*Great music must at once be surprising and inevitable. It must capture the opposites that exist in the universe. Even at our most joyful moments, somewhere in our consciousness we know that we will die someday. Simplicity and complexity need to exist concurrently. How the artist integrates them varies from piece to piece. Integrity is key. We start with a motif and develop it. The great artist tells a story that is to the point with no extraneous or unrelated material. The motif evolves through constant mutation. Lesser artists don't see the potential in their motif and merely present unrelated material rather than working with the central theme. Development needs to occur horizontally as well as vertically. Background becomes foreground, and vice versa. Content evolves out of technique and technique comes from content. Without this interdependence, a piece feels superficial and contrived. Each of the elements (rhythm, melody, harmony and orchestration) must be cohesive and yet evolve and constantly surprise. Solos rely as much on virtuosity as they do on content. So*

*often they are not so much about the "what" as they are about the "how." We accept a lower standard for improvised solos because there are so few players that can meet our compositional standards in the moment. The combination of virtuosity and the high wire act of watching art being created is a big draw. Maybe if jazz players spent more of their energy learning developmental skills rather than the majority of their time on harmony and technique, they might be able to achieve a higher level of artistic expression.*

*I just came from the Jazz Educators' Network Convention, where merchants from all over had their musical wares on display. Of the tens of thousands of arrangements being sold to school bands, how many rise to the level of the classic charts? I understand that there are limitations imposed by the lack of technical proficiency of the student performers, but all great art uses limitations to its advantage.*

*What I have found over my 55 years of involvement with student ensembles, is that with very few exceptions, the teachers choose music with little depth, nuance, and language. They want music that requires little more than playing the notes – music that can sound as good as possible with minimal rehearsal and emotional involvement. Music like this does little to inspire or educate either the listener or the performer. Why would a student playing mediocre to poor arrangements like jazz?*

*There are many jazz educators who have no interest playing older classic charts. In my opinion, those are the pieces they should be concentrating on, just as their orchestras play Mozart and Beethoven. I can't tell you how much an impression playing the Overture to *The Marriage of Figaro* made on me in high school. Great music transcends style. When we embrace greatness, it enters our subconscious and makes us better people. This is the subtle but powerful message of art; it doesn't beat us over the head with fire and brimstone; it gently leads by example. Don't be afraid of it. There is no downside. The more involved you are with great art, the more you will enjoy it, and the less satisfied you will be with lesser works. Perhaps other people will start calling you some of the same names I get called. You'll get used to it and maybe you'll even take pride in it.*

I think that it should go without saying that everything he says about jazz charts can be said about the music we put in front of our Concert Bands and Wind Ensembles. As with Budiansky's writings, I'd encourage you to check out the rest of Berger's blog. He's not shy about sharing his opinions but I find myself agreeing much more than not. (And, as a bonus, he's got an album of his music available for free on the website.) I hope that these writings have provided some inspiration, or at the least some things to think about. Best wishes to all for a successful, and musical rest of the year.

# Moving Forward Together

**Mari Schay**

OMEA General Music Chair



Very few of us set out to be elementary music teachers.

As young musicians, we typically worked to master our instruments or voices. With the development of our skills and musicianship, we were invited to join increasingly more refined and nuanced ensembles. We were artists who embraced the power of music to communicate something beyond what we could say with our words alone. We wanted to become music teachers to share our passion with the next generation.

And then an elementary position came along and we took it. Slam the brakes on refinement and nuance and say good-bye to communicating beauty. Instead, we are singing Bingo and listening to third graders squeak out Hot Cross Buns on their recorders.

Some of us come to realize that there is absolute beauty in a sincere rendition of Twinkle Twinkle Little Star sung by kindergarteners and that we can get to a place where there is some nuance to the music of ten-year-olds.

But it is hard and not all of us get there. The question is, why? Why is teaching elementary music so difficult and why is it that so many elementary music teachers seem so frustrated. Most importantly, why aren't we doing something about it?

Below, I will lay out some of the challenges and issue a challenge of my own.

