At the ASTA 2015 National Conference, a session entitled, “Jazz Improvisation for Middle School Strings: A Step-by-Step Approach” helped to erase the fear of the unknown of introducing jazz to young musicians. The session was presented by Jeremy Woolstenhulme.
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Lynn Harrell
Features

22  Cello Forum
315 Years of Wisdom: Six eminent cellists share their experience and expertise as teachers

Anyone who has studied a musical instrument knows the significance of having a wonderful teacher: one who loves music and the instrument, exemplifies the highest artistic standards, and works tirelessly to foster the maximum potential of each student.

by Cornelia Watkins

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The Eclectic Violist

Aside from being part of the section in a school orchestra, or one of four voices in a non-classical string quartet, how do we provide models and authentically engage the violists who are emerging from our programs?

by Nancy Campbell

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Why the Order of Finger Introduction Matters in Beginning String Instruction

Eventual mastery of any musical instrument depends heavily on the quality of early instruction on that instrument. The mental concepts and physical habits formed (for better or worse) within the first year of instruction will directly affect all future performance and learning on the instrument.

by Sandy Goldie

38  Improvisation: A Pedagogical Method for Teaching Greater Expressivity and Musicality in String Playing

How often do you hear your students comment on the richness of their musical experiences? Does it seem as if there’s a constant struggle to get your students to focus on and achieve their artistic and personal goals regarding musical expression?

by Daniel Sabra
Message from the President
by Stephen Benham

Studio Teaching Tips
Using iPads in Teaching and Practice
by Susanna Klein

K-12 Teaching Tips
Fiddle: Improvising from the Beginning: Jazz
String Curriculum for Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth
Grade String Orchestra
by Cristina Seaborn

My Turn
Kudos Winner: My Professor Was Right—
Joining ASTA Was One of the Smartest
Things I Ever Did
by Cybèle D’Ambrosio

Association News
Award and grant announcements, new publications,
and other association-related information

Showcase
The latest news from members of the
String Industry Council

Reviews
Of books, music, and software

Mission Statement
To enrich lives through the joy of teaching and playing stringed instruments.

• an open sharing of ideas;
• benefits, services, and activities responsive to the needs of all members;
• development of strong state leadership and chapters;
• enhancing the image and visibility of string teaching and study;
• advocacy for string education; and
• an inclusive community of string teachers and players.

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Dear colleagues,

It’s hard to believe that it’s already been several weeks since the conclusion of the 2015 ASTA Conference in Salt Lake City. A big thanks goes to the ASTA staff leadership team, led by senior staff Beth Danner-Knight, Mary Jane Dye, and Gabi Sandoz, along with those key staff who helped with onsite management and logistics, problem-solving and in member-relations. Deanna Tompkins and Mary Wagner did an incredible job organizing sessions and making sure that there was something for everyone. Libby Dietrich helped keep the National Orchestra Festival running like clockwork. As so many of you told me personally, this was one of the very best conferences ASTA has had—we are grateful to our local hosts in Salt Lake City, to our local organizers (led by Andy Dabczynski and Eric Hanson) and the entire Utah ASTA State Chapter. The generous support of our corporate partners also helped underwrite concerts, clinics and other related costs. Truly, an event like this takes a team effort.

Though conference weeks are exhausting, Kris and I left inspired by so many things. I wanted to share them with you here:

- The passion and energy of our membership—you remain committed to excellence in all that you do. In the exhibit hall I met an attendee who had traveled nearly 24 hours to come from the Philippines. We stopped for a brief conversation in which she told me that she hadn’t missed a single hour of presentations, from our sunrise sessions to the late night events. She said, “I’ll sleep when I get home, but I can’t miss anything now!”
- An incredible array of diverse conference sessions on a huge range of topics—the expertise within our association is truly stunning.
- New member initiatives to increase the scope of string playing and teaching, through local outreach programs—your stories of missionary-like perseverance in the face of overwhelming obstacles were so moving.
- Tim Lautzenheiser’s reminders about the value of teachers and what they mean to our culture and to our future. You play a vital role in shaping the hearts and minds of the next generation.
- The artistry and virtuosity of our performers, from Lynn Harrell and the Brigham Young Orchestra, to the Ying Quartet and Christian Howes. The opening ceremony performance of the American Heritage Lyceum Philharmonic, led by Kayson Brown, showed us the power of music to create beauty and move us spiritually.
- The high level of talent on display during the solo competition finals, where the performances by our finalists showed unbelievable maturity, grace and a depth of musical understanding that transfixed the crowd.

Opportunities ahead:

- With each conference I’m also mindful of the challenges and opportunities ahead for our profession. Some of you are facing financial hardships in your districts. *ASTA remains committed to an active advocacy agenda through the Music Education Policy Roundtable and local advocacy efforts.*
- Continued membership growth. I’m proud that ASTA’s membership has grown by nearly 10 percent in the past year, but we know that we are not yet reaching the majority of string teachers. *We are committed to increasing the benefits of ASTA membership and helping you communicate the value of belonging to the ASTA community to your non-member colleagues.*
- Supporting our new and future teachers as they transition into the profession. *We are developing a strong mentorship program for our young teachers in addition to providing programming specifically targeted to that demographic.*
• Our finances are in very good shape, and we believe that now is the time to reinvest in ourselves. We are working strategically with our financial advisors to maximize our investment power and also reinvest in new programs.
• ASTACAP is one of ASTA’s fastest growing programs. We will maintain support for this program at a high level, in both live and online formats.
• Our curriculum is consistently held up as a model for the entire profession. We are now linking the curriculum directly to ASTACAP in order to make this resource more usable by the studio teachers.
• We continue to explore strategic partnerships. We are proud of our work with the Music Education Policy Roundtable, but we also are working to develop closer relationships with the Suzuki Association of the Americas, the International Suzuki Association and the National Association for Music Education.
• The search process for a new executive director is in full swing. This is a key hire for ASTA’s future, especially the next decade. We are holding interviews in May and hope to have a final decision by the end of June.

Please make your plans to attend the 2016 ASTA Conference in Tampa, March 2-5. We received more than 350 session applications and the conference selection committee has shared that the quality is very strong, with proposals submitted on a diverse range of topics. I can’t wait to share with you the slate of pre-conference opportunities that we are developing, which will include some first-time-ever offerings.

In closing, I want to thank each of you for belonging to ASTA. My travels around the country allow me to meet many of you in-person and see the outstanding work you are doing in your communities. Kudos to all of you!

With kind regards and best wishes,

Stephen Benham
benham@duq.edu

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Thank you to our Generous Donors!

A very special group of educators—those who have donated more than $500 to ASTA programs this year, were inducted into the Virtuoso Club at the recent national conference. They received onstage recognition at the opening ceremony along with a special pin. ASTA sincerely thanks them for their support.

- Joseph Conyers, ASTA board member-at-large
- Lynne Denig, ASTA board member-at-large
- Thomas Hartman
- Mary Beth Khamis
- David Littrell, ASTA past president
- Kay Logan
- Warren Loranger
- Nicole Moore
- Bob Phillips, ASTA’s current past president
- Pam Phillips
- Jeff Solow, past president, and
- Mary Wagner, past president
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Institutional String Education Award

The Ohio State University

ASTA Salutes

The Ohio State University

The first winner of ASTA’s inaugural Institutional String Education Award!

Congratulations to Dr. Robert Gillespie and The Ohio State University (OSU) for receiving this high honor and recognition for the truly outstanding work that has been done in establishing OSU as one of the nation’s leading universities in string music education over the past several decades.

This annual award brings attention to the excellent and impactful consequential work on performance, education, and outreach demonstrated by “schools of music” around the nation. It also strengthens and supports the five goals of the ASTA strategic plan: professional development and resources, our future and the next generation, building community, advocacy and outreach, and sustainability.
Today's Lesson:

As a member of the American String Teachers Association, you could get an additional discount on car insurance. GEICO can help with homeowners and renters insurance, too.
Recorded Conference Sessions Available for Member Viewing

Each year at the ASTA National Conference, a select number of sessions are recorded and placed on the ASTA website for future viewing by members. You can view them at your convenience on your PC or other device. To view, select sessions under “Online Learning” in the conference section. You must be logged in to enjoy this member-exclusive content.

Six ASTA Members Named Music Educator Award Quarterfinalists!

The Recording Academy and the GRAMMY Foundation have announced quarterfinalists for the 2016 Music Educator Award. A total of 213 music teachers from 194 cities across 42 states were selected, from more than 4,500 initial nominations. Current ASTA members selected for this recognition, and moving on in the selection process, include:

- Julian Gonzalez, Lilburn, Ga.
- Vivian Gonzalez, Miami, Fla. (running for the third straight year)
- Kirt Mosier, Lee’s Summit, Mo.
- Ulli Reiner, San Marcos, Calif.
- Matthew Rotjan Blauvelt, N.Y.
- Linda Versprille, Ladson, S.C.

The Music Educator Award was established to recognize current educators (K through college, public and private schools) who have made a significant and lasting contribution to the field of music education and who demonstrate a commitment to the broader cause of maintaining music education in the schools. Semifinalists for the award will be announced in September.

Congratulations to all 213 quarterfinalists and thanks to The Recording Academy and GRAMMY Foundation for recognizing these outstanding music educators!

Volunteer for ASTA

Thank you to the hundreds of ASTA members who volunteer every year to serve on committees, task forces, and program initiatives or who provide leadership at the state and college chapter levels—we couldn’t do it without you!

When you volunteer, in any capacity, you bond with the ASTA community and help to build its stellar reputation. So, gain visibility and share your leadership qualities by getting involved this coming year. Simply go to the ASTA website to view a complete list of committees along with mission statements. There also is a downloadable form to complete and return.

Whatever interest you may have, there is certain to be a spot that fits your skills or passion. Positions will be filled as openings become available.

We Need Your Remarkable Member Nominations for Kudos Program!

Help us identify ASTA members worthy of praise. Our Kudos program is recognizing ASTA members whose outstanding work and dedication in the field goes above and beyond and creates a lasting impact that can help to inspire others. Don’t be shy—you can even nominate yourself! Nominations should include member name, contact information, and a brief description of why you think this member deserves recognition (try to keep it to no more...
Make a Meaningful Donation to ASTA

ASTA is proud of providing support for string teachers and opportunities for students through partnership programs and events such as Codabows for America, Potter’s Instrument Awards, ASTA National Solo Competition, ASTA National Orchestra Festival, and the ASTA National Conference, where thousands of educational workshops and sessions have aided our members through the years.

Our fundraising campaign, “Giving in Harmony,” asks for a donation of $50 or more, but—the theme is not really the focus. The focus is providing a meaningful contribution that, combined with others, provides opportunities for children or young adults to advance their creativity and growth through strings.

Please make a tax-deductible contribution to ASTA that will continue our journey into the future. Your donation truly makes a difference! You may go to astaweb.com to make your donation online, add it to your membership renewal, or send a check payable to ASTA, 4155 Chain Bridge Road, Fairfax, VA 22030. A donation of $500 or more, annually, also includes on-stage recognition during the opening ceremony of the ASTA National Conference.

ASTACAP Offers Two Ways to Participate in Its Successful Program

The association and the ASTACAP Committee are working hard to provide all students easier access to the ASTACAP program, while keeping its core intact. The result is adding a new option for participation—an online exam.

You can still play in person at a state chapter event, which is always very popular and preferred by many, or use the new online exam when time and distance make it a challenge to participate. The online exam (available through DecisionDesk) bridges these concerns and is a convenient and excellent alternative. The handbook and repertoire are currently available to download on the ASTA homepage.

Dates

Students of ASTA members may use our DecisionDesk software to complete the levels of Foundation through 10. The first opportunity has passed, and the next one will be June 1 through June 30, 2015. In-person events are found by visiting your state chapter website or www.astaweb.com.

Background

ASTACAP is an 11-level curriculum for violin, viola, cello, double bass, and harp. It offers study materials and adjudication/feedback. The program has been a great success as a major motivator for students who practice more diligently in order to advance through the levels. Since 1998, thousands of students across several state chapters have taken the exams.

If you have questions, please contact Libby Dietrich, associate liaison for the ASTACAP Committee, at libby@astaweb.com.
ASTA Welcomes New and Renewing Members

The following list reflects individuals and organizations who joined or renewed their association membership between January 1, 2015 and March 31, 2015. Welcome to ASTA, or thank you for renewing your membership!

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315 Years of Wisdom

Six eminent cellists share their experience and expertise as teachers

Anyone who has studied a musical instrument knows the significance of having a wonderful teacher: one who loves music and the instrument, exemplifies the highest artistic standards, and works tirelessly to foster the maximum potential of each student. The pedagogues featured in this interview compilation exemplify this description to the highest degree. Through talent, hard work and extensive experience (with careers reaching far beyond these limited biographies), they have established themselves as legacy musicians and teachers—more than 300 years of experience between them. In one-on-one interviews, each answered questions focused on various aspects of their teaching. Their responses offer a glimpse into the guiding principles of their work, and the experiences and special people who helped shape their philosophies. Their distinct personalities and approaches—and common themes that emerge—create a mosaic of thought-provoking ideas for teachers of any instrument.

– Cornelia Watkins, cello forum editor

Joel Krohnick
Juilliard String Quartet; Faculty, University of Iowa, University of Massachusetts, California Institute of the Arts, Juilliard. Major teacher: Luigi Silva.

Ronald Leonard
Principal Cello, Los Angeles Philharmonic 1975-99; Faculty, Eastman School of Music, Colburn School, University of Southern California. Major teacher: Leonard Rose.

Norman Fischer
Concord String Quartet and Fischer Duo; Faculty, Dartmouth, Oberlin College, Rice University. Major teacher: Richard Kapuschinski.

Bonnie Hampton
Francesco Trio; Stanford, San Francisco Conservatory, Grinnell College, Juilliard. Major teacher: Pablo Casals.

Hans Jørgen Jensen
Recitalist and Soloist; Faculty, University of Houston, Northwestern University. Major teacher: Leonard Rose.

Laurence Lesser
Tchaikovsky Competition Laureate, 1966; Faculty, University of Southern California, Peabody, New England Conservatory. Major teacher: Gregor Piatigorsky.
Hampton: I’ve taught over 50 years. Margaret Rowell was the one who got me started when I was a teenager. There were a couple of boys who would have much rather been out playing baseball, but they needed some help with the cello, and she saw something in me and figured I could do it. And I’ve had to say that my first and early intention was to help them get a little better, hopefully, and to really enjoy music and enjoy playing.

Lesser: I’ve been teaching 60 years! When I was 16 my mother had a friend with a son three years younger than me who wanted to learn to play the cello. Our mothers got together and decided, why not let Larry give it a try? I’m very proud of that because he went on to graduate from Harvard Medical School and to this day plays string quartets as an amateur. I had a few students at Harvard, and when I returned home to Los Angeles I taught a great many nice people, most of whom were not advanced players at all. I learned a lot from teaching folks who were probably not going to become professional musicians. I took it very seriously and was sincere in trying to give them the best I could, but there were probably a lot of times when I was suggesting things that weren’t going to work. At the other end of the spectrum, as Piatigorsky’s assistant, I was working with enormously gifted people like Nathaniel Rosen, Jeffrey Solow and Stephen Kates—terrific players who were close to my age, so it was a little uncomfortable. But there was a situation where I had to be really sharp about what I was telling those people because it counted. So people are still subjecting themselves to me, and maybe I’ve learned a little something!

Jensen: I started teaching very early, when I was 19 years old after my second year doing undergraduate work in Denmark—I was the assistant to my teacher there. He gave me a student who had terrible vibrato, and he said it couldn’t be fixed, but I fixed it in four months. He couldn’t believe it, but I did it! So, from the first lesson until now, that’s 45 years.

Fischer: I figure that I’ve taught for over 50 years on and off. My first student was a neighborhood boy who was a few years younger than I was. I loved it and continued teaching as a student whenever I could possibly do that.

Krosnick: I’ve taught for 51 years. When I was 22 and a music and English major at Columbia College, I took a summer job at the University of Iowa replacing a German cellist, Hans Koelbel, in the Iowa String quartet, later called the Stradivari quartet. I found out that Professor Koelbel had passed away and the university offered me a position based on my playing. So before I had a college degree I was teaching. My subsequent positions at the University of Massachusetts, California Institute of the Arts and Juilliard were also at first based on my playing, and then only gradually on my teaching experience.

Leonard: My first job out of Curtis was in the Cleveland Orchestra. Leonard Rose needed to arrange a teacher for a boy in the Cleveland area, so he suggested me. So, at the old age of about 22, I started working with this boy! That was pretty much the beginning of the whole idea of teaching for me—I really took to it and enjoyed it. It was great to figure out all the various things that you have to do when you are showing someone else. A couple of years later there was a position in Rochester for principal cello and teaching in the preparatory department at Eastman, which is where I really got into teaching in a very heavy way. That was pretty much the beginning of my teaching career. It was a great change. I started to figure out all the various things you have to do when you are showing someone else. But Leonard Rose was really the one who pushed me into it. So I’ve been teaching 58 years now—almost a steady job!

What do students need from you again and again?

Fischer: One of the biggest issues is trying to reinforce their being organized about the work. You’re going to have just so much time to prepare repertoire, so you need clear goals. Of course, first-timers need extra guidance. For example: This is way too much for a lesson, this is too little; or you should be able to do this if you are practicing consistently. They also need to know how to use quiet time for mental practicing. Many students haven’t truly accessed this mental component yet. It has to do with pre-experiencing what they are about to do, coming up with a specific plan in its many dimensions. Sometimes it’s even as simple as playing scales without the cello, thinking about how you want to do that. This activates most of the brain—even the motor cortex is activated. There is so much new from neuroscience that is applicable to our work—it’s fascinating.

Hampton: Cello performance is a hard taskmaster, it’s a serious business, and students who have the intention of trying to make music central to their lives can have a wonderful time doing it, but one needs to work very, very hard. Everybody, everybody, who is accomplished, no matter how much talent, they’ve worked hard—we’ve all worked hard at various times. I think it is important to try to develop the most natural and the best physical habits in terms of the actual connection to the instrument. The thing is, that we work on so many levels that it’s very easy for the ear to get turned off. The pitch—developing a keen, sensitive ear—needs to be the number one priority, or at least one of the number one priorities! The point is that unless one is free, unless one’s body is free, one doesn’t hear well. It’s all connected—it’s all integrated. And, we must remember why one is doing this. Why learn to play an instrument? The answer is because one wants to play the music. The enthusiasm for the music is really crucial, yes! We work hard, but there is a real joy in it, too.
Leonard: The basic thing with new students is that you can never get away from fundamentals, and every one of them—no matter how well they play—they have to really know what they are doing. It always comes down to the certain ways the bow has to move, certain things that don’t work with vibrato, they have to be working on scales and arpeggios and thirds. Some people don’t believe in scales; I happen to very strongly. Although I admit I don’t spend as much time on scales as I used to; but I still expect them to be working on scales and arpeggios and thirds. Some things that don’t work with vibrato, they have to really know what they are doing. It always takes over—an instinct that has been informed by thoughts about how the phrases of the piece have been constructed, individually and together over long areas. But one doesn’t just play structure, any more than one just plays technique. One thinks about all of that and then one puts one’s instincts to work.

Lesser: The statement that I use almost every year: “I want you to understand that my ambition is to get rid of you.” That’s exactly what I say, and I’ve been saying it for years. Sometimes students look very worried, but I tell them from the beginning that we only have a certain amount of time to get them ready so they can go out on their own. I want them to learn to be their own teachers, but also to know that I am always there for them. Everything we do along the way will be with that goal in mind. So I’m not the kind of teacher to say, “Here is your Brahms F Major Sonata, copy my music, here are the bowings,” etc. I never do that, absolutely never. Instead we’ll agree on what they will work on, and then they have to start preparing it on their own and bring it to me. If they are doing something that I think is just not good, then it’s a chance to have a conversation about what they might do that’s better. It’s not a question of what I’m used to doing and they should copy that; this approach enables me to teach them how to think about what they are doing, and find answers to questions that I ask of them or they ask of themselves. My goal is to set them up so they can figure things out on their own. I guide them down the road so they know how to go down the road by themselves.

Of course, students need to learn the art of the cello, a most fundamental part of which is tone production, and I typically start with bow issues. I’m trying to set them up so they learn how to listen to themselves, and learn the equation between a sound and how it feels making it: “Here is a sound that I like and here is how I made it.” This way, they can do it again, so they use that to teach themselves. All through life they will encounter other musicians who have musical ideas but will not be equipped to tell them how to get that on the instrument. So if I don’t teach them that, then I have failed them.

What is your special ingredient with students?

Lesser: A lot of the work in setting up your relationship with a young player is to figure out how to communicate with one another so you’re not wasting time, and that’s very important because time is really precious. So from the beginning, I want them...
to understand what I expect from them, and what they can expect from me. I think they know that I’m very, very eager and determined to help them become the best they can be—that’s what I’m after. And then, you know, underneath all of this is I expect we are going to have some fun… that this can be a joyful kind of relationship. It’s not a prison!

Fischer: I am a fairly consistent person, balanced, and they know I won’t go to extremes. I don’t force them into things or scare them, I’m very readable in terms of my emotional condition, I don’t have to demonstrate what I’m feeling—they get an idea about that. I like to stay consistent and tracking for things and be able to do the same thing for them that I want them to do for themselves. You set up a paradigm for how to learn, how to play, how to achieve things that you want, and if that has been done well, it becomes a foundation for everything you do. So that’s my goal.

Jensen: Number one is that I really love what I do, and I love working on it. So I think the contagious joy of studying and actually having fun doing it, although it’s serious work, is really fun. And for me, I see the uniqueness in each person. There are a lot of fundamental things you do, of course, but it’s almost like a new experience teaching the cello with each student. After all these years and students, I can identify problems very fast. But when I teach, it is not just me teaching them, it is us together trying to find ways to figure things out. So I’m not talking down. I’m finding the answers through the student’s mind as much as through my own mind. So it’s never routine, it’s never boring… it’s fun.

Leonard: I work with everybody on sound. Of course, we want to develop our own personal sound, but very often a lot of these young people haven’t really learned to listen. Students come to me with a certain sound, and if I feel the vibrato is too fast, or too slow, or it goes from one extreme to the other. I try to impress upon them that there are many ways to use the vibrato, and how much you should use, and should you use your particular sound all the time? You need to look for and use different colors. Our ears can get accustomed to what we are doing so we no longer question what is going on, so it is so important to question, “How does this really sound?” They need to do this with the score in their mind, so I am continually asking them, what is happening in the orchestra now, what is going on in the piano part, what key is this in, what instrument is playing this? These are things they have to be aware of all the time.

Krosnick: I’m involved and use everything I teach: I practice scales, I try constantly to put in a better memory for my sound, better memory for pitches and harmonies, to think about the pieces I’m playing in terms of the harmonic and contrapuntal and motivic events, and a more personal reaction to what I’m hearing. So if I bring anything to them, it’s that I am not making speeches—what I’m talking about is what I actually do.

Hampton: I look at every student individually—I like to find out where students are coming from. I like to get a sense of what their background is, where they are, how they learn, how they work. I’m not a teacher who, when a student arrives, can just decide and say OK, we’re going to do this and that and the other. Every student needs something different, so I want to get to know the person. I want to get to know their playing. Once it becomes clear to me what direction we need to take, then it’s a two-way street, a partnership.

How did your teachers influence you?

Jensen: My first teacher was in Denmark, Asger Lund Christiansen. I remember that I had only played two months when he started me on the Saint-Saëns concerto. He had me play the first page for a very long time and control every note. That ability to go into great detail and really make all those details work—I learned that from him. Then I studied with Fournier. He had a refined sense of musicianship and that incredible, beautiful sound he had—very inspiring. Then the main thing from Rose was his beautiful sound, but also the control of vibrato. Nobody had ever worked on vibrato like that, how the bow is in control of the sound and the vibrato has to follow the bow. Also, Channing Robbins was Rose’s assistant—he was extremely helpful with specific technical things—he fixed my sautille after a few lessons with him.

With Rostropovich, not only did I learn from his recordings, but I also studied with him every day for one month in a master class in Switzerland. He had an incredible power of expression, and a huge dynamic range from very soft to just so powerful. When you experience that, it changes one’s concept on what is possible on the cello. Later, I observed many master classes at Indiana with Starker. He could pinpoint things with utmost precision without wasting a single word. A lot of times when you see a master class, people waste a lot of time, but Mr. Starker just would get right to the point. He was very specific. That was incredibly inspiring for me and changed how I look at things.

Fischer: I studied with the remarkable Richard Kapuscinski for four years at Oberlin, and I also worked with Claus Adam for one summer. That same summer I did four weeks of master classes in Sarasota with Bernie Greenhouse. Probably my most memorable lesson was working on the Carter Sonata with Bernie. Everything there was done in master classes, but when I told him I wanted to work on the Carter, he said, “You and I should meet one on one about this piece.” He cared a lot about the work because he had premiered it. He felt like it was his piece, and he wanted to make sure that we talked about it, working with sound and ways of turning phrases. So this was a special time. Not only because of what he had to say, but that he cared so much about the music, and he cared about my playing it, and he wanted to be sure we had an extra connection about it, that he was passing the torch.
Leonard: One thing I tell my students all the time is that it's important for them to go back to their teacher before they go on to any wonderful school and realize how much they should value what their teachers gave them in their early careers. My first teacher was someone who was never particularly well known, but she absolutely loved cello, loved everything she was doing, and she loved me. She was 100 percent behind me, and I think it had a huge effect on my whole career. And she directed me to the right teachers when she knew I was ready for a change.

And then studying with Leonard Rose, he, too, loved his students and was very proud of them. And when he was teaching he was totally involved. I try to emulate that in my own teaching. Mr. Rose was critical of himself to a fault, though. In a lesson, if he demonstrated out-of-tune, he would get so mad he'd sit and practice for a few minutes before we could go on with something else. He'd play the Dvořák Concerto 80 times a year, but if he missed a note at a concert he'd go back and practice like crazy after the concert. I don't like it when I mess up at a concert, but if I do, I realize that I'll just fix it. I'll go home and practice it, but it's not the end of the world. You are never going to be perfect, but you keep trying.

Hampton: I was very, very lucky because Margaret Rosnick was my first teacher, and she was such a great teacher and also a great person and spirit. She was very involved with us. But I remember hearing the Bach suites probably within a few months of my studying cello with her, and that was Casals, of course. So he was in my life from the beginning. Casals's inspiration was nature, that it would be natural. That was a word he used a lot. Not only in terms of connecting music with things that were natural, but also finding the most natural ways to do things in terms of playing, in terms of balance and bodily freedom. And it was all very unified. It was all one piece, it wasn't that you learned your technique and your this and your that. No, the music and learning the instrument was all connected, and the thinking was all very clear. And he was a very kind teacher, and very patient... and actually very insistent. He would stay with an issue or idea until he was sure you got it. And then what one ultimately did with it was one's own responsibility.

Lesser: I was lucky enough to have contact with lots of wonderful artists. I studied with Gregory Aller (father of Eleanor Aller of the Hollywood String Quartet) and Gabor Rejto when I was in high school. Three of my four years at Harvard I went down to New York to study with Leonard Rose. He had a really important point of view. I studied one year in Germany with Gaspar Cassadó, and I had a chance to play for Pablo Casals—all of this was just wonderful. But I think I learned my most important lessons about artistry and playing the cello from Piatigorsky, and his approach of trying to capture your intuition, your potential for artistry, in a way that expresses you.

Krosnick: I studied with Luigi Silva from the time I was 10 until I was 21. Mr. Silva would say, “Are you fishing around up there or do you know where you are going?” He taught me a disciplined use of my left hand in terms of mirroring the pitch structure of the piece of music in the shape of my hand and the placement of my hand and arm on the cello. For this, I thank him every day.

During this time I was growing up in New Haven, Connecticut, and my father was an amateur musician. One of his close friends was the great cellist Aldo Parisot. I never officially studied with Mr. Parisot—he knew I studied with Mr. Silva—but between the ages 12 and 17 I took hundreds of lessons with him! He'd come to our house to play chamber music, but he'd sneak up to my practice room and quietly say, “Play for me, Jô.” For years, I have had a special relationship with Mr. Parisot, to whom I am still “Jô.”

I also worked with Jens Nygaard, who was a conductor, a clarinet player and had been a prodigy violinist. Some people said he was crazy, some people said he was a genius. He simply knew in common sense physiology how the weight needed to be transferred to the instrument. He helped me understand about the alignment of my body and the simplest, most direct way of getting my arm weight into my hands and keeping it consistent no matter what I had to do on the instrument. God bless Jens Nygaard—he was tremendous. I revere Luigi Silva absolutely, and I hold in very dear memory my predecessor in the Juilliard Quartet, Claus Adam. But Jens was a very, very special man in my training.

Do you have advice for aspiring students and/or their preparatory teachers?

Fischer: When someone comes in to audition for school, they’re often very focused on having a hyper-performance, yet what we see are things they take for granted. They’re going for that high C shift, trying to be right about everything. But when they tune, we already know something important about them. It’s about their relationship with the instrument and the way they do things. You can tell if someone plays chronically out of tune or they’ve just missed a couple of notes—it’s usually pretty clear. In the end analysis, you’re looking for potential, and a relationship that is going to work. There are people who come here to audition and they play amazingly well, but I would never accept them because I can tell this just doesn’t work for me—I wouldn’t want this energy in my class. So I might take someone who is less advanced as an instrumentalist that I think will have more success with me in terms of what we’re doing and in terms of the school.
Hampton: I think that if a teacher is working well with a student, they need to work the way they work, the way they believe, the best they can. If you have a goal of studying with a particular teacher perhaps it might help knowing something about what is important to them, what kinds of musicians they are, both of which might give direction in preparation. But the point is, if a teacher is working well with a younger student, why change it? Students who have been fortunate to have good teaching, developing good habits from the beginning, they are free, balanced and work with the instrument in a very natural way. Also, right along with that, is of course, developing the ear because we are dealing with music, and we need a keen ear that is really hearing pitches and intonation because that is so crucial right from the beginning. If students are able to get along until the college age and are still having fairly serious problems with intonation, they have got a very, very tough job.

Lesser: When somebody comes and auditions for me, I don't expect them to play every note in tune, because nobody does. After 70 years, I still can't always play in tune—but I still try! And I don't expect that someone would come to me if they didn't need a teacher—they need to be taught. But we have to be able to hear. And I can usually tell pretty well whether students are aware of the fact that they are playing in tune or not. So I tend to shy away from people who I think don't know the difference, or if they are tight physically and having a hard time playing even fundamental things. What I do look for is someone I can relate to and are the most interesting to me in those human qualities: a good person, someone with talent and potential to grow and work well with me and all the people in my studio. I expect them to play for one another and learn from one another, so I won't accept someone I don't feel comfortable with as a person.

Leonard: Many teachers are unrealistic about their students’ level or their potential. It is a good idea to have them play for someone their teacher respects to get an opinion of where they stand in comparison to the competition. Also, it is very important to realize when it is time for the teacher to send their students on to someone else. My first teacher knew at one point that it was time to pass me on to someone else and I have always been grateful. I think too many teachers hang on to their gifted students for too long.

Also, audition DVDs should be recorded well. Often the piano is too loud, or the room has too much echo, or they are sitting on a living room couch or they are not wearing shoes… all these things say a lot about the individual. Sometimes I wonder if auditioners actually listen to the DVDs. It is a big deal because the level of playing is just astonishing these days, much higher than when I was a student. It would be a good idea to have their teacher or some third party listen to the recording.

Krosnick: I heard a student yesterday who is thinking of applying to Juilliard, certainly prodigiously gifted, playing the Elgar Concerto. I asked at one point, "How do you know where those notes are?" The student ultimately said absolutely the right answer: "I use my ear." But the answer is to put specific things, muscle memories as it were, in both hands that correspond with what you wish to hear out of the cello and in the music. The idea is, put something in your scales, put something in your learning of the piece, so that what you do with your hand corresponds to what you’re hearing. What I look for in a young person is some orderly sense of grammar and spelling of how the pitches are found, played and expressed in sound on the cello.

Jensen: I think it’s important to inspire the younger people to enjoy the process of building a solid technique, to find the joy of working on basic technique and etudes. Because you see, when people audition, they play a concerto and some Bach, and then the etude. Often the etudes just sound very bad, and it is very obvious that they really don’t enjoy that. I don’t understand why people don’t like to study etudes and technique, because for me it’s like a sport. There is a physical joy of playing an instrument. So I think it’s important that teachers of younger students learn to spend more time on that aspect, and understand that the process of practicing, fixing and building technique is just as important, and just as much fun as the joy of the music.

What “bigger picture” idea do you like to impart to your students?

Leonard: I encourage my students to teach because I think that teaching helps us to learn about ourselves. It makes you question yourself, and you start looking at things in a different way. I learned so much when I first started at the prep department at Eastman working with people of all ages and talents. In the orchestra, I was always studying myself. I remember so well looking down at my left hand during a rehearsal, knowing that I had been suggesting certain things about vibrato and suddenly realizing, “Hey, I’m not doing that! This is what I am actually doing.” It was a revelation to me, and it made a total change in my teaching.

Krosnick: I share my cooking, drawings and intense interest in literature (as furthered during my undergraduate time at Columbia College) with my students to help them see that life is a lot more than “up bow and down bow”… and I want them to know that the courage to be involved in music is about sharing your dreams with others as teacher, colleague, and performer of the music you love.

Lesser: The event we call a “concert” is a partnership between us who have a need to share our music with those who need it because they can’t produce it themselves. The most wonderful feeling from each side is that everyone benefits. And, with nothing but appreciation for recordings in all their formats, I don’t think anything can replace that direct communication of the maker of the sound and ear that receives it in the same space.
Jensen: I want them to understand how their desire to learn really speeds up the learning process. It’s been proven in lots of scientific experiments that the most important aspect of learning is having the thirst or the desire to accomplish the task. [And for the teacher] it’s always best if a student asks for help, because if a student is really hungry and eager to learn then you can really help them.

Fischer: There are three archetypes built into what we do: the musician, the athlete and the performer. Central to the musician is the imagination—you want to know everything about this piece and have a plan so that when you sit down to play you know exactly how you want this to sound. The athlete knows how the body works optimally, drawing from disciplines like Alexander, Yoga and what we’re learning from science; the athlete knows how the cello and bow work together to resonate optimally; and ultimately the athlete creates the most simple, efficient and intelligent interface between the body and the instrument. The performer’s primary characteristic is enthusiasm, and that is how you engage with your audience. The performer becomes essentially a tour guide, helping the audience to hear and experience all the wonderful “moments” in the work as richly as possible. Musicians usually need to function well with at least two of these archetypes, so we work to enhance our strengths, and strengthen what is weakest.

Hampton: We are musicians first, with the cello as the vehicle of our musical expression. Growing as a musician is a lifelong journey. First we develop our craft, and find our musical “voice,” the qualities of sound to express the music, our alive sense of rhythm and tempo and finally the musical understanding, both culturally and in our search for the composer’s intention. As performers and teachers, our strongest guiding force is the music itself. As young cellists our first job is learn to play the instrument and its repertoire, and to take every performing opportunity possible. Then, when ready, we should try to experience everything. Teaching pushes us to think about how to help another person learn, not just how we do things ourselves. With chamber music, and all its joys, we learn fine ensemble playing and develop skills that carry over into orchestral playing. By opening ourselves to many experiences we may discover hidden talents that point us in the direction of a gratifying musical life. The important thing is to keep that joy and love of music which started us off in the first place.

Thoughts on a life devoted to music and teaching...