## The Breadth of the Job

This job is really big. I'll use my position as an example. I teach every student in my school, preschool through fifth grade. That is seven years' worth of curriculum taught concurrently. I see each class in each grade for forty minutes about seven times per month for nine months and I have three classes per grade:

- 7** grade levels to plan
- 3** classes per grade
- 7** class sessions each per month
- 9** months per year
- 1,323** sessions per year
- 40** minutes each
- 52,920** minutes per year to plan and teach

Each year, I must fill 52,920 minutes with purposeful teaching so that my students learn to sing, read, move, and play instruments with skill. Each year, I must fill 52,920 minutes with joyful teaching so that my students love music enough to continue to participate in middle school and, hopefully, throughout their lives.

I must do this with the benefit of one semester of "Elementary Music Methods" (which was taught by a professor who had never taught elementary music). I must do this with a curriculum our district adopted ten years ago which was designed to be taught

by classroom teachers. It is not sequential; it is not well-rounded; it does not include a daily lesson plan. To be fair, it does include tons of songs, but it does not teach me how to use the songs to instill a passion for music. That is a lot of time to fill with very little to prepare me for the job and very few resources to support my planning.

## Working in Isolation

There are some schools with two music teachers, but not many. Most of us work in isolation in our buildings or even in our communities. The closest colleague we have is typically the PE teacher. (Mine is a really good guy who loves to sing and dance, so I am very lucky in that regard.)

Some principals have great respect for music as an integral part of a child's education and some do not. Some simply view the music teacher as a solution to the problem of teacher preps. Few read music and fewer still could (or would) jump in and cover a class for us. (Again, mine is a wonderful person who inspires me to bring my best every day.)

Some districts have time for Professional Learning Teams and have enough music teachers to form a team. Most do not. (And again, I struck gold here. Nine of us meet once a week to collaborate and share planning.)

But there are so many teachers who are trying to fill their 52,920 minutes per year alone. No colleagues, no mentors, no support.

## External Forces

Then there are the school priorities over which we have so little control. We can probably all agree that testing has become such a force in elementary schools that it controls almost everything we do. Can't schedule your concert then --- it's testing time. (I understand.) Can't have a rehearsal before the concert --- it would interfere with required reading minutes. (We'll make do.) Can you double up classes this week so we can get all the testing in? (Of course.)

Some of us do not have a classroom in which to teach. Some of our classrooms do not have the most basic resources for students to make music - no drums, Orff instruments, recorders, ukuleles or guitars - or do not have enough for every student to play together. (Would they ask four kids to share a desk, a text book, and a single pencil?)

## Let's Do Something About It

I have made the whole thing sound depressing and difficult. And it can be.

But, it can also be the best job in the school; one that gives you more energy than it drains. You can be the person who gives kids an opportunity to experience ambiguity, creativity, and community.

To do this job alone is very challenging, but we do not have to be isolated. We can come together as music teachers within our districts, regions, and our state.

In the year that I have left as your General Music Chair, it is my goal that we develop our community, whether in person or online, so that no matter how remote your school, you will have the support of mentors and the collaboration of colleagues.

Let's fill our 52,920 minutes together.

## My Challenge for Elementary Music Teachers in Oregon

**1. Mentoring** - We have started an informal mentoring program matching two experienced mentors to every music teacher requesting support. I hope you will reach out to each other and form relationships. Those with less experience, ask your mentors for help with whatever you need: curriculum development, classroom management, or a reality check. Those with more experience, ask what your mentee needs to make their job better. Go out for coffee if you are in the same region or book time for a phone call if you are not. It is our responsibility to improve the state of music education in Oregon. This starts with supporting each other as we learn our jobs.

**2. Sharing sessions** - At our conference this year, we were able to have a sharing session that was a highlight for many attendees. It was unplanned and there was no agenda, just a chance to share ideas that we have found successful and a chance to ask questions of each other about implementation of curriculum. This will be a scheduled part of our conference next year.

I would like to challenge someone in each region of the state to host a sharing session at least once per year. You can set up a theme if you want or ask each person to bring one thing to share. You could choose a few songs and ask people to bring their ideas for how to use those songs. Whatever you think will work. Something is better than nothing.

**3. Join the online community** - There is a Facebook page called "Oregon Elementary Music Teachers." You can use that to ask general questions or post ideas or success stories. There is also a website set up by Val Ellett, our NW Regional NAFME General Music Representative, called: [oregonelementarymusic.org](http://oregonelementarymusic.org). On the website, there are links for professional development, standards, advocacy, and other relevant areas.