Lesser: The reason I teach, the reason I play is because I’m trying to communicate something I feel that I want others to hear. So when I’m working with students I may have to deal with what you call the nuts and bolts of technical issues, but I try to put it all in the bigger context of what it is they are communicating, what it is they are trying to say. I’m really, really happy when I listen to those I’m working with and I can say that they’re different from one another, because they just don’t sound alike. I think the underlying principle in my teaching is how to help a talented young person gain the intellectual/emotional/physical/artistic equipment that enables them to become who they are meant to be.

Krosnick: There is a real relationship between teaching and performing—even if I were retired from performing, I would be working and practicing and trying to work on the things I have been talking about. I will not stop doing that. I remember Bonnie Hampton told me that she visited Casals when he was 93, and she told him about the various performing she was doing and he asked, “Are you still practicing scales?” She said yes. He said, “Because I do every day.” And somebody apparently asked him why in his 90s he still practiced every day. He answered, “I’m in hopes of getting better.”

Fischer: Music is actually the only thing we do as human beings that encompasses the complete spectrum of thought, feeling and being a person. As we devote ourselves toward developing our art, individually [and with our students], we’re shepherding and reinforcing and hopefully changing the lives of people through playing and teaching music. And then there is the possibility of what music does for not only those people but also the other people who come in contact with those people, keeping that thread alive. So, in a way, we have pushed people forward as enriched, caring human beings, and hopefully our students will do the same.

Leonard: I have always realized that a lot of luck is involved in my career in teaching and performing, a lot of hard work. In that regard I have been so fortunate, teaching at wonderful schools with highly motivated students who love what they are doing. Probably the only way you are going to be happy in music is to love what you do, so it’s great to see these kids going out into the world getting positions in string quartets and orchestras. I do hear from students—all of a sudden I’ll hear from a former student saying they got a job, or somebody saying what a difference I made in their lives. What can be better than that?

Jensen: I see myself as a person who totally loves what I do, and I love the process. When I first started I didn’t have as many students who were dedicated, but then I started to attract students who
are very serious and dedicated. Having students like that is very inspiring. It’s like you jump on a train and it gets pulled along by the sheer force of everybody’s excitement. The joy of doing it is what matters… I don’t really care what comes later. That’s absolutely true. You get inspired, and it’s incredible.

Hampton: I have to say that there is a purpose for having taught so long. For quite a few years I have been invited around to different colleges in different parts of the country, and it’s wonderful to see students from those earlier years contributing to their communities, growing in their own musical lives. Some of them are doing so well, just so well. The playing today is just getting better and better. And it’s also wonderful having some “grandkids,” those students of students. Because you can say, OK, that’s why you’ve been doing this. And that has been one of the greatest joys.

Cornelia Watkins is a lecturer in music and preparatory cello instructor at Rice University. She has served on the TexASTA board and several national ASTA committees, and was the 2010 recipient of the State Chapter Leadership Award. She speaks at conferences across the country and is a member of the Wisconsin CMP committee. Watkins has written articles for several periodicals including AST and The Strad, and is the author of two books on music and teaching.

Don’t miss this essential book from Elizabeth A.H. Green that is indispensable for the orchestra teacher! Green discusses the essence of orchestral bowing, the fourteen basic bowings, different styles, and tricks of the trade. Includes section for teachers concerning the several phases of orchestral instruction.


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The Eclectic Violin

by Nancy Campbell

Aside from being part of the section in a school orchestra, or one of four voices in a non-classical string quartet, how do we provide models and authentically engage the violists who are emerging from our programs? How can studio teachers present the idea of creating a unique voice for the viola in this world of eclectic styles?

Whether or not you embrace the current term “Eclectic Strings” to encompass music from a vast range of sources, as an educator you know that the inclusion of a broad spectrum of musical styles and cultures in your teaching heightens student engagement, relevance and gratification. A wealth of new compositions have emerged in the years since ASTA held its first stand-alone conference in Columbus, Ohio, in 2003, which included the first “Alternative Styles” track and competition. Since that time, numerous individual performers and a wide variety of performing groups have achieved popularity and cultivated listening audiences on par with Western classical traditions. Violists continue to strive for a unique “sonic identity” in classical and non-classical music (Wallace).

Caught in the middle

A lot of traditional American and European music was conceived by and handed down for fiddlers, so naturally violinists are the primary string players in many non-classical ensembles. Not nearly as many boast a true “Middle Fiddle” player.

Bob Phillips, past president of ASTA and director of string publications for Alfred Music, explains that in participating in any eclectic ensemble, it is a matter of embracing your role in the ensemble. “The bass has its role in any musical ensemble; we play the bass line and occasionally, in the upper reaches, we might get a solo. The cello has taken an interesting role crossing between bass line, chopping and melody.” Violinists, or fiddlers, have an established place in the string quartet, bluegrass ensemble or jazz combo. “Violists must have an understanding of their role; some of the time they have to play a cool rhythmic part or chop, play lower harmony, or an occasional solo” (personal correspondence, March 2015).

In the jazz idiom, pioneers of blues, swing and bebop were violinists par-excellence. Currently more violinists and violists are choosing the benefits of the added range in five- and six-string instruments and all modes of amplification in order to be heard. The Internet abounds with progressive cellists covering rock tunes and improvising. So, where does the “real” violist fit in?

Groundbreaking violists

Teachers wishing to introduce young violists to authentic performances on their instruments have exemplary models to explore.

Berklee String Department Chair and Violist, David Wallace, published an article in the Journal of the American Viola Society in 2009 (Volume 25, Number 1, pg. 33-38) on electric viola players, including Martha Mooke, Mark Wood, Asha Mevlana and Daryl Silberman. All four of these groundbreakers had a solid foundation in classical technique and went on to search for something more. Wallace himself easily transitions from classical performances and master classes to shredding viola licks in head-banging rock covers like “The End of the World as We Know It” on YouTube.

Martha Mooke is a performing violinist and composer who is eager to show the world the capabilities of the viola, both acoustic and electric:

“Basically, my goal is about evolution in music. Pushing the envelope and breaking down stereotypes and barriers – of course, I’m a violist, so I lead by example, but this applies to all string players… and by extension, anyone interested in pursuing a musical career. In current times, it’s very challenging to earn a living from being a section viola player. I’ve always emphasized versatility and having the skills to show up and play, whether it’s at Lincoln Center, a local club or a recording session where the only form of notated music is a sheet of notebook paper with some chords scribbled on it” (personal correspondence, February 2015).

Mooke created a workshop called “Violas on the Verge” that she’s presented a number of times at ASTA conferences. In this program, she encourages young players to look beyond conventional boundaries and shape a new frontier. Her own compositions “defy classification” (ASCAP Concert Music Award). She was a part of the Yamaha and New York Viola Society Day of Progressive Viola, along with multi-faceted violist John Graham and former Turtle Island String Quartet (TISQ) violist Danny Seidenberg. Graham spent 25 years as a top freelance violinist in New York and taught at Eastman School of Music. Seidenberg may be best known for his 12 years with TISQ, and has more recently recorded with his trio, the Unbande, with the unusual combination of two violas and the Chapman Stick.

Though I am writing specifically about the viola for this forum, we should consider the universal nature of creating music. Wallace’s colleague at Berklee, Mimi Rabson, offers this advice for any musician:

“I feel very strongly that the instrument should not be a factor in musical exploration. Violists should, like every other musician, play the music that they love regardless of instrumentation. I think that is how the magic happens. All sorts of new music will be invented when violists begin playing punk or rock or R&B or whatever it is they love. I’m very much looking forward to hearing it all” (personal correspondence, February 2015).

Lark Quartet violist, Kathryn Lockwood, lives a dual life as a classical performer and performer of world music. Her background is “totally classical,” coming to the U.S. from Australia to study with Donald McInnes. She went on to become a founding member of the Pacific Quartet.
Lockwood describes her playing:
“The sound of a viola taking a trip around the world. Not staying in an all-inclusive or an American brand hotel, but staying in a local place, where you don't hear English and really feel and absorb a local culture. I'm essentially a classical violist but I've learned to play in lots of wonderful styles and have had to make decisions based on how to best emulate what I hear from the original instrumentation” (personal correspondence, February 2015).

Her unique explorations with her husband and collaborator, percussionist Yousif Sheronick, have led to several commissioned works from composers such as Glen Velez, John Patitucci, Phillip Glass and Kenji Bunch. Bunch is a Juilliard trained player and composer with lots of commissions and quite a few pieces written for his own performances. He is well-known for his compositions for unique instrumentations, and is a violist who brings a multi-cultural side to his improvisations and compositions.

Kallie Ciechomski has played in the New World Symphony and now commissions new works for solo viola. She has been a part of the Bang on a Can festival and performed with Snarky Puppy. When she first attended Oberlin Conservatory, known for its contemporary music, she was “pretty disinterested.” But throughout her time there Ciechomski was immersed in the new music scene and encouraged by Tim Weiss, director of the Contemporary Music Ensemble, and violist Karen Ritscher.

Ritscher offers some advice that would be beneficial for mentoring budding eclectic violists:

As a mentor, I am committed to serving the "wholeness" of my students. I want them to be happy and able to really enjoy their music making. Decision-making in the career path is an important skill, and I endeavor to help my students make choices that serve their unique paths, whether it's orchestral playing, teaching, playing as soloists, chamber musicians, jazz musicians or whatever else feeds their souls. I emphasize integrity and creativity above everything else, because those traits lead to the most satisfying life paths (K. Ritscher, personal correspondence, February 2014).

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Asked about her experience at the Bang on a Can Festival, Ciechomski responded that “… Now that I’m living in New York, I connect with the players. It’s kind of a cultish thing (Bang on a Can Festival) where people are so excited once they’re there; and once you leave you’re part of the Bang on a Can family. They help us promote our work and connect with each other. They’re a wonderful resource and a pretty infectious group of people. It’s a very exciting approach to music.” She advises students to spend time exploring the sounds they make and improvising on their own and in groups.

“Improvising is both a really useful skill and very fun” (personal correspondence, March 2015).

To be sure, there are more groundbreaking violists to be found in venues large and small. Something they all have in common is a spirit of adventure and willingness to step outside their comfort zone to explore their sound and create new musical combinations.

Finding our voice
As violists, we all had reasons for choosing to play this marvelous and mysterious instrument. In most cases, the reason is because we were drawn to the magical power of the sound. As the chair of the first ASTA Alternative Styles track, violist and professor of Music Education at Brigham Young University, Andy Dabcynski puts it perfectly:

I think it is quite evident that all of us who have chosen to play viola do so because there is something that we recognize in the instrument that is “us,” that is “our voice.” Of course, there is the richness and singular quality of the viola sound, its unique texture, its resonance, its range — all of those qualities that draw us to the instrument. But there’s also a certain ethic that goes hand-in-glove with playing the viola in “classical" music: we recognize that we’re rarely going to be the soloist; we put up with the built-in physical and geographical obstacles of the instrument; we accept that our role is usually a supportive one; we relish the challenge to sculpt our inner musical lines so that they enhance the outer parts; and, with good grace we bear the role of scapegoat in musical humor. I suspect those roles are somewhat analogous to how most violists live their lives (personal communication, February 2015).

When students ask me why there are so many viola jokes out there, I like to tell them it’s because “we can take it.” It shows our strength and resolve. Most violists I know have a good sense of humor, a healthy sense of self, flexibility, and are adept at negotiating the territory in the middle of the string quartet and the center of the orchestra. When I choose beginning students to put on the viola, I look for these traits as an indicator of future success on the instrument. Wouldn’t these traits also be helpful in training students to step outside of their boundaries and try non-traditional musical and learning styles?

Improvising
In her section, “Improvisation for Violists” in the ASTA publication Playing and Teaching the Viola, violin Katrina Wreede offers strategies for incorporating improvisation in teaching, practice and performance:

“… Violists now and in the future may need to read a lead sheet, accompany by ear, and swing and rock even in symphonies. These skills can motivate practice and validate diverse musical interests in students. They are important for job creation, new artistic opportunities and finding human connections through appreciating and playing the music of many peoples. We can inspire the next generation of violists to challenge themselves and the musical status quo by becoming more conversant with improvisation. The results will include better violists with more sensitive ensemble skills, a wider variety of compositions at our disposal, and, in fact, more free-thinking musical citizens having creative fun contributing to a diverse assortment of musical styles” (p. 173).

Accessibility
Publishers have many offerings representing eclectic styles — Jazz Philharmonic (Sabien and Phillips), Basic Fiddlers Philharmonic (Dabcynski & Phillips), Mariachi Philharmonic (John Nieto & Phillips). The instrumentation of these method books is flexible and offers all instruments the opportunity for
so long, learning how to create bass lines and inner voice harmony options.

**Authentic Stylistic Concerns (World Music, Not Whirled Music)**

When seeking out music that is appropriate and authentic for the viola, Martin Norgaard, assistant professor of music education at Georgia State University and author of *Jazz Viola Wizard Junior, Books 1 and 2*, refers to the Suzuki Method adaptations of the early violin books for the viola — the melodies were transposed down a fifth, which made the pedagogy work well for viola:

“My main advice would be to make sure the melody sits well, because if it doesn’t, you lose the allure. Fiddle tunes were conceived to sit well on the violin. If you take them down a fifth for the viola you retain the original fingerings. Some tunes with the range of no more than an octave-and-a-half may also work down an octave” (personal correspondence, February 2015).

The *Fiddlers Philharmonic* series presents both a “solo key,” which is often the original key for violin, and a “group key,” which is often down a fifth, which makes the melody more playable on the viola and cello. Phillips agrees with Norgaard on fiddling for violists. “The viola speaks more slowly, so sometimes there are some technical issues. If technique makes playing awkward, violists must make their decisions based on ease of playing.”

Jazz is a somewhat different story. The solos of jazz greats like Stephane Grappelli might not sound quite the same using lots of shifting or taken down a fifth, but jazz fiddlers, like Svend Asmussen, used the viola to evoke a mellow tone in many of his solos. Norgaard even suggests that transcriptions of trumpet tunes in the low register may sound better on the viola, as the violin cannot hit that low F in the trumpet range. He also suggests listening to J.J. Johnson, who often employed the high register in his trombone solos.

In the jazz idiom, violists need to first build foundational skills and do a lot of listening to learn the styles and the literature. Interested students can download Christian Howes’ e-books, “Jazz Scales for Violin, Viola and Cello” and “Arpeggios for Jazz Violin, Cello and Viola.”

**The real world**

Phillips also goes on to say that in the real world violists have to learn fiddle tunes and jazz charts in the original key. “In the school world we can take the tune down a fifth or put it in a sharp key, but in reality any viola player who wants to sit in a jam session has to know the fiddle key; and jazz players have to learn to play in flats if they want to play in anything other than string arrangements… wind players want to play in flat keys.”

Dabczynski states, “Often, the joy and motivation of playing tunes, never mind improvising on them, are eliminated for a violinist when all sorts of unnecessary acrobatics are required simply to negotiate the basic tune or key.” He adds that Irish planxty, Scottish air, Eastern European and Norwegian Hardingfele music cries out to be played by the viola.

**Template For Teachers**

Joanna Binford, Academy of Music, Suzuki strings coordinator and Norfolk Collegiate (VA), strings director, starts teaching improvisation as early as age three. She gives her young students license to explore the sounds of their instrument while still focusing on their set-up and listening skills. More of a challenge, she states, “Is the young player who has been trained, but not allowed the opportunity to explore their own voice. These players often do not trust what they have to say, nor think that it is ‘good.’”

She offers this template for encouraging players of all ages to explore improvisation and find their voice:

1) “There are no wrong notes.” Since the focus of our improvisation is “free improve” and not necessarily based on a harmonic structure or pre-existing melodic line, the student needs to know and be reassured that any and all notes they produce cannot be “wrong.” If a student does not like the sound of a note, then simply change notes.

2) Define and demonstrate “drone” and “ostinato.” I use these two unifying devices to provide both cohesion to the duo and to give the solo player time to listen to another solo. We are essentially trading breaks.

3) Demonstrate and allow student to produce “extra” string sounds, e.g. tremolo, pizzicato, glissando, harmonics, play behind bridge, col legno, etc. Ask the students to use one or more of these techniques in an improv. Using these extra techniques helps students develop a musical vocabulary from which to “voice” their improv.

4) Establish “duo” improv with a student: student plays drone, teacher plays improvisation, when teacher starts drone student takes over. If a student is resistant, encourage the student to play a solo playing only one note and using an “extra” string sound or various rhythms.

5) Use a time constraint for initial improv. Tell the student the duo improv will last one minute. They always tell me this is too short!

6) Add “free improve” to weekly lesson and studio recitals. (personal correspondence, March 2015)

These are exciting times for students, teachers and performing musicians. The possibilities are only limited by our choices. Training violists to be technically sound players and mentoring them on a path of self-discovery can lead to real satisfaction and sense of place and send them along a trajectory toward a lifelong pursuit of happiness.

Nancy Campbell is cofounder of L.O.V.E. (Lexington’s Original Viola Ensemble), a community of viola students and teachers. She is the orchestra director at the School for Creative and Performing Arts in Lexington, Kentucky and serves as orchestra content leader for Fayette County Public Schools. Campbell directs the Central Kentucky Youth Repertory and Preparatory String Orchestras. She is a Yamaha certified string educator and faculty member for the Kentucky Governor’s School for the Arts.
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Eventual mastery of any musical instrument depends heavily on the quality of early instruction on that instrument. The mental concepts and physical habits formed (for better or worse) within the first year of instruction will directly affect all future performance and learning on the instrument. Historically, many great pedagogues have considered the first year of instruction to be the most important year for building a solid technical foundation on which future musical success can be built. In his *Méthode de violon* (1830), Jacques-Féréol Mazas warns the student against an “indifferent teacher” during this stage since with such a teacher “the student may perhaps acquire such bad habits, that it would take more time to correct than if he knew nothing.” In *Violin Playing as I Teach It* (1921), Leopold Auer wrote:

> It is impossible to overestimate the importance of the first elementary practical steps in the long process of mastering the violin. For better, or for worse, the habits formed in the early period of training directly influence the whole later development of the student. The very start of all violin playing—the apparently simple matter of holding the instrument, for instance, before the bow is brought into play at all—has a wide range of possibilities for good or evil. There is no instrument whose absolute mastery at a later period presupposes such meticulous care and exactitude in the initial stages of study as does the violin.

Positioning the left hand and arm for the first time on a string instrument can be a daunting task, especially in group instruction where there are several different instruments present. This article will begin by examining best practices in the initial set-up of the left hand and arm in beginning string instruction, starting with a comparison of the different approaches to left hand set-up taken in the private lesson setting versus the classroom setting. Next, it will report the results of a small action research pilot study (Goldie, 2007) that systematically measured the results of two different methods of instruction on the initial set-up of the left hand within a beginning public school string class. It concludes with suggestions for how to implement a fourth finger first approach into beginning class instruction using your current method book.

### The Comparison: Private Lesson and Group Instruction

Many of the leading string class method books approach initial left hand set-up for violins and violas by having students position the first three fingers of the left hand on the instrument and delaying the fourth finger until much later in instruction. Some of the most popular and well-written string methods used currently and historically in group instruction that do this include: *Essential Elements for Strings, 2000* (2001); *String Basics: Steps to Success for String Orchestra* (2010); *Strictly Strings: A Comprehensive String Method* (1992), *All For Strings: Comprehensive String Method* (1982); and *Müller-Rusch String Method* (1961). Many of the most reputable and well-known artists and teachers who instruct in a private lesson setting currently and historically, however, have found it crucial to introduce all four fingers simultaneously, having students set-up their hand frame and arm position so that they are able to reach all four fingers from the start. These teachers include Ivan Galamian (*Principles of Violin Playing and Teaching*, 1985), Samuel Applebaum (*The Art and Science of String Performance*, 1986), Leopold Auer (*Violin Playing as I Teach It*, 1921), Yehudi Menuhin (*Violin: Six Lessons with Yehudi Menuhin*, 1971),
Leopold Mozart (A Treatise on the Fundamental Principles of Violin Playing, 1756), and Francesco Geminiani (The Art of Playing on the Violin, 1751).

We might ask ourselves why such a dichotomy in left hand instructional technique exists. It may be that the delayed fourth finger approach used in group instruction has been used primarily for instructional convenience, and as a compromise to take into account the needs of all the instruments present in a heterogeneous string class. Since all instruments of the orchestra finger the note E on the D string with one finger, many teachers have found this note a convenient starting point. This approach, however, often presents difficulty for accurate elbow placement, thumb placement, finger spacing, and finger angle for beginning students. In addition, this approach may be detrimental to a fundamental understanding of how the left hand and arm should approach the violin and viola for future successful performance on these instruments. It is imperative that from the start, students create an appropriate hand frame within which each finger can drop easily into place without excessive motion or tension. Proper positioning of the left hand is crucial for future developments in shifting, vibrato, intonation, and facility.

Delaying the introduction of fourth finger for violinists and violists may have many harmful effects. Not only can this practice lead to an incorrect positioning of the arm/elbow early on that makes it impossible to reach the fourth finger, but it could also contribute to a fundamental misunderstanding of the finger system for the instrument. Students can easily form an impression that a violin or viola is fingered primarily with three fingers and that the fourth finger is used only on special occasions (like the good china that is pulled out for special dinner guests).

Students who have learned fourth finger later in instruction often view it as a finger that is more difficult than other fingers and are often reluctant to use it. While I have never met a cello or bass player who complains about using fourth finger, avoids using it, or considers it harder than playing the other fingers, many times I have had to go to great lengths to convince violinists and violists to use fourth fingers rather than open strings. Many of these students persist in the inappropriate use of open strings despite the awkward string crossings this might create and the disruption of the musical phrase by notes that suddenly stick out of the texture because of the change in timbre. In addition to contributing to a negative attitude towards using fourth finger, delaying its use may also exacerbate the physical weakness of this finger compared to other fingers.

The Study
After an initial comparison of the literature on instructional methods for the initial set-up practices for setting up the left hand within private lesson instruction and group instruction, I began to think about different approaches for setting up the left hand in beginning instruction within the public school orchestra class. I began to ask myself, “what if?” What if we could change the order in which the fingers of the left hand were introduced, and possibly get a totally different (and improved) result from instruction? In order to find out if this might be the case, I conducted a small, exploratory action research pilot study lasting 27 weeks with members of my sixth-grade string orchestra class in 2007. Students participating in the study were ages 10-12 years old, had no previous experience playing violin or viola (instruments used in the study) and were part of the larger sixth through eighth grade middle school orchestra program located in a suburban Georgia middle school just outside of Atlanta, Georgia.

The experimental group used fourth finger as the first fingered pitch on the D string. The control group used third finger as the first fingered pitch on the D string. Verbal instructions and modeling were used with both groups and instructions were identical except for the beginning set-up of the hand (placing four fingers instead of three) on the fingerboard. The subjects included 12 beginning violin and viola students who agreed to participate in the study. These students were part of a larger sixth grade heterogeneous class of 56 students who played violin, viola, cello, and bass. These students were the only members of this larger class who had never played a string instrument before. Two teachers were involved in the study. Teacher A instructed the 12 beginner participants in a separate classroom, while teacher B instructed the other members who did not need beginning instruction since they had previously received two to three years of instruction. Following the initial separated instructional period of three weeks, the 12 participants of the study became regular members of the larger class and their scores on all evaluations were done by Teacher B who had no knowledge of which of the students had received the experimental instruction.

Students were assessed on four prepared performance tasks and a sight-reading task. The first performance task, Ode to Joy (from Essential Elements 2000, Book One), showed 83 percent of the students who started with the fourth finger first approach positioned their left arms/hands correctly while only 63 percent of the control group did. In addition, half chose to play fourth finger unprompted while only 1/3 of the control group did.

The second performance task was done six weeks later and involved students performing a short excerpt from Jingle Bell Rock arranged by Bob Cerulli. By this point, the beginning students had rejoined the larger class of students with previous playing experience. The evaluator for this task was the second teacher who had no knowledge of which students had received the experimental or control treatments. On this task, 100 percent of the fourth finger first group correctly positioned the left hand, wrist and arm whereas only 66.7 percent of the control group demonstrated correct positioning. Use of the fourth finger was not examined on this musical excerpt as its use was not appropriate for the measures performed. For example, the only instances of the note A on the D string or E on the A string were instances in which the pitch was approached from the string above and returned directly to those pitches (for example, BAB on the A string or GF#EF# on the E String). This excerpt provided data on all other technical aspects being measured (elbow, wrist, thumb and finger position as well as intonation of pitches).

In the third performance task (week 18), students were asked to perform a short excerpt from the piece Star Dancer by Mark Williams that the group was preparing for a Large Group Performance Evaluation, which is the yearly orchestra assessment event for school groups in Georgia. On this task, the two groups were relatively even on their successful positioning of the left hand, wrist, and arm. Some concerns exist about the results of this task due to environmental factors (administration during a shortened class period due to an assembly schedule and pep rally leading to lack of adequate assessment time) and the difficulty level of the repertoire, which was very challenging for many of the beginners.
who were now part of the more experienced class. All of
the beginners were experiencing the same set of difficulties
arising from being scheduled into a class of players with
previous playing experience, however. In the category of
intonation, the fourth finger first group did score higher than
those who started on third finger. This may have been due
to the increased precision of finger placement created by the
stability of having a stable hand frame.

In the fourth performance task (week 21), students
performed a two octave D Major scale. While half of the
fourth finger first group correctly positioned their left
hand, wrist and arm, only a third of the control group did.
In addition, 75 percent of the fourth finger first group used
four fingers for the notes A and E, while only 25 percent
of the control group did. This is a surprising gap, especially
since all students were instructed to use fourth fingers. They
received instruction on this scale every day for five days and
were reminded each day to use fourth finger and that this
would count as part of their grade on a performance test
for their orchestra class. Despite these instructions, only 25
percent of the control group used the fourth finger.

On task four, the scores were all somewhat low for
both groups. Analysis of the individual feedback comments
given to students revealed many more critical issues with
faulty technique than any of the other tasks. This effect
is understandable as it shows that the difficulty level of
this task is beyond the experience level of a first year
student and the task was only presented to these particular
students since they were participating in a second/third
year class in their school that had no class for beginners.
The detrimental effects of presenting musical material that
is too difficult for students too soon can be seen not only in
the overall low scores of the participants in both groups,
but also in the individual comments which illustrate the
many sacrifices in technique that occurred. When presented
with too many difficult tasks at once, students must
prioritize what gets attention and it is often technique that
falls by the wayside.

The final task (week 27) involved sight reading four
different lines of music in which the fingerings had been
removed so that students must decide for themselves which
fingerings to use. The D string sight reading excerpted
revealed 63 percent of the fourth finger first group choosing
to play fourth finger while only 13 percent of the control
group did. On the G string sight-reading sample, 25 percent
of the fourth finger first group chose to play fourth finger
compared to 17 percent of the control group. The A string
sight-reading sample revealed 97 percent of the fourth finger
first group choosing fourth finger over open E, while only 70
percent of the control group did. It is worth noting that in
the A string sight-reading task, the fact that nearly all of the
fourth finger first group chose to read E with fourth finger
suggests that the “default” fingering for that note (the one
they choose in the heat of battle) seems to be four rather
than open E, a fact sure to create pure delight in the heart of
most string teachers.

Students who started with fourth finger first
outperformed the control group on almost all performance
tasks regarding the positioning of the left hand, wrist, and

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**Figure 1** Fourth Finger First Procedure: Starting All Instruments with All Four Fingers Down

1. **Select a tune or exercise line from your method book that introduces the note A played with open A.** Have students play the selected line a second time, but this time let violins and violas know they will play the A in a new way—using all four fingers down on the D string. In preparation, have violinists and violists first practice touching all four finger tapes lightly on the D string in the order of 4-3-2-1 and then lightly “tap, tap, tap” the thumb across from the index finger to release tension. Students should then be ready to pizzicato the note A (using 4th finger) out loud over and over while singing its pitch name “A” as well as play the selected line from your method book.

2. **Select the line from your method book that introduces the note G on the D string.** Have violin and viola students play G using 3 fingers down on the D string by simply releasing the pinky while keeping it close to the string. Cellos play G by placing all four fingers on the tapes in the order 4-3-2-1, then tapping the thumb away from the middle finger to release tension. Basses provide a pitch anchor by playing open G.

3. **Select the line from your method book that introduces the note F# on the D string.** Have violins, violas, and cellos play the note F# by simply releasing the fingers they do not need (so violins and violas play only 2 fingers and cellos play 3). Basses play F# by placing all four fingers on the tapes in the order 4-(3)-2-1, then tapping the thumb across from the middle finger to release tension.

4. **Select the line from your method book that introduces the note E on the D string.** All students can play E by releasing all of the fingers except the first, preferably without changing the angle of the hand or arm.

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Arm as well as the voluntary use of fourth finger. As a group, they also
scored higher in the category of intonation in every performance task
including sight reading. This was a surprising, but positive discovery
considering that the study did not set out to examine intonation
effects. In short, this study found that using fourth finger as the first
fingered pitch in violin and viola instruction may contribute positively
to increases in: a) correct positioning of the left hand, wrist, and arm,
b) voluntary use of fourth finger, and c) more accurate intonation for
beginning violinists and violists.

**Suggestions for Implementation**
Because of the small sample size of students participating in this
exploratory pilot study within a single teacher’s classroom, I would
caution that the results are not necessarily generalizable; however, the results in student improvement were dramatic enough to warrant future study and may be useful to classroom teachers seeking strategies to improve their own practice. The increases experienced in correct placement of the left hand, wrist and arm and accuracy of intonation experienced by students in this study, suggest that this strategy may not only be worth further study, but that’s it’s use should also be examined for beginning cello and bass students within the orchestra as well.

Although the note E (first finger on the D string) may be considered by many teachers to be the easiest fingered pitch to introduce first in the beginning string class since it uses only one finger for all instruments; it may not be ideal for creating the best left hand and arm technique in the long run. Ideally, no instrument of the orchestra should have to sacrifice the basics of good left hand technique to the compromises that must be made for convenience of instruction within the heterogenous string group setting. It is possible to start all instruments in the beginning string class with all four fingers down so that both the arm position and the hand position for every instrument are set more correctly from the start. The procedure for how to accomplish this using your current method book is provided in Figure 1 (previous page.)

Starting beginners in this way (fourth finger first) has many benefits, both technical and pedagogical. For violin and viola, this may include improving the ability to position the left hand, wrist and arm correctly, more voluntary use of fourth finger without teacher nagging, and improved intonation. Other benefits may include a better conceptual understanding of the fingering system for upper string instruments as well as how the arm and hand should approach the instrument in order to create a usable hand frame in which all fingers can drop easily into position. Students may also have a more positive perception of the difficulty level of using fourth finger and may experience increased physical strength of this weakest finger as it is introduced first instead of last.

Conclusion
Although it is the quality of the teacher and their insistence on absolutely correct technique that is the most important factor in student learning, regardless of the methodology or method used, no one can argue that the use of one strategy over another might bring student success more easily with fewer repetitions, even for the best teachers. Careful sequencing of new instructional strategies may help teachers lead students to discover improvements previously not envisioned for routine areas of difficulty in string playing (such as improved intonation and left hand technique for the students in this study). Colprit (2000) found that among Suzuki master teachers, the areas targeted most often for improvement in student lessons were intonation, note accuracy, and left hand positioning. Improved early instruction that could change the student’s initial perception of left hand and arm set-up may greatly improve student success in these areas and cause less time to be spent correcting left hand and intonation issues. In addition, more advanced techniques such as shifting, vibrato and facility might benefit from this instructional procedure as well since proper positioning, efficiency of motion, and amount of tension present in performance would all directly affect the success of these advanced techniques.

For us as teachers, it may be what we do in the very earliest stages of instruction that matters most for the future musical success of our students. It is within this early instruction that we lay the foundation for all that is to come musically and technically. Given this importance, it is crucial that we examine closely what we do and how we do it. This does not necessarily mean expending more effort in instruction. Expending maximum effort for minimal results may point us to the need to seek new and alternate pedagogical approaches to age old problems. The real point of this article is not to try to convince anyone to change what they currently do in beginning instruction, but instead to challenge us as a profession to think about the bigger question of “What if?” as it relates to this as well as to other areas of string teaching. What if we could take something that we have always taught in a certain way and change one small thing about it and get a totally different (and improved) result from instruction?

Footnotes

Bibliography

Sandy Goldie is an assistant professor of music education at Virginia Commonwealth University and previously taught at the University of Florida where she received the David Wilmot Prize for Excellence in Music Education. She has worked to promote music education at the local, state and national levels through leadership positions such as president of the S.C. chapter of ASTA, president-elect of the S.C. chapter of the American Viola Society, executive board member of the S.C. Music Educators Association Orchestra Division, as well as advocating for school orchestras and comprehensive music education on advisory boards at the local school and community levels. She is an active a guest conductor/clinician and has worked with many honors orchestra groups, all-region orchestras, district clinics, youth orchestras and the 2009 SC All-State Orchestra. Additionally, she was a public school orchestra teacher for 14 years. As a violinist, she has performed professionally in symphonies for more than 23 years. Goldie completed her Ph.D. in music education at the University of Florida, her master’s degree in music education at the University of Georgia and her bachelor’s degree in music and music education at the University of South Carolina.
How often do you hear your students comment on the richness of their musical experiences? Does it seem as if there’s a constant struggle to get your students to focus on and achieve their artistic and personal goals regarding musical expression? Barry Green tells a story in his book, *The Inner Game of Music*, of a friend who, following a performance, expressed experiencing emotions on a level previously unknown in her playing. The secret to this newfound richness of expression was improvisation.¹

While performing a Bach cello suite for a modern dance class, Green’s friend Liz was led by her emotions to improvise in the middle of her performance. This experience of improvisational expression led her to have a deeper, more gratifying connection with the music than she had previously experienced performing printed music.²

The concept of experiencing deeper musical expressivity through improvisation begs consideration as a method for personal artistic discovery. The implementation of improvisation into your lesson pedagogy can act as a teaching tool to aid the discovery of the artistic voice in each student and work to teach the musical lexicon requisite for informed music making.

**Beginning Problems, Time Problems**

One of the problems string teachers may face when teaching new students is that the beginner string player often lacks control over his or her instrument and the knowledge base of the musical language they need to perform musically. Ultimately, many teachers may feel that a student with a loose grasp of technical skills and a robotic aping of musical regurgitation of “half-right” pitches and rhythms is the best they can hope for. This may lead to directionless performances lacking vitality and artistic expressivity, eliciting applause more for the cuteness of the child, than for the luster of the music produced.

Teachers are often led by method books, tradition or the pressure of upcoming concerts to have a heavy focus on correct pitches and rhythms in their lessons to “get us through” the next concert. Yet, if we as teachers achieve our short-term
goals by getting the students to mime music that is in-tune and in-time but doesn't have expressive qualities, then those goals don't necessarily have the student's best interest at heart. There is a wealth of musicality that goes beyond correct pitches and rhythms. It is worth exploring with our students from the earliest lessons.

Research into student dropout rates has shown that the majority of young people pursuing music lessons eventually give up music altogether.1 By introducing elements of creativity and personal expressivity in lessons early on, we may see students stay in music lessons for longer than appropriate periods. No student stays in lessons forever, nor should they. But by introducing the joys of personal expression, students may go on to experience rich lifelong relationships with music as an important part of their life. A rigid focus on technical elements of music may leave the vitality and artistic expression of the student underemphasized. Musicality beyond mastery of pitches and rhythms provides students with the opportunity to discover their self artistically, and interpret and understand the artistic value of music of the great performers and composers.

Overemphasis on correct notes and rhythms can be tantamount to teaching the alphabet of a foreign language to young students. Allowing students to learn and play with the language of music, much like a child learning their first language, can develop growth through exploration and experimentation, which can lead to greater expressivity and command of the musical lexicon that exists around them. Even if a student attains complete mastery of technique, the student may live their entire lives having had no practice in expressing themselves through their technique, leaving their performances less vital and dynamic than they should be and leaving the potential of that student unreached.