**4. Present at our conference** - Year after year, conference attendees seem to prefer the local presenters over the headliners. I think it is because these are the people who actually do our job.

They know what is real and what is practical. I found myself so much more energized and inspired by the sessions presented by Stephanie Benischek, Kendra Kay Friar, and Erica Lindgren because they were teaching me real things I could put into real practice.

If you have a specialty or an area of strength, share it at the conference next January. You do not have to go it alone --- present with a colleague or a team. You do not need any credentials other than being one of us. Our hope this year is to create our entire elementary session line up from regular music teachers who do the job we do.

## Share the joy

Share the great moments in your teaching with at least one colleague. Email your mentor, post it on Facebook, pick up the phone and call a friend, or tell your principal.

This job is hard, but it is incredibly rewarding. It is filled with little moments of beauty and powerful moments of joy. Use those moments to keep yourself and others motivated.

## Coda

If you need support with any of the above ideas - how to present at OMEA, hosting a sharing event, or if you would like to participate in our mentoring program - please email me: [mari\\_schay@ddsd40.org](mailto:mari_schay@ddsd40.org) or post to the Oregon Elementary Music Teachers Facebook page.



The advertisement for Soundwaves Recording features the company logo at the top, which includes the word "Soundwaves" in a stylized font with a wave graphic and "RECORDING" underneath. The main body of the ad is split into two columns. The left column has a black background with white text that reads "RECORD YOUR NEXT CONCERT!" followed by contact information: "For information contact: 216-269-9673 Tom@Soundwaves.org" and a Facebook link "We're Social! Like us on Facebook". The right column has a light gray background with black text that says "Visit our online music catalog for Music Educators!" and lists "Thousands of recordings. All teaching levels CDs, DVDs, and audio downloads". At the bottom of the ad is the logo for "MEtunes" (with a stylized 'e') and "TUNES FOR MUSIC EDUCATORS", along with the website address "www.soundwaves.org".

# How and Why to Incorporate Movement in Choral Rehearsals

**Kathy Briggs**

OMEA President Elect



The use of movement in the choral rehearsal has yielded enthusiastic support from conductors, producing numerous studies, presentations, and articles demonstrating movement's effectiveness as a teaching technique and encouraging conductors to include movement in their rehearsals. A conductor's decision to use movement should be based on a firm pedagogical foundation, not viewed as a "trick" or gimmick for choirs, and it is advantageous if this pedagogical knowledge is shared with students. Movement activities in rehearsal may be perceived as a foolish use of time by singers if directors fail to share the reason movement is used. When singers are unclear about the purpose of an activity or participate with indifference, movement has little to no effect on the sound of the choir. Students who understand singing to be a whole-body activity and understand the purpose of movement exercises in the choral rehearsal, however, are more likely to participate in an engaged manner, in turn improving their musical performance. Singers appreciate knowing why they are asked to participate in any activity, and will better understand the benefit of a movement exercise if their conductor makes a point to explain the rationale for it. Researchers have shown that when pedagogical theory is shared, students perceive movement exercises in the choral rehearsal to be beneficial to themselves as individuals, and to the choir as a whole in the following ways: keeping themselves alert, engaged, and ready to sing; improved breathing technique and increased breath support; improved singing technique (tone, posture, diction); improved accuracy (pitch, rhythm, intonation, balance); and especially singing more expressively (dynamics, emotion, phrasing, tone, energy, staccato/legato, overall musicality, etc.).

While rehearsals incorporating successful movement exercises may produce musical improvement and positive attitudes among singers, ill-prepared attempts to add movement may have the opposite effect. The success of movement exercises is dependent upon many factors, including: (1) singers' understanding of the musical and educational value of the exercise; (2) the conductor's preparation for, pedagogical understanding, and comfort level with movement; (3) singers' comfort level with and trust in their conductor; (4) regularity of the use of movement in rehearsals; and (5) overall participation by singers in the ensemble. When movement exercises result in musical improvement, singers' attitudes toward movement exercises are positive, and their perceptions of the movement's educational and musical value are high. Students who feel awkward or uncomfortable at first gradually warm to the use of movement as they see musical results and understand how movement improves their performance. However, when participation, understanding, and leadership

are lacking, movement exercises tend to result in little musical improvement, accompanied by less favorable attitudes and value for singers.