Attitude Problems and Losing Vision of Musicality
Overemphasis on technique-based achievement can poison a student’s attitude and cast a pall on their musical experiences. In his book Cello, famed string pedagogue and performer William Pleeth addresses this as one of the two common attitudinal problems he sees in music students. Pleeth describes the endeavor for technique-at-all-costs as a Sisyphean striving for safety and a fear-driven repulsion for human error. He writes:

> Over the years I have heard many players with good run-around techniques still grinding away on a mechanical practising (sic) of the basics of technique, and I often ask myself what the driving force behind this kind of practising (sic) is. Is it fear that as a human being one might make a mistake? A fanatical search for security? If it is, then it is looking for security that does not exist within the context of the human being. And while one is searching for that pot-of-gold-at-the-end-of-the-rainbow, one is destroying one's whole musical sensitivity and one's link between physical action and musical expression—and thereby one's best means of being relatively secure.4

Pleeth describes the second attitudinal problem that often plagues students as overly pursuing approbation from his teacher and seeking to be perceived as “better” than other musicians the student views as competitors. Pleeth writes, “Students often set off on this wrong path because they are searching for the most apparent and immediate type of success in technical progress. They develop, or are influenced by their teachers and colleagues to develop, a greed for superficial technical achievement.”5 Students who overly focus on technical ability can “lose their healthy motivation toward the integration of their craft with their art.”6 Striving for security and approbation through the acquisition of technical skill in music can lead students to “ultimately… find a wedge pushed between their feeling for the musical mood of a piece of music and the translation of it into sound via the [instrument].”7

Exploration and Experimentation: The Precedent with Acquisition of Lingual Skills
Musical improvisation, much like the acquisition of lingual skills, allows a student to experiment, create, express themselves, and gain control of the elements of their instrument of communication. Much research has been done on how children learn spoken languages. Upon comparison, there is a strikingly high similarity between how children learn spoken languages and how they learn musical languages. C. Gordon Wells says:

> Children produce what appear to be random vocalizations and babbling before they begin to produce gestures and recognizable words; two-word utterances occur before two-clause utterances; direct imperative requests in all situations precede the appropriate matching of the various forms of indirect request to the particular status of the person addressed.8

This is reminiscent of the tiers of progress a beginner musician goes through when acquiring control over musical sounds. The same process of exploration with simple musical elements can be built upon through an improvisation element in each lesson to teach the expressive elements of music making.

Implementing improvisation into your lessons can put an emphasis on personal expressivity and artistry from the earliest beginnings of the student’s musical journey. Rather than pursuing technique for the sake of technique, a guided implementation to improvisation can allow students to learn to control the elements of music with artistry. Expressivity and control of musical elements are valuable skills not only in improvised music, but also in the interpretations of written music.

Improvisation in the Private Lesson and Suggested Methods for Implementation
Teachers can shift their students’ focus away from nonmusical obsessions to musical expressivity by using improvisational exercises tailored to techniques the student is working on at the moment. For instance, a beginner student of mine is struggling in one of her pieces with a particularly quick string change from the open A string to the third-finger G on the D string. In our lessons, we’ve explored free improvisation using only those two notes. Accompanying her on guitar, I observed my student improvise a fun and jaunty two-pitch solo in a tonal approximation of A Dorian. Unbeknownst to her, the improvised exercise acted as a technical etude with a primary focus on expressivity. Later, when the tricky section arrived, my student played it much better, both technically and expressively.

Another problem addressed in our lesson was my student’s struggle with maintaining double-stops evenly. As an improvisational experiment, I had her play a long-tone, open-string double-stop solo. With a time frame of four minutes,
my student explored the sonorities of all combinations of open string double-stops. During her solo, I gave prompts to pursue other musical elements such as dynamic contrast and phrasing. My student became immensely engrossed in her solo, gaining more facility and control in her double-stops, expressing musical gestures with artistry.

One method for incorporating improvisation into your lessons could be to start students out with accompanied improvisations that are totally free on the student’s part. Allow them to explore the instrument, even if the results are nonsense or sound bad to your ear. Exploration is an important first step in capturing their imaginations and discovering means for musical communication, as John Kratus writes:

> Exploration is analogous to verbal babble in young children. In both exploration and verbal babble, the child is trying out sounds with little control over the sounds created. In both cases the sounds may appear to be random and without meaning. But the exploratory process is a necessary one in music learning as well as in verbal learning. In verbal babbling, children begin to create and control phonemes, which are the basic building blocks of verbal sound production.9

If your students are advanced enough, you can suggest a key area for them to play in, or a series of open strings if they are absolute beginners. (Incidentally, simple improvisation parameters such as soloing using only open strings can be extraordinarily challenging and rewarding for advanced students.) Narrow parameters can help engender reluctant students who may be overwhelmed by infinite options. Allow students to explore sounds on their own terms. Use free improvisations as an examination of their sense of rhythm, melody and control of their instruments. Spend as many lessons as you wish with free improvisation, using it as a mental and physical warm-up, beginning your music making with artistic expression on the part of the student.

Again, Pleeth advocates for free improvisation as a warm-up technique for the professional and for the novice. He writes: The greatest value of this kind of warm-up is not only that your physical [aspect of playing] will warm up faster, but that your mind and musical sensitivity will not be shoved off into an isolated corner. Even five minutes with free play of fantasy will help you warm up the whole person, not just the fingers and will bring all aspects of playing into touch with one another. Why should we shut out the musical mind and heart at any point along the way? They have to be harnessed to the physical action at some time, so why not from the very start?10

Indeed, it is paramount that musical expressivity must be stressed from the start of a student’s career and improvisation is a fantastic tool for discovering the expressive impulse. After a few weeks, you may begin introducing more musical parameters, such as providing a cell of pitch material from which they can reference. Using a pentatonic tetrachord, in a key that is easy for your students to play, such as D major, allows for melodic ingenuity and wide accompaniment options on the teacher’s part. One may also choose to select the pitches the student has learned so far and is comfortable with. Improvising on these notes helps reinforce their note learning at an early stage. Accompaniment on your part can be broad since the student’s pitch material is limited and key areas of B minor, D major, G major and E minor all compliment a D pentatonic tetrachord well.

### Progressive Expansion

Once students progress on making melodies, you may expand their improvisational parameters by suggesting repeating rhythms for their solos, particularly rhythms that are common in the pieces they are working on. I usually start out with a four-beat measure of half-note, quarter-note, quarter-note, quarter-note or some like figure, having the student use the same pentatonic tetrachords they have been improvising with for several weeks as their pitch parameter. This begins the process of decision-making regarding pitch while controlling for the constant of rhythm. This is essentially the pedagogical approach for improvisation that can be built upon and expanded as the student grows and learns more of the musical lexicon. Take one idea as a constant and add additional musical parameters. Build on those parameters in a progressive manner as the student gains more facility in expressivity and command of the musical language, applying the newfound expressivity to their repertoire.

At some point, some of the student’s compositions will have good musical and expressive qualities to them. You may record student’s improvisations with a computer and play them back to the student, having them listen and discuss what was musical and effective and what didn’t work as well.

This expanded approach can be tailored to any student’s specific needs. For example, if you are working on articulations with your student, you could assign a limited pitch set and suggest that one note always be played with an accent. This will teach an expressive use for accents, as well as develop the student’s technical ability to perform the articulation. It is important to prioritize in your mind and in the student’s mind that expressivity and musicality should take precedence over technical ability.

At first, let your students explore the sonority and techniques of an articulation (or whatever technique you choose to focus on for that student) and once they’ve improvised with proficient use of the chosen skill, move on to dynamism and emotional pathos in that skill, seeking how many different ways one can produce and attribute expression to that technique.

How many different ways can they play that technique? What if they pair that articulation with a dynamic? Improvise techniques that are used in their solo repertoire and have them listen to great musicians for examples of different ways the technique can be performed. Consequently have students see if they can imbue the chosen technique with the same emotional qualities they heard in the musical examples. Once single articulations are expressive, expand their command of technique and expressivity by soloing that single articulation on a different note every measure. Expand the technique out to multiple articulations or dynamics. Marry articulations to different dynamics, so that on one pass the student plays an accent pianissimo and the next pass fortissimo. Expand the improvisational language to encompass all time signatures and key areas. Have students solo in compound and asymmetrical meters, and use diatonic and synthetic modes.

Continue adding layers of parameters to increase difficulty and expand expressive and technical skills. A tetrachord can be expanded out to a pentachord and eventually a one or more octave scale. A measure-long rhythm can be expanded out to a two and then four-bar phrase, even out to the period. Command of single meters can be expanded to alternate between changing meters. The number of processes applied can be added onto and
multiplied as the student gains more and more musical control. If the student has good control of articulation, can they play that articulation with a pianissimo dynamic? Can they play it fortissimo? Can they alternate between the two extremes? And can they place it on the first and fourth beats two measures apart? Seek ways to limit, pinpoint and combine different elements of musical language in their improvisations.

As a teacher, use your knowledge to expand the musical and expressive vocabulary of every student from the earliest point possible. Can the student play a period, starting their second phrase with first the measure they used in the first phrase? Using formal repetition can build your student’s ability to remember ideas they came up with and reference them later in their solos. Suggest an A and B alternation, then AABA, and so forth. See if you can have students improvise themes and variations on their melodies or a given theme from the repertoire. Always preface and follow up all improvisations your students make with musical guidance and coaching about whatever specific musical element you are focusing on at the time.

Conclusion
The implementation of improvisation technique into your lesson plans can create and facilitate expressivity and artistic vision in your students from the earliest stages, exposing them to the language of music through experimentation much like an infant learns spoken language. Improvisation can bring vitality and expressivity into the lexicon of the student musician and shift their focus away from poisonous attitudes that focus solely on technical acumen, bringing into view the musicality, expressivity and dynamism of whatever music they are currently playing. Barry Green wrote, “When the music really comes alive, it means the performers have put themselves at risk, and to risk an interpretation, to risk exposing yourself to the music, means confronting the risk of failure.”

Improvisation as a pedagogical tool can make every lesson and practice session a time of exploration of the richness and fullness of artistic expression, opening up deeper worlds of emotion, personal musicality and creativity in the lives of our students. Teaching our students to embrace the vulnerability and excitement of improvisation can open doors to deep personal expression in their music and enliven the playing of future generations with musical spirits that communicate rather than hide, young minds that seek expressivity rather than the safety of technique, hearts that display artistry rather than competition, and experiences that leave the musical lives of our students more whole, healthy and vibrant.

Daniel Sabra is a graduate of the University of Nebraska at Omaha, with a bachelor’s degree in violin performance and music composition and is currently pursuing a master’s degree in music composition. Sabra, a multi-instrumentalist, has been teaching private students for more than a decade in violin, viola, guitar, harmonica and mandolin. He has performed in many classical ensembles, string quartets and orchestras, as well as working in popular fields of music as a songwriter, string arranger and fiddler. One of the highlights of his violin career was playing with the band Kansas in 2013. Sabra has an avid fascination with improvisation and has started his own improvisatory group Colloquy, which performed in the Under The Radar new music festival in 2014.

Endnotes
2 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid. 14.
7 Ibid.
ASTA and its Publications Committee, chaired by Judy Palac, are working hard to make sure that your bookshelves are not empty in 2015! We have two new publications slated: *The Advancing Bassist’s Handbook: A Guide to Practicing and Playing the Bass* and *Lucien Capet and Superior Bowing Technique: A History and Comparison*. Additionally, the new edition of the *String Research Journal, Volume V* will go to print soon after the national conference. Rest assured that we will keep you posted on the availability of all these interesting and informative publications.

*by Benjamin Whitcomb*

This intermediate, four-part book concisely and thoroughly covers every aspect of practicing and learning to play the bass. It will help you to rapidly improve your playing by using proven practice tools and techniques that can effectively obtain a faster rate of advancement.

**Lucien Capet and Superior Bowing Technique: A History and Comparison**  
*by Kelley M. Johnson*

Lucien Capet was born in Paris in 1873 and became a renowned violinist in the Capet Quartet. He was a student of Maurin and the pure tradition of French violin technique through Baillot. He was invited to teach chamber music at the Paris Conservatory and during his years as a chamber music teacher at the Paris Conservatory, he published Superior Bowing Technique. This book answers the questions that many have been asking, including: the most complete biography of Capet, a comparison with Baillot’s pedagogy, and a comparison with the bowing techniques of Galamian and Fischer.

**ASTA String Research Journal, Volume V**

This edition of ASTA’s scholarly peer-reviewed journal includes topics such as working with students with disabilities, teaching behaviors and beliefs, what influences a string teachers career decisions, and much more!

ASTA has many other fine offerings that are available through our Alfred Music Publishing distributor. To order and view a complete list of publications, go to www.alfred.com.

ASTA is planning future publications on special needs students in the classroom and studio and on assessment for all kinds of string teaching situations. If you have ideas for other publications or would like to write something for ASTA, contact Judy Palac, chair, at palac@msu.edu.
Advertise Your Business on www.astaweb.com!

Astaweb.com is the premier web address for the string industry. It is the electronic link between ASTA and ASTA's 9,000 members, and also is a major draw for others because it offers a tremendous amount of strings-related news, resources, competitions, member directory, and national conference information.

For more information, including availabilities, please contact Steve Watafolsky at 440-781-0846 or stevew@larkinadv.com.

The W-ASTA Birch Bay String Teachers’ Workshop is presented annually in Ferndale, Washington, a pleasant small town located fifteen minutes north of Bellingham, fifteen minutes from the beach at Birch Bay, and fifteen minutes from the Canadian border. The workshop is of interest to private studio and public school string teachers at all levels, and to college/university students preparing for a music education career. Each year, participants from all over the country and from foreign nations attend.

BirchBayStringTeachers.com

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Salt Lake City made for a solid, successful conference!

Just as a dash of salt enhances flavor, Salt Lake City, Utah, was the seasoning for the 2015 ASTA National Conference with gorgeous weather, good restaurants, impressive sites, and cordial people. The base for the event was solid with educational sessions, workshops, competitions, festivals and a unique strings-only themed exhibit hall. Every ingredient of the conference came together, producing a successful event with nearly 1,800 in attendance.

On Wednesday, the pre-conference sessions were packed and many registrants arrived early to take advantage of the area’s ambience. The sellout evening concert, featuring the Brigham Young University Symphony Orchestra with special guest Lynn Harrell, who is a former ASTA board member-at-large, set the tone and expectation of other ASTA showcase performances.

Tim Lautzenheiser was the lively keynote speaker on Thursday morning. He followed the talented American Heritage Lyceum Philharmonic, a youth orchestra led by Kayson Brown, who gave a great performance. Lautzenheiser’s inspirational dialog engaged the audience with humorous stories to which both teachers and non-teachers could relate. He left the audience wanting more! The audience also was treated to a special piece celebrating ASTA, by Julie Lyonn Lieberman, called String Dreams.

Friday continued with interesting educational opportunities, competitions in the National Orchestra Festival, bidding on items in the annual silent auction, which benefits the ASTA National Foundation, and much more. The evening capped off with the finals for the prestigious National Solo Competition. It was a live performance for all to watch and enjoy. The spectators even got to choose an “audience favorite.” (The winners of all competitions can be found on page 48.)

Throughout the conference, many national awards were presented: Artist Teacher Award, Kim Kashkashian; the Elizabeth A.H. Green School Educator Award, Bill Bitterman; String Research Award, Marg Schmidt; the String Project Award, Northern Kentucky University; and, for the first time ever, the String Education Leadership Award, which went to the Ohio State University represented by Robert Gillespie, past president of ASTA.

Saturday was not a day of rest! Sessions stayed on course and the exhibit hall continued to buzz with music, shoppers, and a dessert reception. The National Orchestra Festival Winner's Concert revved-up the midday in the Salt Palace Ballroom for those who wanted to see an impressive group of talented students perform and know that our future is in good hands.

The finale concert was a remarkable work by Christian Howes. He performed Southern Exposure, a combination of modern jazz with Latin musical influences. Ken Dattmore of Yamaha Corporation of America said, “It was one of Chris’s best performances.”

According to Kayson Brown, conductor of the American Heritage Lyceum Philharmonic, “The ASTA conference was the highlight of our season for me, not only because of the completely invested way in which the students gave of their gifts, but because this was a concert for the people that matter the most to me—the teachers. Music teachers changed the course of my life in a way that I can likely never fully repay.”

Tim Lautzenheiser provided humor and inspiration as the keynote speaker. Here is one of many inspirational quotes: “You have more influence, at a deeper level, than any other teachers.”
Steve Benham, ASTA president, tries to outbid Mary Wagner, past president, on a silent auction item; he did not succeed!

Many of our younger members attended the Student Chapter gathering, where fun and networking went hand-in-hand.

One of our many volunteer presiders happily fills out an evaluation form.

They were a number of sessions on Eclectic Styles from jamming to a session entitled, Rockestra.

Often times, members are encouraged to bring their instruments to sessions for a better learning experience.

Poster sessions are designed for dialogue and interaction between researchers and interested attendees.
Artistic Teacher Award - Kim Kashkashian

Awarded annually to a pedagogue of renowned stature from North America.

**Sponsored by Kay H. Logan**

Winner of the 2013 Grammy Award for Best Classical Instrumental Solo Album for her recording “Kurtág/Ligeti: Music for Viola,” Kim Kashkashian is recognized internationally as a unique voice on the viola. In 2014, she was awarded the George Peabody Medal for outstanding contributions to music in America, as well as the prestigious Golden Bow award of Switzerland. As soloist, she has appeared with orchestras from across the globe and held recitals in many great halls. She lives in Boston, where she coaches chamber music and viola at New England Conservatory. She is a founding member of Music for Food, an initiative by musicians to fight hunger in their home communities. musicforfoodboston.org.

Elizabeth A.H. Green School Educator Award - William Bitter

Awarded annually to a teacher with a distinguished current career in a school orchestral setting.

Currently in his 34th year with Gilbert Public Schools, Gilbert, Arizona, William “Bill” Bitter, director of orchestras and chairman of the Performing Arts Department at Highland High School, is our 2015 winner. Bitter has built award-winning high school programs consisting of five performing ensembles, with an enrollment of more than 300 students. He was a nine year member of the staff of the National High School Honors Orchestra, sponsored by ASTA with NSOA, serving as organizing chairman in 2005. He has been awarded the O. M. Hartsell “Excellence in Teaching Music” award by the Arizona Music Educators Association (AMEA) and the Outstanding Public School Teacher Award in Arizona by the Arizona Chapter of ASTA. In 2014, the AMEA named him the Arizona Music Educator of the Year. ASTA is proud in having such an outstanding member to honor with this award for 2015.

Institutional String Education Award - The Ohio State University

This “new” annual award brings attention to the excellent and impactful consequential work on performance, education, and outreach demonstrated by “schools of music” around the nation. It also strengthens and supports the five goals of the ASTA strategic plan: professional development and resources, our future and the next generation, building community, advocacy and outreach, and sustainability. This “new” annual award brings attention to the excellent and impactful consequential work on performance, education, and outreach demonstrated by “schools of music” around the nation. It also strengthens and supports the five goals of the ASTA strategic plan: professional development and resources, our future and the next generation, building community, advocacy and outreach, and sustainability. Congratulations to the Ohio State University (OSU) and Robert Gillespie, former ASTA president, for receiving this high honor and recognition for the truly outstanding work that has been done in establishing OSU as one of the nation’s leading universities in string music education over the past several decades.

String Project Award Winner - Northern Kentucky University

Awards annually by the ASTA National Board to an outstanding String Project Site in the National String Project Consortium.

ASTA congratulates Northern Kentucky University (NKU) on receiving the outstanding String Project Award. According to Stephen Benham, ASTA president, NKU demonstrated excellence in several areas, including a large number of outreach and recruitment activities in diverse venues and locations, strong growth in enrollment, and high standards for teaching and learning. The NKU String Project sets high standards for teaching and learning, exceptional organization and communication, and commitment to building relationships. It is particularly proud of the attention given to creativity and resourcefulness, dedication to innovation, and multiplicity of excellence of the program.

String Researcher Award - Margaret Schmidt

Awarded to a researcher whose work has contributed significantly to scholarship in string education and/or performance.

Margaret Schmidt has a focused, sustained, and interconnected record of scholarly work. Her research is of the highest quality, conceptually and methodologically. She regularly publishes in the top tier journals and presents at national meetings of ASTA, NAfME, and AERA. She has shown remarkable ability to fuse her research with work as a string teacher, teacher mentor, and research advisor and collaborator. Schmidt is assistant director of the School of Music and associate professor of music education at Arizona State University. Her research, focusing on beginning music teachers and issues of race and class in music education, has been published in journals including the Journal of Research in Music Education and the Journal of Music Teacher Education. She is founder and director of her school’s String Project, which in 2014–15 involved 25 undergraduates in teaching classes and private lessons for approximately 200 children each semester.
State Chapter Awards

Membership Recruitment Award
Loretta McNulty, California

Student Chapter Awards

2015 Student Exemplary Service Awards

(left-to-right) Adriana Ransom, chair, ASTA student committee; Betsy Williams, Northern Kentucky University; Marg Berg, ASTA board member-at-large

Most Improved Chapter
Loretta McNulty, California

2015 Outstanding ASTA Student Chapter

(left-to-right) Marg Berg, ASTA board member-at-large; Emily DeVincent, The Ohio State University; Adriana Ransom, Chair, ASTA student committee

2015 Most Improved ASTA Student Chapter: West Chester University
(not pictured)

Congratulations to all of our award and scholarship winners!
National Orchestra Festival Showcases the Future of Strings

The 12th annual ASTA National Orchestra Festival (NOF) allows students to hone their skills with noted adjudicators and clinicians while enjoying the spirit of competition. It was held in conjunction with the national conference in Salt Lake City, Utah.

NOF featured 16 ensembles representing middle/junior high schools and high schools from across the country. Competing orchestras are split into two categories: High School String Orchestra and Middle School Orchestra. Performances are evaluated by a panel of music educators on technique, tone quality, intonation, rhythm, and interpretation. As the educational aspect is an important component of the festival, students have the opportunity to attend conference sessions.

Grand Prize Winner of the 2015 ASTA National Orchestra Festival!

Public School Division: Clark High School Orchestra, Las Vegas, Nevada
Directors—Charles Cushinery, Jeremy Paredes

Other award winning groups receiving awards:

Middle School String Orchestra

First Place
Hyde Park Middle School Orchestra
Las Vegas, Nevada
Jeremy Woolstenhulme, director

Second Place
Explorer Middle School Advanced Orchestra
Everett, Washington
Robin Enders, director

High School String Orchestra

First Place
Liberty High School Chamber Orchestra
Liberty, Missouri
Mary Lou Jones, director

Second Place
Newport High School Chamber Orchestra
Bellevue, Washington
Christine Gero, director

Congratulations to all the talented young musicians who participated in the festival. ASTA thanks NOF Chair Val Palmieri for all of her hard work and dedication on the festival. The deadline to apply for the 2016 festival in Tampa is over. We are pleased to announce that nearly 30 groups applied.
The 18th ASTA National Solo Competition Takes Center Stage at ASTA National Conference

Friday night March 19, conference attendees experienced the excitement of watching six Laureate Finalists vie for the Grand Prize of the ASTA 18th Solo Competition. They also played an active role by selecting the new winner of the Audience Favorite Award. The co-winners of the Grand Prize were Samuel Nebyu and John-Henry Crawford. Hao Zhou won the Audience Favorite award.

Special thanks to the finals judges: Leslie Harlow, viola; Thomas Landschoot, cello; Marina Roznitovsky Oster, harp; Eduard Schmieder, violin; and DaXun Zhang, bass. Also to the online judges: Jeffrey Bradetich, double bass; Brett Deubner, viola; Deborah Fleisher, harp; Grigory Kalinovsky, violin; Terry King, cello; and Martha Masters, guitar.

For the second time in the history of the competition, the preliminary round was entirely online. There were two levels for the online round: the Junior Division and the Senior Division. As always, participants must be ASTA members or students of a current professional ASTA member.

Since the inaugural Solo Competition in 1978 with 17 finalists from 10 states and $425 in prize money, the list of prize-winners who have gone on to careers as soloists, university professors, and section leaders of major orchestras continues to grow.

ASTA sincerely thanks Jeffrey Solow, competition chair, and the following prize money sponsors for this prestigious event:

**Grand Prizes:** SHAR Music, Nathan Gorden Fund, and Ralph Matesky Fund

**Laureate Prizes:** Nathan Gorden Fund, Ralph Matesky Fund, Warren Loranger, and Jeffery Solow

**Audience Favorite:** Yamaha Corporation

**Recital Night:** Pirastro GmbH

Congratulations to our winners!

*Left-to-right: Samuel Nebyu, Hao Zhou, Abigail Kent, Hayaka Komatsu, Arjun Ganguly, John-Henry Crawford*
**2015 Summer Workshops/Conferences**

**Michigan String Workshop**
**June 25-27**

University of Michigan School of Music, Theater, & Dance  
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-2085  
Contact: Robin Myrick  
Email: myrickr@umich.edu  
Website: www.music.umich.edu/adultprograms  
Phone: 734-936-2660  
Fax: 734-647-0140  
Faculty  
Michael Hopkins, conference director, University of Michigan  
Valerie Palmieri, Adrian College  
Bob Phillips, Alfred Music, ASTA past president  
Danae Witter, SHAR Products  
See ad on page 51.

**Vancouver Symphony Orchestral Institute at Whistler**
**June 28-July 5**

Whistler, British Columbia  
Canada  
Contact: Christin Reardon Maclellan  
Email: christin@vancouversymphony.ca, info@vsoinstitute.ca  
Website: vsoinstitute.ca  
Phone: 604-684-9100 ext. 245  
Fax: 604-684-9264  
Faculty  
Bramwell Tovey, music director, VSO  
See ad on page 7.

**Green Mountain Chamber Music Festival**
**June 28-July 25**

University of Vermont  
Burlington, Vermont  
Contact: Kevin Lawrence  
Email: KJLawrence@aol.com  
Website: info@gmcmf.org  
Faculty  
Thirty-five eminent conservatory and university teachers of violin, viola, cello, and piano from the U.S., United Kingdom, and Austria  
See ad on page 62.

**UW-Whitewater String Orchestra Camps**
**June 21-26**

University of Wisconsin-Whitewater  
Whitewater, Wisconsin 53190  
Contact: Benjamin Whitcomb  
Phone: 262/472-5573  
Fax: 262/472-5241  
Email: Whitcomb@uww.edu  
Website: www.camps.uww.edu  
Faculty  
Benjamin Whitcomb, camp director  
Susan Chandler, conductor  
Chris Ramaekers, director of orchestra  
Leanne League, violin/viola  
George Lindquist, guitar  
Bradley Townsend, bass  
See ad on page 10.

**Ohio State University String Teacher Workshop**
**July 5-11**

The Ohio State University  
Columbus, Ohio 43210  
Contact: Robert Gillespie/Julie Ellis  
Phone: 614-292-2336  
Fax: 614-292-2336  
Email: gillespie.5@osu.edu or ohiostatestw@gmail.com  
Website: www.music.osu.edu  
Faculty  
Robert Gillespie, workshop director  
Deborah Baker Monday, composer-in-residence  
David Becker, conducting  
Susan Day, composer-in-residence  
Mark Wood, Rock ‘n Roll in Your Orchestra  
See ad on page 62.
Mark Wood Orchestra Camp
July 12-19
MidAmerica Nazarene University
Olathe, KS 66062
Contact: Mark Wood
Phone: 1-516-767-6677
Fax: 1-516-767-3302
Website: MWROC.COM, facebook.com/mwroc
Email: mwroc@markwoodmusic.com
Faculty
Mark Wood, director
Lisa Batson, executive director
Janette Hess, assistant director
Emil and Dariel Liakhovetski, special guest artists, America’s Got Talent
Laura Kaye
David Wallace
Sean Grissom
Daniel Roumain
Nathan Blake
See ad on page 61.

Strings Without Boundaries
June 22-26
Georgia State University
Atlanta, Georgia

July 27-31
Lawrence University
Appleton, Wisconsin

August 17-21
Seattle Pacific University
Seattle, Washington
Contact: Julie Lyonn Lieberman
Phone: 203-304-1238
Email: julileyonnmusic@gmail.com
Website: www.stringswithoutboundaries.com
Faculty
Darol Anger
Julie Lyonn Lieberman
Martin Norgaard
Randy Sabien
Matt Turner
... and others
See ad on page 59.

Birch Bay String Teachers’ Workshop
August 3-7
Ferndale, WA
Contact: Chip Schooler
Phone: 360-943-2317
Email: cschooler@spsc.edu, birchbaystringteachers.com
Faculty
Dijana Ihas, assistant professor—Pacific University, founding director/master teacher of String Project
Christopher Bianco, department of music chairman, director of bands—Western Washington University, clinician for conducting master class
Ian Edlund, Birch Bay director emeritus composer, reading orchestra, rehearsal technique
Joyce Ramee, affiliate artist, University of Puget Sound, viola technique and pedagogy
See ad on page 43.
**Membership Application 2015**

Use this application to join ASTA or apply online at www.astaweb.com.

**Personal Information**

- **Name**: __________________________
- **Address**: __________________________
- **City, State, Zip, Country**: __________________________
- **Email**: __________________________
- **Home Phone**: __________________________
- **Work Phone**: __________________________
- **Cell**: __________________________
- **Date of Birth**: __________________________
- **Profession**: Check only one.
  - Higher Education
  - K-12 levels
  - High School
  - Middle/Jr. High School
  - Elementary School
  - School (Multilevel)
  - Private Studio
  - Performer
  - Conductor
  - Retired
  - Music Administrator
  - String Enthusiast
  - Student

**Primary Musical Focus**: Check only one.
- Classical
- Non-Classical

**Membership Category**: Check only one. Rates current through June 30, 2015.
- Professional: $110
- Senior (age 62 or over): $80
- Full-time Student*: $54
- Dual**: $152

*proof of full-time undergraduate student status required
**please complete second form for other Dual member

Please exclude me from:
- Online Membership Directory
- Mailing Labels
- ASTA Email Announcements
- All Mailings

**Preferred method of contact**: Check only one.
- Email
- Fax
- Mail
- None

Do you participate or use the ASTACAP program?  Yes  No

**Profession**

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**Instrument**

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- Yes! I want to enroll in the automatic dues renewal program. I understand I may cancel participation in this program at any time.

**Dues Installment Plan**

- Yes! Please enroll me in the Dues Installment Plan based on my preferences below. For more information on installment plan payment options, please visit astaweb.com, or call 703-279-2113.

  **Note:** Members taking advantage of this option also will be enrolled in the Auto-Renewal Program.

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- Quarterly
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- Yes  No

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The concept for the EggMATE came in a natural manner to Michelle Linquist. She and her son began violin lessons together several years ago. It was then that she recognized the challenge for student and educator alike to acquire proper wrist positioning. Her personal research and exploration has led to the development of an attachment to the instrument, which is present, pleasant, and persistent. The EggMATE slips on or off easily and is safe for the instrument. Because of the multiple sizes available, it's adaptable to any particular thumb location technique an educator prefers. Most importantly, it's simple and inviting to use. Educators, studios and retailers serving the string pedagogy community are encouraged to find out more about the remarkable ease and benefits of the EggMATE. It's perfect practice that makes perfect.”

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The new Spirit! Strings from Thomastik-Infeld, released last summer, have made a splash with their made in Vienna quality and warm and vibrant sound all at a budget-conscious price point—an absolutely unbeatable value!
Developed to spark the musical spirit in the progressing student and aspiring artist, Spirit! Strings embody the superior quality of all Thomastik-Infeld strings with easy and stable tuning, easy response to the bow and they are balanced and long-lasting. Here is what we have heard:

A luthier describes the violin strings as an:

“Excellent value at the price point.”

A professional cellist describes the cello strings as:

“Well balanced, feel great, resonate and project”

And now, they will be available in fractional sizes, singles, and tubes! Spirit joins other family members including Dominant, Vision and Peter Infeld strings among others. Dominant remains the market leader for over 40 years, while Peter Infeld (PI) strings are critically acclaimed among more distinguished players.

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Accessory inventor and studio teacher Ruth Brons was recently honored for her work advancing strings education by ASTA with the Kudos Award. “Bow Hold Buddies dramatically reduce the time it takes students to master a proper bow hold. Students’ energy can be redirected toward other challenges. Quicker progress, more fun!” said Brons.

**NEW AND EXCITING PUBLICATIONS FROM CARL FISCHER MUSIC**

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SUPER-SENSITIVE MUSICAL STRING CO., BRING SMILES TO HOSPITALIZED CHILDREN

Jim and Susan Cavanaugh, president and vice president, respectively, of Super-Sensitive Musical String Co., and their two children, Alexandra and Nicholas, visited five South Florida area hospitals on February 14 to deliver teddy bears for sick children, bringing miles of smiles to their faces. According to the Cavanaugh’s, it all began in 2008 after visiting All Children’s Hospital in St. Petersburg, Florida. A question occurred to them: Do the children at the hospital receive gifts for Valentine’s Day? As is often the case, people give generously at Christmastime, but what about something special for Valentine’s Day. “This holiday can be easily overlooked, and it was our idea to do something about it. It became an annual family/company tradition to get Valentine’s gifts to hospitalized children. Our idea is now a reality with Victory Valentine’s. And the mission statement: Giving hospitalized children hope—one bear hug at a time, naturally fell into place,” said Jim. Victory Valentine’s became a reality when the Cavanaugh family purchased hundreds of teddy bears from the Build-A-Bear Workshop.

Additionally, the Build-A-Bear Workshop has matched the Cavanaugh’s gift each year. This means, they are now able to deliver teddy bears to children in five area hospitals every Valentine’s Day. The Cavanaugh family plans to expand the Victory Valentine’s program to other children’s hospitals and continue the program every Valentine’s Day for many years to come. www.victoryvalentines.org, www.cavanaughcompany.com

GERI AND JAMES GRINE RECEIVE RABIN YOUTH ARTS AWARD FOR ARTISTIC ACHIEVEMENT

Geri and James Grine, longtime music educators, performers and supporters of the arts, won the Rabin Youth Arts Award for artistic achievement this past March given by the Wisconsin Youth Symphony Orchestras. This honor has been bestowed since 2001 to individuals statewide in Wisconsin making significant contributions to the development of young musicians.

James Grine, former chairman of the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh’s music department, accepted the award on their behalf. Geri, a longtime ASTA member and a retired orchestra director at Oshkosh North and West high schools, fittingly, was busy conducting an orchestra of 1,300 third-graders for the artist in residence program that she founded.

The Grines are unquestionably worthy recipients of the award, Gladys Veidemanis, a retired Oshkosh English teacher wrote in her nomination of the couple: “They are highly respected teachers and conductors, central to the artistic life of this community and region. Most important, they are arts activists, involved every day of their lives in helping to maintain and transform the local symphony, expand arts opportunities for youth and sustain other arts organizations in the city.”