## SIX CRITERIA FOR SUCCESSFUL USE OF MOVEMENT IN REHEARSAL

**1. Conductor understands the pedagogical rationale for what they are doing and why. Movement is not a gimmick.**

Warm-ups preparing students physically and mentally to sing are both necessary and enjoyable for most singers. Group stretches, back rubs, and even simple yoga moves are wonderful ways students can prepare for singing by increasing breath support and releasing physical tension, and are beneficial as a transition physically and mentally from their other classes or activities to focusing on choral singing.

Outside of the physical benefits of preparing the mind and body for singing, one of the most compelling theories regarding the use of movement is the connection with metaphor. Musicians frequently describe musical terms through metaphors of physical movement. "We need to hit that accent." "The descant line should float." "The phrase needs to grow toward measure 93." "Let's have our tone spin as we sustain." These are just a few examples of the colorful, descriptive language conductors use when working with students. When we transfer these verbal metaphors – "hit, float, grow, spin" – to physical movement, our singers experience these non-visual and non-tangible musical descriptions personally and physically, thus connecting and understanding at a deeper level. The use of physical movement allows us to experience what we hear and feel but cannot see in music. Dr. Therees Hubbard's research on this connection is a fascinating and informative study on the topic.

Rudolph Laban created a lexicon of movement descriptors (known as Laban Movement Analysis or LMA) that can help conductors develop a movement vocabulary of their own when working with musicians. LMA descriptors such as float, punch, glide, slash, dab, wring, flick, and press are transferrable to music when describing articulations, tone color, dynamics, and a myriad of other musical elements. Instead of verbally



describing music with similar words, choirs who physically move their bodies demonstrating the musical metaphor will have a stronger connection to the music and the desired outcome. When all moving together, physical application of musical terms as metaphors creates cohesive understanding within the choir. Movement while singing creates muscle memory within the choir and students remember that which is physically experienced and learned much better than what is merely spoken. Kinesthetic memory is strong. Conductors may then incorporate the movements experienced in rehearsals into conducting patterns and gestures as a means to communicate and inspire while performing.

The less talk and more movement a conductor has in rehearsal, the more the singers will retain. Once movement has been used to establish a connection with a certain sound or musical concept, a simple movement from the conductor can be used to remind students of the work of previous rehearsals instead of explaining repeatedly what needs to be improved. Physical movement also provides teachers with an instant, visual assessment of singers' understanding of concepts. For example, if singers cannot all snap at the precise moment of a cut-off, then they most likely do not know when to stop singing or apply their ending diction together.

## **2. Singers understand the value and purpose of the activity.**

The connection between metaphor, music, and movement is relatively simple – we use movement terminology in music to describe what we hear but cannot see. This rationale is a concept that is understandable by singers in most choirs, from elementary through collegiate. When teachers share this pedagogy with their students, singers feel respected and empowered with the knowledge. The movements are perceived as a worthwhile educational and musical activity with the purpose of improving their sound, and not merely as a random “goofy” exercise. When students understand the reason behind an activity, along with the research of why it and how it works, they will be more invested in the activity thus enhancing the musical outcome.

## **3. Conductor is confident and comfortable with the activity.**

Be brave. Being human makes teachers relatable, and if you make a mistake while moving it shows students it is okay for them to make mistakes, too. Do all of the movements with your choir. Teachers who themselves demonstrate movement in rehearsal will be more successful in leading their students to do the same. Conductors new to incorporating movement can start small – hand and arm gestures to demonstrate the shape of a phrase, for example. By choosing a four- to eight-measure phrase and focusing on just one musical element (dynamics, articulations, phrasing, etc.), a teacher can choose a few physical movements or gestures to enhance the element, and then practice the movements on their own to build confidence.

As one does this more frequently with students, the variety of movements and ideas will increase, along with confidence.

## **4. Singers trust and are comfortable with the conductor.**

Trust and rapport between a conductor and a choir is a rich topic within itself, but regarding movement, a conductor who employs the previously mentioned criteria can establish the use of movement as a worthwhile endeavor. As a teacher leads students toward a deeper understanding of how and why the movement is used, students trust that the activity has been thoughtfully developed for the choir's success. Explaining to students that movement is used to incorporate different learning styles (visual, aural, kinesthetic, and tactile) and the connection between metaphor, movement, and kinesthetic memory builds confidence in the conductor's knowledge and ability to lead the ensemble.