Geri Grine is the principal clarinetist with the Oshkosh symphony and has been the conductor and musical director of the Oshkosh Youth Symphony Orchestra since 1987. Two years ago she founded the Philharmonia Orchestra to provide a feeder organizer for the OYSO, Veidemanis wrote. According to her husband, she has interested more young people in music by introducing the Suzuki Method to teaching piano and string instruments to the area.
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  - $21.99
  - A resource that is indispensable for the orchestra teacher! Green discusses the essence of orchestral bowing, the fourteen basic bowings, different styles, and tricks of the trade. Includes section for teachers concerning the several phases of orchestral instruction. A must-have for the bookshelf of a strings educator.
  - Author: Elizabeth A.H. Green

- **ASTA String Curriculum**
  - $49.99
  - This K-12 concise string program curriculum is the first of its kind. It is easy to use, and more than 200 specific learning tasks make this curriculum comprehensive. Based on the outstanding contributions of many earlier authors, educators, and researchers, this curriculum contains useful and practical information for string teachers from every level of experience. Now available in e-version through iTunes!
  - Authors: Stephen J. Benham, Mary L. Wagner, Jane Linn Aten, Judith P. Evans, Denese Odegaard, Julie Lyonn Lieberman

## Pedagogy

- **Teaching Stringed Instruments in Classes**
  - $29.99

## Resource

- **Dictionary of Bowing and Pizzicato Terms** ed. Joel Berman, Barbara G. Jackson, Kenneth Sarch
  - $21.99

## Miscellaneous

- **Alternative Styles In the Classroom DVD**
  - $19.99

## Research

- **String Research Journal**
  - Volume I, 2010
  - $24.95

- **String Research Journal**
  - Volume II, 2011
  - $24.95

- **String Research Journal**
  - Volume III, 2012
  - $24.95

- **The Bach Chaconne for Solo Violin**
  - ed. Jon F. Eiche
  - $19.99
All Strings

Reviews

String Orchestra


Dedicated to Bob and Pam Phillips, this rousing medley includes “Arkansas Traveler,” “Fire on the Mountain,” and “Devil’s Dream.” The work alternates between D and A major. High third fingers, largely relegated to slower note values, appear extensively in seconds and violas. For cellos, the only extended fingers are found in the opening upbeat. Challenges in setting a single-line fiddle tune include crafting interesting parts for the accompanying voices and distributing the theme among the instruments. McCarrick is most successful in his arrangement of “Arkansas Traveler,” where viola and cello introduce the melody. After the initial eight measures, firsts and seconds have all remaining melodic content. Basses alternate between tonic and dominant the majority of the time. McCarrick builds intensity over the course of the medley: a moderately fast tempo for the first tune grows to a furious Alla breve allegro for “Devil’s Dream;” cadential fermatas ease transitions between tunes. Except for the basses, all parts have sixteenth notes. Offbeat syncopation—in both common time and Alla breve—tests internal pulse and subdivision. A brief, one-measure solo for the concertmaster marks the end of “Arkansas Traveler;” other solos could be added incorporating repeats and adjusting accompanying dynamics. With particular challenge for upper strings, this is a thrilling concert closer for intermediate orchestras. M.L.


This Lady Gaga piece is fun for students and exciting for their parents. The 2.25-minute C-major work opens with spiccato bowing with off-set accents and glissandos for all sections. At least two sections play the many syncopations simultaneously. Divisi first violins carry most of the melodic material (violas and seconds for a few bars). All sections except firsts remain in first position. A fun addition to a pops concert! M.C.


This wonderfully conceived two-movement composition depicts two very different fall moods. “Falling Leaves,” in C, has much rhythmic and melodic independence. Cellos, basses, and firsts need position acumen. A lovely section includes cascading pizzicato accompaniment in the lower strings. “Folk Festival” is in 6/8, mostly block rhythms, with juxtaposing eighth and quarter notes providing accents and interest. A fun addition to our October concert! M.C.

FATHER GRUMBLE (Gr. 2.5, opt. pno). arr. Carrie Lane Gruselle. FJH, 2013, $45.

This American folk song, in D and cut time, is recognizable by both students and audience. Only basses shift beyond first position. Written mostly with block rhythms, independent parts fit easily with the accompaniment. Pizzicato, double stops and some chromatic slides make for fun. M.C.


This well-arranged medley includes “Do You Want to Build a Snowman?” “Let It Go” and “For the First Time in Forever.” Piano or electric piano is optional; percussion includes suspended cymbal, triangle, drum set, and mark tree. Set in G, C, and D, this piece lays well under middle school fingers. All three tunes give every instrument soli sections to shine—exactly why young players want to play popular music. The rhythms challenge players technically and give the flowing melodies more depth. Firsts have four tricky sixteenth-note passages as well as accidentals and syncopated tied notes. With a top-notch first violin section, a level 2 orchestra can be successful. I just wish this arrangement had arrived sooner. K.M.


Provide your orchestra with an opportunity to refine their vibrato skills while performing lush harmonies written by one of America’s greatest composers! The arrangement includes three violin sections, occasional divisi viola and cello, and short solos for two violins and two cellos. Harmonies generally consist of vertically aligned half notes. Performable in first position, occasional accidentals are interspersed throughout, allowing students to focus most efforts on bow control, nuanced dynamics, and vibrato skills. Firsts have some moving eighth notes; otherwise, the most difficult technical passage lies with the two cello solos who briefly perform in fourth position. A nice program complement to faster works, this piece offers your orchestra an opportunity to perform thick sonorities with a beautiful, rich tone. J.M.


Frackenpohl provides another great string arrangement to engage all sections of your orchestra! Students need to hone their bowing skills to perform off-the-string eighth notes and on-the-string quavers. All sections have challenges to keep them working: subito dynamic changes and accidentals require each individual’s attention. Basses will enjoy having their own line separate from cellos. Stylistically more difficult than it appears, this arrangement is a great tool for stretching and refining your orchestra’s capabilities while introducing them to one of Mozart’s most beloved overtures! J.M.
INDIAN LEGEND (Gr. 2). Barry Amass. Mewzkl, 2013, $35.
The haunting melodies of this work include an introduction reminiscent of a funeral march, an andante with unison eighth-note runs, and repeated tracé-like notes. In an uplifting moderato section, three main melodies appear and broaden the range from the violin E string to the bass E string. A fast, syncopated 3/4 E-minor section follows, where firsts and violas pair up against seconds and cellos in opposing rhythms. The piece returns to the A natural minor moderato melody with a short tag where seconds, violas, cellos, and finally the basses get a chance at a rhythmical solo passage. For future editions I would love to receive program notes from Amass: what is the significance of the title, or what was the motivation for the varying sections? Middle schoolers love to learn modern music that tells a story or leads them to share their own. T.M.

Frackenpohl’s arrangement is a lively rump in 6/8, with all four tunes connected in one piece. Student musicians will need to be able play in the lower part of the bow to create the strong downbeats. The hemiolas need strong accents, and dynamics should be strictly observed. Entirely in E minor, with no added accidentals, students can develop a good foundation in counting 6/8. The tunes flow easily from one to the next. Jigastic is entertaining and upbeat, and a crowd pleaser as well. G.P.

In 6/8, this piece is written to evoke the urgency of attempting to ascend one of the world’s tallest peaks, experiencing the intense visions from the top. In B natural minor and AABB form, all parts are in first position. 6/8 can be challenging, but rhythms are blocked with at least two sections together. Hooked bowing is utilized throughout. M.C.

LA SORTIJA (Gr. 3). Michael S. O’Brien. FJIH, 2013, $50.
I was excited to bring this Argentinean-flavored milonga to my orchestra. Beginning in D, the dotted-rhythm dance style is driven by first violins while lower strings play a galloping syncopated rhythm reminding my students of gauchos on horses. The lyrical D minor middle section features violas while seconds strike their instruments like drums. The dance again picks up the pace in D with cellos and then basses playing the melodious drum-like pattern. My students caught on quickly to the repetitive syncopated rhythms and pushed the tempo well above the recommendation, more like a Cuban habanera. T.M.

LEGACY (Gr. 1.5, opt. pno). Sean O’Loughlin. Carl Fischer, 2012, $47.
Legacy is filled with passionate power-driven rhythms complemented by a lyrical melody. My sixth-grade advanced orchestra learned augmentation by comparing the lower string augmentation and softening of sound to an extended family through marriage—where new family members soften the hard edges of lonely people and build strong harmonies together. The composition teaches C-natural, heavy marcatto accented bowing, and quick crescendos and a grand pause. I really enjoyed working on this piece with my students for two reasons: O’Loughlin’s program notes on “legacy” led to great language arts teaching themes; and now my students definitely understand augmentation; we can add it to our rounds, scales, and even writing exercises. T.M.

MARCH AND CANON (Gr. 1/2). Thomas May, Hal Leonard, 2014, $35.
In D and 4/4, most notes in violin 1 are on D string, with some open A#. Violin 2 and viola parts are almost identical, mostly on G and D strings. Cello and bass parts are almost identical also. The music is scalar, with quarter notes and rests, eighth notes, and half notes. March begins mf and increases to f. The half-note section in the middle is very soft. Canon begins mf with first violins, followed two measures later by seconds and violas; cellos and basses each follow. Unison rhythms include four eighth notes and two quarter notes. The last two f notes have accents in all parts. More advanced players can use alternate fingerings to avoid open strings. P.N.R.

Monday has provided yet another accessible introduction to one of the most popular symphonic works from our rich heritage. Arranged with all instruments in mind; each section of your orchestra has plenty to practice. All students must be capable of shifting skills and various finger patterns to successfully perform melodic and harmonic passages featured in each section. Diligent practice will help students master the subtle harmonic changes and frequent duple and triple rhythmic subdivisions. Difficult rhythmic passages are often doubled between two sections to foster both harmonic interest and easier learning. Mastering the more technical concepts will surely be a challenge and a delight for everyone! J.M.

POKER FACE (Gr. 2. synth/ pno, drum set, wind chimes).
Many of your students will know—and be excited to play—Poker Face, recorded by Lady Gaga in 2008. In Longfield’s arrangement, the original C-major key is maintained throughout. This is a great piece for teaching off-the-string bowing; eighth-note spiccato and combined slurs and spiccato occur throughout. Cellos start with the opening ostinato, and violins soon pick up the melody. Syncopation follows, exactly like the original. Violas eventually join violins for the melody, and cellos have a section solo melody later. The bass part is basically rhythmic. The synthesizer/piano part doubles string parts, and percussion will add a rock feel. I highly recommend this piece as a pop tune for middle school students. It is so similar to the original, they will have a blast playing it! G.P.

POSTCARDS FROM MARS (Gr. 2.5, opt. pno). Lauren Bernofsky. FJIH, 2013, $45.
Bernofsky pretends this music is from Mars, a cute buy-in to teach dissonance, modal harmony, and chromatics. Beginning in D, the piece quickly leaves tonal centers, using accidentals, leaps of sixths or more, and choppy staccato eighth notes. The rhythm is repetitive and catchy—it is the dissonance, augmented intervals, and chords that make this piece crazy. Cellos shift once on the A string; all other sections stay in first position. Seconds and violas are challenged with some extensions, but the flats can be worked out because rhythms do not complicate the piece. Great for a Fall/Halloween-themed concert. T.M.

Consummate craftsman Meyer presents this thoroughly authentic arrangement of Tchaikovsky’s masterpiece. Retaining the rollicking spirit of the original, he reduced the length considerably to a manageable 197 measures. Meyer keeps first and second themes in C, rather than E-flat; the arrangement essentially presents the recapitulation. Second and third positions are required of all first violins, but only the upper voice in divisi extends to fifth and sixth positions. Other required shifting includes third and fourth positions for cellos and second and third positions for basses. Multiple-stop chords in all parts are simplified or eliminated. Suggested fingerings provide effective solutions, including the violins’ tritone pizzicato accompanying the second subject. Like the original, the
piece demands a wide range of stylistic expression, ranging from the ethereal introduction (all instruments are muted) to the vivacious Allegro, and from the majestic coda to the breakneck conclusion. Meyer has made this timeless music within reach of fine middle level orchestras. M.L.


This pulsing, unreleenting and energetic E minor piece entices players and listeners to create storylines in their imagination worthy of the best movie. The opening eighth-note marcato in upper strings is emphasized with off-beat accents, while bass and cello firmly plant the first beats in each measure. This rapid pulsing creates a constant sense of anticipation and intrigue. Adding to the intrigue is a legato first violin part, seemingly ascending above the fray of the ever-moving and marked eighth-note patterns in lower parts. Starting at measure 42, cellos and basses exchange two-measure eighth-note “barbs” with the upper strings. This intense call and response continues, building to the end where all are playing driving marcato and accented eighthes. At the close, both players and listeners will likely enjoy this hauntingly beautiful selection. N.C.


This lovely ballad was composed for the movie version of the iconic musical. Kazik’s arrangement is in G Major, with only occasional C-sharps, allowing time to focus on expressive bow techniques. Upper strings and cello exchange the melody, engaging most of the orchestra. The bass part is the most rudimentary, with all notes below open G string. Upper strings and cello remain in first position, with just one first violin measure which requiring third. Two opportunities for cello and first violin solos are marked optional soli. Second violins and violas weave among the melody, mostly moving independently. The most interesting harmonies come in the off-beat accompaniment of seconds, violas, and cellos as they pizzicato in fifths. This is a great teaching tool for working on voicing and balance of chords, with the most challenge being 17 tempo changes within the 41 measures of the piece. However, it is that rubato that will charm listeners and develop more expressive student performers. L.K.H.


This beautiful arrangement from the hit movie includes “Do You Want To Build A Snowman?”, “For The First Time In Forever; In Summer”, and “Let It Go”. Wonderful solos appear throughout the piece for bassoon, trombone, clarinet, trumpet, piccolo, English horn, French horn, and violin. This 7 minutes work has a very lush string sound. It includes time signatures of 4/4, 6/4, and 2/4, and keys of F, E-flat, E, and G major, and F minor. It challenges all string instrumentalists to shift into higher positions—listen online to hear what is needed. A wonderful addition to a pops concert for an excellent community or professional orchestra. N.C.

Violin


This collection of fifty Irish fiddle tunes is great for anyone interested in learning traditional Irish fiddle. These selections provide an overview of the core repertoire, both familiar and beautiful less-well-known tunes. Playable by advanced beginners and intermediate students, this sequential book offers helpful hints to establish finger patterns, counting, and key signatures. The pieces in G, D, and A are a fun way to rehabilitate the left hand of the “reluctant student,” reviewing first-position patterns similar to Wolfhart exercises. The book is unique in providing basic tunes without ornamentation, accompanied by traditional fiddle bowings, with helpful historical background about many of the tunes. This is a great tool for teaching fiddling and for those who want to expand their fiddle repertoire. L.L., D.P.


We might assume Ravel’s Sonatas in G and Tzigane are his only violin pieces, but this collection of original and transcribed pieces for violin and piano dispels that idea. I cherish Durand’s transcriptions of Ravel’s works not only for the violin: Pavane pour une Infante Defunte (originally for orchestra); the lovely “Minuet” from Sonata for Piano (recorded by Jascha Heifetz); “Pavane” from Mother Goose Suite. These surprisingly exquisite miniatures are a real bargain. When we can expect Volume II? L.H.


Ševcit’s complete work covers every area of violin technique, from the most elementary exercises concerning specific technical skills to analytical studies of standard concertos, and is still among the most important teaching methods for violinists. The new edition is based on the first, as well as sources from Ševcit’s posthumous papers. Foltýn, a violin professor at Prague Conservatory, provides an accurate methodological commentary. The four volumes start with the most basic first-position tetrachord on the A string in variations from quarter to sixteenth notes, moving on with varied rhythms, finger patterns, additional string crossings, to diatonic and chromatic scales, adding arpeggios and double stops near the end of Book I. Book II starts with similar ideas in second position, moving to third through seventh positions. The difficulty level increases as the notes get higher. The purpose of Book III is to practice shifting, starting with single-string scale, then single-string arpeggios. Book IV starts with all octaves on the first page! I single out exercise 4 here, one I have never seen before, changing from normal octave fingering to fingered octaves (extension). I am glad that Ševcit included the often-ignored interval of the fourth in exercise 7. With pizzicato and double harmonics at the end, I call this book the encyclopedia of left-hand technique. Besides recommending this series to my students, I myself will start with some exercises tomorrow! L.H.
SONATA FOR PIANO AND VIOLIN, Op. 6 (“At Fox Meadow”), Walter Damrosch. Wolfhead Music, 2007, $24.95. I was unaware of this beautiful 1899 sonata, representative of the romantic tonal language from America’s Gilded Age. Damrosch was music director of the forerunner of the New York Philharmonic. Written in a pastoral style, the work prefigures the chromaticism of European composers of the early twentieth century. The similarity of harmonic language with Brahms’ Sonata op. 78, including the G-major key, amazes me. A lovely addition to our limited turn-of-the-century sonata repertoire. L.H.

SONATA NO. 1 in A major, Op. 13 (vn, pno), Gabriel Fauré, ed. Maria Egelhof. Schott, 2013, $26.99. While this sonata may not enjoy the popularity of similar works by Franck, Debussy or Ravel, Fauré’s certainly deserves much more attention. The first movement’s stormy syncopations, novel harmonies and agitated arpeggio accompaniment suggest the young man’s passion, tempered by a strict sonata form. Technical demands, while substantial for the pianist, are modest for the violinist: octaves, sautillé, and expressive bow control and coloristic vibrato for the cantabile melodies. The Andante second movement, cast in brooding D minor, is a haunting barcarolle, requiring an exquisite sense of color and intonation. By contrast, the third movement (Allegro vivo 2/8) is a light, wistful and mischievous scherzo. Its two contrasting themes alternate charmingly between leggerissimo and cantabile. A steady sautillé and brilliant dexterity are required to negotiate its virtuosic requirements. The final Allegro quasi preso, in sonata-rondo form, drives along with a breathless succession of keys, starting with A major and passing through F-sharp minor, D major, B-flat major and minor, C major and its relative, and D major, finally returning to A major. The many textures, harmonies, and rhythmic innovations make an enthralling movement. This new edition is beautifully engraved and printed on Schott’s typical high quality paper. Where differences exist between the manuscript and first printed sources, Egelhof provides oxtia readings, preserving the original and indicating changes below. Artistically-chosen fingerings favor high positions where coloristic effects are desired, while avoiding long shifts where portamento would be undesirable. This edition nicely bridges the gap between a purely scholarly Urtext and an attractive performing edition. P.B.

SONATINA NO 1 (vn, pno), John Craton. Wolfhead Music, 2002, $12.95. This eleven-minute arrangement of the original saxophone score showcases a variety of tone colors in three movements: Andante— Allegro assai — Andante (“A Summer Sunday”), Grave (Chaconne), Allegro (“The Armadillo Races at Victoria, Texas”). Craton, a composer-violinist in Bedford, Indiana, neatly marked fingering and bowing suggestions. For a mid-sized piece to open or conclude your recital, a mid-sized piece to open or conclude your recital, especially with an American theme, here we go. L.H.