Trust is built between a conductor and singers when students feel their input is valued. After the use of movement is introduced, along with the rationale for the activity, it is highly engaging and beneficial to ask singers to come up with their own physical movements to achieve a musical goal. This often results in high levels of engagement and participation as ideas, discussion, and movements are student-generated, creating a sense of ownership and investment in the performance among singers.

Students who witness their teacher fully participating in movement feel less risk in moving themselves. If a conductor feels awkward or uncomfortable with a movement, it may be a good indicator that the singers might feel the same way. If this is the case, being able to laugh at one's self can create a sense of relatability and good-natured humor within the choir, or a different movement can be used. A conductor's willingness to move to student-generated movements will in turn increase the likelihood of students moving to teacher-generated movements. If students are hearing or feeling results, they will continue with an activity, especially if it takes place in an environment where it is okay to laugh at one's self and students feel safe and comfortable.

## **5. Movement is used regularly in rehearsal.**

Students' inhibitions decrease as movement becomes a regular part of the rehearsal process, and connections between movement and music start to feel genuine with regular use. If movement is only used sporadically, the focus tends to be solely on the movements because it is novel. The more frequently movement is used in rehearsals the more successful it becomes in eliciting musical improvement, as long as teachers and students regularly “mix it up.” Monotony in any rehearsal causes even the best activities to lose their effectiveness. Some regularly-used movements to reinforce concepts in warm-ups, (for example, various hand shapes in front of the face to help form vowels) are excellent, but movements should evolve and adapt to the specific music or concepts being learned.

## 6. Overall participation of students is high and students are actively engaged.

If students are instructed to step or walk on the beat and they merely shuffle along, musical improvement is not happening. If singers are reluctant to engage, start small – incorporate a few small movements in warm-ups, a few gestures while singing a song – but do so on a regular basis. In time, gradually increase the use of movement or incorporate bigger physical movements. Ask students for verbal metaphors to describe what the music or lyrics are expressing and how they might add a movement to communicate this in their sound. As students start to hear the improvement in their sound and feel more comfortable, engagement will increase, thus further improving results.

In conclusion, movement – when presented well – is a powerful pedagogical and musical tool for rehearsals that singers find highly beneficial and enjoyable. Conductors interested in learning more are encouraged to seek out the numerous articles found in the *Music Educators Journal* and the *Choral Journal* on this topic. A non-exhaustive list of resources is below.

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# An Insider's View on Teaching Flute

## E. Paige Wheeler

Brigham Young University-Idaho

You never truly know what something is like until you have done it for yourself. I mean, think about when you started riding a bike. You knew there was pedaling involved, some turning here and there, and somehow you had to balance on it. It is not until you were actually on the bike that you wondered how anyone could possibly do all of those things at the same time. Well, my experience was sort of the same. Except it was twenty fifth graders instead of pedals, and there was no fun breeze brushing my hair back, just pent up potential energy. It was only going to be me and them, and I was afraid to even walk in the room. It was not until I walked in the room that I became acutely aware of myself. How must I have looked to those students? Their eyes followed my every move as I walked to the front of the class. I felt like a new animal on show at the zoo. "See attraction number five, flute teacher on her first day of teaching," sounded in my mind. I tried to ignore my spiraling thoughts and just focus on the task at hand, teaching the flute

to twenty students who were looking at me like, "wait, why are they looking impressed?" Oh, they liked the cursive, "Welcome," I just wrote on the whiteboard. This was the "in" I had been looking for. The introductions were easy. Little did I know that introductions would be the only easy thing that happened until the end of the year. I asked them to pull out their flutes expecting that they could do that much. I wanted to tell the head music teacher that my students already knew how to put their instruments together and play a few notes. Half of them did not even know how to work their cases, or how put the instrument together. Even fewer could make a sound on the first day. I thought it was a disaster.

Being a music teacher, especially to beginning students, is challenging. It is not until you actually start teaching, that you wonder how anyone could juggle instructing students on their instruments, teach a whole class notes and rhythms, and

manage a classroom at the same time. I would like to share with you three tips I learned while teaching flute. They are: Forgetting yourself, being willing to be adaptable, and showing your love of music. Every teaching experience is different because every child is different. However, if these three tips are applied, it will help improve your teaching and the learning of your students.

### **Forget Yourself**

During one of those beginning weeks I thought it was going to be most effective to teach them by repetition. "Straighten up, I am going to be paying particular attention to your posture today," I opened with this statement to the class. Immediately, I was greeted with nervous, pained, and annoyed faces. I did not understand why they felt this way. Having good posture was the only way they were going to be able to get a full breath and play their best. I told them this and still there was no response. After a whole class of gently reminding them about their posture, I asked them at the end of class if they remembered what we had discussed as being good posture. "Sit at the front of your chair with your back away from the back of the chair," was all they could remember. I reminded them at least five times during the class about not putting their pinkies under their A-flat keys. I could not understand why they could not remember.

Repetition is one way that we commit information to memory. One way. There are dozens of others available to us. It is all about picking the right one for the class and age group. Also, when I first started I was really self-conscious and nervous in front of my class. I worried what they thought about me, if my handwriting was too messy on the board, and I wondered if they even liked me. Not being able to teach them such a simple concept did not inspire my confidence in my teaching abilities.

I was having such a difficult time that I decided to consult another music teacher, Debbie. She told me, "One of the most important things to me about teaching music is making music an enjoyable time" (D. Wheeler, personal communication, February 15, 2015). I realized that I had not been making my class enjoyable, especially when it came to posture. The way I was teaching it was making them resent it, and even at times want to abandon it completely.

So I decided I would need to try something completely different. It would even require me to be a little silly. I would intentionally have to do something I considered embarrassing without any indication that it would work. I would have to forget myself in order for this to work.

The next day of class the students walked in as normal and got ready. However, they soon realized that something was different. Instead of starting the lesson, I just sat down in a chair and pantomimed that I was thinking. They started chatting among themselves until finally one of them asked, "What are you doing?" I promptly explained, "Well, I was thinking about whether or not I should tell you all a secret." This piqued their interests immediately. They nodded with excitement in their eyes. I leaned forward and whispered, "Clarinet players have

purple tongues." They were shocked. At this point I figured they would write me off as crazy and this idea would just be shot down. To my surprise, they laughed hysterically and began asking me about the other instruments. "Trumpet players have yellow lips, and drum players have green feet," I added. They could not contain their smiles and the room was filled with a good mood. Finally the question I had been waiting for surfaced. "What about flute players?" Everyone waited for the answer on baited breath. "Flute players...have pink pinkies!" I exclaimed. They loved it and, I asked them if they would show their neighbors their beautiful pinkies. After this died down, I made it seem as if it was business as usual.

When we started playing I did not even have to ask them to show me good posture. They already sat toward the front of their chairs and held their flutes high. However, they all were still forgetting one thing. I put my hand on my forehead as if I were searching, and with a confused look asked, "Where did those lovely pink pinkies go?" They laughed and remembered to pull them out from under the key. From then on, they remembered without my having to ask them, and they no longer were annoyed at my constant reminders.

### **Being Adaptable**

"Alright, students, to make a sound on the flute you have to blow across it, not in it," I instructed. I demonstrated how this was done and then asked them to try. All I heard were puffs of air being exhaled. I thought maybe they had not understood me so I explained it the same way in different words. Only one student got a sound this time. Again, I tried to rephrase it in different words, but on day one we had reached our cap of students who could make a sound. The other students left feeling disappointed, and I just felt frustrated. We were not at the place I thought we would be by the end of the day. "How many of you took your flute home and practiced it?" I asked the next day. No one raised their hands. Now we would have to do more work next time, shoving the schedule I had for them further back. I cringed at the thought that maybe they would never be able to make a sound.

As a teacher, it is important to adapt lesson plans to meet the needs of where the students are at. At first, I thought that strict adherence to the lessons I had planned out was the main goal. However, these plans were made before I even had the chance to meet these students. Instead of feeling inspired to reach up for the goal, they felt discouraged because the effort they had put in was obviously not enough for me and my expectations.

I think that the important part, in the beginning, is not how fast they progress but how much effort they are willing to put in. I knew that I would teach these students to play, but effort and self-motivation had to come from them alone. I asked Nadine Luke, a professor at Brigham Young University-Idaho, about her experience teaching flute and she said, "You have to be able to teach the fundamentals from all different perspectives and be able to adapt to the learning styles your students have" (N. Luke, personal communication, May 17, 2016). At first, it may be

hard to recognize the different learning styles of students, but if you are putting in the effort to help them learn, you will find a way to teach them.

The next day the students came to class, I asked, "Will you all please practice trying to make a noise out of your flute?" They did, and I came around to them one at a time as everyone worked on making a sound. Some of them were able to find it on their own just by experimenting until they found the right mouth shape. For those that raised their hand for help, I tried many different ways of explaining to them how it worked until one fit. Still, there was one girl who could not figure out how to make a sound out of her flute. She started to look disappointed and frustrated like I had been on the first day. "I can't make any noise yet. I don't think I should be in your class," she complained. "The important part is 'yet,'" I explained. "Are you willing to keep trying?" "Yes," she answered. "That's all I ask. If you will keep trying to learn then I will keep trying to teach," I said. "Okay!" She smiled.

For two weeks after this point she practiced forming notes with the class even though she could not make a sound yet. She put in effort in class and on her own time at home. I worked with her trying out different techniques I knew and asked other teachers if they had any ideas that might help. Nothing had worked until one day in class when she was asking me about a note. She went to play it the best she could and this beautiful note echoed around the classroom. Everyone clapped and cheered for her because we all knew how hard she had worked to make a sound on her flute. I still remember the look on her face when she said, "I can play!"

### **Showing Your Love of Music**

As with anything we love, we often want to share this love by telling someone about it. However, it is often that they will not truly understand it until they find out for themselves. I remember this happening to me during class when one of my students asked, "Why did you want to teach us?" I thought for a moment and replied, "I love music." I proceeded to explain to them why, and I explained a few things that music had taught me. I thought that this alone would help inspire them to love music too. I hoped that this love of music would grow and that they would want to stay with music throughout their lives. I asked them why they came to be taught. "I like coming to class, it is fun," or, "I like learning new things," were their responses. I wondered how I would be able to teach them a love of music, because it was certainly not something I could tell them.

The arts can be powerful outlets for anyone, but that is something that students have to come to know and decide for themselves. As Debbie put it, "Music is made to be enjoyed, to evoke emotion, and to provide a personal oasis" (D. Wheeler, personal communication, February 15, 2015). To me this is exactly what music is, and I wanted all of my students to feel this way. However, as I came to learn, this is something that they have to learn on their own. I can bring this knowledge to them, but they are the ones that get to make the choice whether or not to accept it.

One of my favorite memories from teaching happened when I decided to teach the students with a popular song they enjoyed. It started from my wanting to teach them about the importance of rhythm in a song. I wrote notes up on the board and played them the "rhythmless" tune. I asked them what song it was. They threw out some guesses, but no one knew. I said, maybe I should have someone else play it. So, I asked another one of the students to play it but they still had no idea what the tune was. I then proceeded to draw a beat pattern under the notes. "Let's see if you can all guess this now that I'm playing it with the right rhythm." I started playing and they instantly recognized the chorus of Let It Go from the movie Frozen.

I thought I had only taught them the importance of rhythm that day, but soon after my students began looking up their favorite songs and learning to play them. One girl asked me, "I learned this song over the weekend. I practiced it for three hours. Could I play it for the class?" This surprised me because it had previously been a struggle for them to play the required twenty minutes a day, much less, three hours. "I would love it if you shared with the class," was my eager response. I came to find out that she was not alone, many of the other students in the class decided to learn how to play their own favorite songs. Even though they had more difficult notes and rhythms, they still took the time to learn them. They learned to love music as they found a new ability to express themselves.

I think that the principles of these three tips, forgetting yourself, being adaptable, and showing your love, can be applied to many forms of learning. However, they are especially important to teaching music. I do not think I would have come to know these things for myself, or as deeply, if I had not had the chance to teach flute to these twenty fifth graders. Now when I look back on that first day of class, I can look past the fear I felt. From applying these tips, I was able to become a better medium for which my students could come to know and love the flute and music as well.



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