VIOLIN DEBUT: 12 Easy Pieces for Beginners (Gr. 1, 1-2 vn, pno, CD), James Rae. Universal Edition A.G., 2012, vn/CD £13.95. This collection is divided into three sections. The first four solos are for violin with piano accompaniment. The next four are violin duets; the last four are duets that can be played with band instruments from the Debut series. The solos each have one major technical focus such as pizzicato, three-note slurs, jazz style, or blues notes. The duets sound great and are not always harmonized in thirds. The CD includes play-along tracks at performance tempo as well as accompaniment piano tracks. Free piano part downloads are available on the website, along with free cartoon coloring sheets. Instructions in English, German, and Italian may be distracting, but I find language learning a treat. Of special interest are “A Ballad for a Big City” and the blues hoe-down duet “The Swingin’ Sheriff Blues.” T.M.

Viola

EXERCISES FOR THE VIOLA IN VARIOUS COMBINATIONS OF DOUBLE-STOPS (vla, also available for vln). Roland Vamos. Carl Fischer, 2014, $24.99. This book focuses on all double-stop combinations available on a set of strings in a single position. Each pattern is repeated in seven positions, reinforcing correct finger spacing in each position. In addition to developing double-stops, Vamos wrote the exercises to establish a strong left hand with flexibility in the joints and freedom from tension in the thumb. Vamos includes two lines of bowing practice for each double-stop pattern, to promote flexibility in the right hand. Students can finger the double-stops while playing one string, encouraging use of anchor notes to solidify intonation. The included DVD demonstrates Vamos’ approach to the exercises. T.W.

WEST SIDE STORY (vla, pno). Leonard Bernstein, arr. Joel Boyd & Joshua Parmann. Boosey & Hawkes, 2013, $22.99. These classic tunes, including “America,” “Cool,” “I Feel Pretty,” “Jet Song,” “Mambo From the Dance at the Gym,” “Maria,” “One Hand, One Heart,” “Something’s Coming,” “Somewhere,” and “Tonight,” are skillfully arranged for viola and piano. The companion CD with piano accompaniments features infectious tempos and terrific playing by Jamie Johns. Students would enjoy finding the lyrics (not included) to sing along. As indicated on the contents page, the order of songs on the CD does not always jive with the book. Sadly, one of my favorites, “Officer Krupke,” was not included. These lovely arrangements are suitable for intermediate to advanced players. D.G.
This effective arrangement of the famous tremolo guitar study works very well for intermediate and advancing cellists. The first cello part is the primary melodic source, requiring treble, tenor and bass clef. The second cello part, in harmony with the first, also uses treble clef. The third part is exclusively in bass clef. The fourth is primarily bass line, but takes over the melody in tenor clef at one point. All parts require slurred string crossings. Textures alternate between lyrical melody, pizzicato, bariolage, bowed and fingered tremolo. The ABA piece alternates between D minor and D major. The range and timbre of the cellos, and the colors Birtel uses in this version, make an especially pleasing complement to the cello quartet repertoire. A.C.F.


Beginning students will enjoy the opportunity to play these fifteen catchy ensemble pieces, in styles ranging from blues to calypso. Two pieces are playable by early beginners; other pieces would work for most first- or second-year students. All violin parts are in first position. A number of pieces have tricky rhythms, but the included CDs help students learn them. The flexibility of the series makes it highly usable; pieces can be played with one, two, or three parts and accompanying piano or teacher part. Cello books and viola supplement require limited shifting in a few pieces. Students will build ensemble skills while being rewarded with fun, contemporary pieces. T.W.


The op. 77 quintet is widely regarded today as one of the staple chamber music pieces that include the double bass. The piece is technically and musically demanding, requiring advanced players to perform with the necessary gusto and bravado. This edition is clean and clear, providing rehearsal letters, measure numbers, and suggested tempi. Bowings and fingerings are left to the performer. The score is sold separately from the parts. J.M. The op. 97 quintet has never received the popularity it deserves—I am thrilled to see this Bärenreiter critical edition. The four movements of this masterpiece are in E-flat, B, A-flat minor, and E-flat. If you have two great violists, you can seal the deal with flying colors! L.H.

Books


This fantastic book is based on anecdotal stories from over 150 music parents, professional musicians (including Joshua Bell, Alisa Weilerstein, and Anne Akiko Meyers) and music educators. Topics include choosing an instrument, finding a teacher, practicing, the parent's role, college and career decisions and more. This is a must have morale booster for every parent trying to navigate their child's musical education, whether for those just beginning, those on the track to becoming professionals, or those regarding music as a hobby. Even experienced music parents will gain new information, ideas, and support. The stories present a variety of parenting styles and easily speak to a broad audience of parents, and can serve as a reference, as parents’ role changes with their child's development. The overall message is that music education, regardless of the child’s ultimate career choice, has a positive impact on many aspects of children's development and, although costly and time consuming, is well worth the parental efforts. K.H.


Rarely does a book come off the press with such bountiful information about a musical instrument. Schoenbaum’s is exceptional for its encyclopedic exploration of seemingly every aspect associated with the violin, with allegiance to sociology and history, embracing violin making, economic and technological influences (linked to music education, laws, and performance), and worldwide culture. Schoenbaum’s writing style, with literary color, is both informative and intriguing. R.H.W.


This is a valuable resource for people dealing with playing injuries or performance-related physical issues, providing an in-depth study of both the physiology involved in Alexander Technique and its role in solving problems. Johnson offers practical solutions to the aches and pains commonly experienced by string players by showing in detail how each part of the body works. She explains that the sternoclavicular joint, the first of four joints used by the bow arm, is often either underused or misused. Her excellent description gives a basis for developing control of all four joints, resulting in greater relaxation, more flexibility and efficiency, increased stamina, lack of pain, and, of course, better music making. She explains that the alignment of our bodies, from top down, can either help or hinder playing. For example, when body weight is supported by the spine, distributed, and balanced, the resulting freedom and flexibility can be astonishing. With much technical information, the book may be of greatest value to those with some knowledge of Alexander technique. However, anyone who has dealt with jaw tension, headaches, tendinitis, wrist and arm problems, etc., will welcome this volume. M.J.Z.
Deborah Greenblatt (D.G.) gives lessons, workshops, and fiddle camps in an old 1925 schoolhouse in rural Nebraska. She performs with Greenblatt & Seay, with the Greenblatt String Trio, and is co-concertmaster of the Hastings Symphony in Hastings, Nebraska. She is a proud member of ASTA, the American Nyckelharpa Association, and the American Recorder Society.

Laura Kerr Hill (L.K.H.) is a former member of the Civic Symphony Orchestra, and concertmaster of the Lansing Symphony Orchestra. She holds a B.A. in Music Education from the University of Northern Colorado. She is also active as an orchestra teacher in the Washington, D.C. area.

Amy Catron Flores (A.C.F.) is assistant professor of cello at Millikin University in Natchitoches, Louisiana. She is active as a soloist, concertmaster, and recitalist and served as the president of Washington ASTA and vice president of both the Utah and Maryland/D.C. chapters.

Nola Campbell (N.C.) is an orchestra teacher at Calvary Baptist Church in Rockford, Illinois. She holds degrees in education at Arizona State University, and orchestral music education from Arizona State University. She is active as a soloist, conductor, and music theory and orchestra division coordinator for Maricopa County Performing Arts District in Boulder, Colorado. She earned her B.A. in Music Education is from Arizona State University. She is also the District Elementary Strings Coordinator. She earned a B.A. in Music Education from Arizona State University, and a master’s in Secondary Education and Leadership certification from Northern Arizona University.

Paula Jones (P.J.) is a Chandler Unified School District strings teacher in Arizona. Her teaching experience includes teaching the beginner elementary student through the advanced high school player. In her spare time, she has worked as a clinician at music festivals and creates online learning experiences for strings students.

Philip Baldwin (P.B.) is the professor of violin, conductor of the University Symphony Orchestra, and director of string studies at Whitworth University in Spokane, Washington. He is active as a soloist, concertmaster, and recitalist and served as the president of Washington ASTA and vice president of both the Utah and Maryland/D.C. chapters.

Linda Levy (L.L.) is an elementary orchestra teacher in Gilbert, Arizona. She earned her B.M. in education at UCLA and her M.M. in education at Arizona State University.

Jacques Leclaire (J.L) is an active professional performer who teaches privately at Owens State Community College. She was formerly a member of the Civic Orchestra of Chicago and has a master of music degree in harp performance from Northwestern University.

Kristen Herkstroeter (K.H.) teaches 1 to 12 grade strings and is music department chair at Viewpoint School in the greater Los Angeles area. She is a violist/violinist with a Ph.D. in music education from Florida State University.

Laura Kerr Hill (L.K.H.) is a Ph.D. candidate in music education, string pedagogy, at the Ohio State University (OSU) under the direction of Dr. Bob Gillespie. She is a past Kentucky State ASTA president, and a decade-long member of KYASTA board of directors. She taught in the public schools for over more than a dozen years and was the education coordinator for the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra prior to attending OSU.

Jaime Johnson (J.J.) is currently an elementary orchestra teacher in Mesa, Arizona, and has taught in the public school system for 25 years. She holds a B.M. in music education a M.M. in performance pedagogy and D.M.A. in viola performance from Arizona State University. She plays viola in two part-time professional symphony orchestras and has been a guest clinician, as well as conductor for various school districts within Arizona.

Kevin Gr iffin (K.G.) is an active professional performer who teaches privately at Owens Community College in Findlay, Ohio. He is also the District Elementary Strings Coordinator. He earned a B.A. in Music Education from Florida State University, Ithaca College, and Texas Christian University.

Pamela Nichols-Rheaume (P.N.R.) teaches elementary and junior high orchestras in the Chandler, Arizona, Unified School District. She is also the District Elementary Strings Coordinator. She earned a B.A. in Music Education from Augustana College, and a master’s in Secondary Education and Leadership certification from Northern Arizona University.

Deborah Greenblatt (D.G.) is a Chandler Unified School District strings teacher in Arizona. Her teaching experience includes teaching the beginner elementary student through the advanced high school player. In her spare time, she has worked as a clinician at music festivals and creates online learning experiences for strings students.

Mark Laycock (M.L.) is an associate professor of music at Wichita State University, where he holds the Ann Walenta Faculty of Distinction Endowed Professorship; he serves as director of orchestras and coordinator of strings. Laycock is a member of the board of directors of the Midwest International Band and Orchestra Clinic.

Linda Levy (L.L.) is an elementary orchestra teacher in Gilbert, Arizona. She earned her B.M. in education at UCLA and her M.M. in education at Arizona State University.

Katharine Mason (K.M.) enjoys a career that combines performing as a violist, studio teaching, and teaching middle and high school students in the Boulder Valley School District in Boulder, Colorado. She holds degrees in applied viola and music education from Murray (KY) State University, the University of Illinois and the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Tommy Mason (T.M.) is a string specialist for Tempe School District 3. She earned her M.M. in instrumental music education and M.Ed. in bilingual education from Arizona State University. She has taught and played professionally during her 25 years as director of six orchestras at Gillilland Middle School.

Ann Young (A.Y.) is professor of harp at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Active as a performer, teacher, and author throughout the world, she is President of the American Harp Society and formerly editor of the World Harp Congress Review.

Duane Padilla (D.P) is past president of the ASTA Hawaii chapter and serves on the ASTA Eclectic Styles Committee.

Gene Pohl (G.P.) is director of orchestras at Gunston Middle School and Wakefield High School in Arlington, Virginia. She holds degrees in music education from Ithaca College and music performance from Boston University. She is an active freelance violist and performs with two local symphonies in the Washington, D.C. area.

Theresa Wilkinson (T.W.) is a private teacher in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. She performs with the Chipewa Valley Symphony Orchestra and is co-founder of Western Wisconsin Chamber Music.

Robert H. Woody, Sr., (R.H.W.) is a professor of psychology at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, writer/lecturer on the social psychology music, and multi-instrumentalist performer in a variety of venues. He plays various string instruments and writes about musicianship.

Maurice Machado (M.M.) is a recent string pedagogy graduate of Bob Jones University in Greenville, South Carolina. She is now beginning her teaching career at Calvary Baptist Academy in Midland, Michigan, where she is teaching strings and elementary music classes.

Amy Catron Flores (A.C.F.) is assistant professor of cello at Millikin University where she teaches cello, pedagogy, lower string methods, and chamber music. She is the principal cellist of Sinfonia da Camera and cellist with the Arcadia Chamber Players, the Overtones Ensemble, and is active as a cellist in the central Illinois area. She maintains an active private teaching studio in the Champaign-Urbana area.
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Astaweb.com is the premier web address for the string industry. It is the electronic link between ASTA and ASTA’s 9,000 members, and also is a major draw for others because it offers a tremendous amount of strings-related news, resources, competitions, member directory, and national conference information.

For more information, including availabilities, please contact Steve Wofalosky at 440-781-0846 or stevew@larichadv.com.

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FYI . . . Did you know that ASTA has developed standards for string teachers and orchestra directors who are working in K–12 programs? Led by Dr. Robert Gillespie, Ohio State University, the teaching standards task force has recently revised the standards, (see below) for use in helping to guide evaluations, inform administrators, and provide general insight into what ASTA believes are essential skills and qualities for excellence. We hope you find these useful! We will also post them on the ASTA website for future reference.

Look for a feature article by Gillespie in the August issue of ASTA.

I. As a Musician
   A. performs at proficient technical level on at least one string instrument.
   B. performs at a high level of musicianship in terms of musical and stylistic interpretation.
   C. performs fundamental concepts on all other string instruments.
   D. demonstrates the ability to play by ear and improvise.
   E. demonstrates an advanced level of aural discrimination and sight reading skills.
   F. demonstrates competent orchestral conducting skills.
   G. demonstrates a basic knowledge of performing and teaching brass, woodwind and percussion instruments with an understanding of intermediate to advanced ensemble concepts.
   H. demonstrates proficient keyboard skills with a minimum ability to accompany simple melodies using primary triads.
   I. demonstrates an understanding of performance injury prevention.

II. As an Educator
   A. demonstrates a thorough knowledge of pedagogy for teaching all string instruments including both homogeneous and heterogeneous approaches.
   B. demonstrates a thorough knowledge of string teaching materials and orchestral repertoire at all levels. This includes a diverse range of repertoire of eclectic genres, cultures and historical periods.
   C. demonstrates knowledge of solo and chamber music repertoire for string instruments.
   D. demonstrates the ability to arrange music for school orchestra.
   E. demonstrates effective rehearsal techniques in string and full orchestra settings.
   F. demonstrates effective classroom/rehearsal management.
   G. demonstrates knowledge and awareness of current trends in string playing and education including electric or amplified string instruments and repertoire.
   H. demonstrates effective methods of assessing and evaluating student achievement.
   I. demonstrates knowledge of technology and its application to instruction and research.
   J. demonstrates ability to gather, process, and effectively apply student data.
   K. demonstrates knowledge, application and assessment of comprehensive, sequential K–12 curricula with focus on string and orchestral teaching, for example local, state and ASTA Curriculum: Standards, Goals, and Learning Sequences for Essential Skills and Knowledge in K–12 String Programs.
   L. demonstrates understanding of the National Core Arts Standards: Dance, Media Arts, Music, Theatre and Visual Arts and other state and local standards for music including knowledge of current music and general education policies.
   M. demonstrates comprehension and knowledge of differentiated learning styles, special needs, and the ability to adapt the curriculum accordingly.
   N. demonstrates understanding of the possible impact on learning and development of socio-economic, ethnic and geographic backgrounds and diverse ages of students.
   O. demonstrates practical knowledge of string teaching including advocacy, recruiting, scheduling, budgets, purchasing, fund raising and instrument rental and purchase.
   P. demonstrates clear communication through writing and speaking with students, teachers, parents and administrators.
   Q. demonstrates strategies for integrating music with other disciplines.

III. As a Professional
   A. Growth and Development
      1. continues to perform on a string instrument.
      2. demonstrates pursuit of disciplined growth and learning as a musician and an educator, including in-depth professional development such as attending conferences or taking lessons.
      3. demonstrates effective, ongoing professional self-assessment.
   B. Professional Affiliations and Related Activities
      1. maintains an active involvement in professional associations, such as NAfME, ASTA, Suzuki Association of the Americas, Chamber Music America. This includes serving as an active volunteer or in leadership positions within these organizations.
      2. develops and maintains relationships and communication with other music and art educators and performing musicians.
   C. Advocacy, School and Community Relations
      1. articulates the positive aspects of string education to members of the school and community.
      2. develops a healthy rapport with school administrators for nurturing a successful string program.
      3. establishes and maintains positive relations with administrators, teachers and parents through communication and dialogue.
      4. communicates effectively with administrators, teachers and parents through clear and effective written and oral communication.
      5. provides opportunities for outreach and community service for string students.
   D. Personal Attributes
      1. maintains professional ethics, behavior, appearance and relationships within the school and community.
      2. maintains balance between professional and personal interests.
Using iPads in Teaching and Practice

As string teachers we are keenly aware of the importance of quality, goal-oriented practice, but we often struggle to motivate our students to develop this focus in their own work. Practicing between the lessons requires consistent and truthful self-assessment, and that’s where iPads and other recording devices can be useful if they are integrated into student assignments. I have never once recorded myself and thought, “Yup, that’s pretty much how I thought I sounded!” If that is true for a player in her 40s, that will most certainly be true of younger players. Frankly, we can all stand to hear and see ourselves better – as my teacher used to say, “Eighty percent of practicing is hearing what is actually coming out of your instrument.” What I love about video, as opposed to audio, is that you can actually see why things are sounding the way they are, and not just hear it. My favorite recording device is the iPad. It has instant playback with both decent audio and video quality—no cords, no uploading, and no technology hurdles.

When I first started using recording assignments in my studio at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), I tended to make rather vague assignments, such as, “record yourself one time this week and write down some new goals for your piece.” What I learned—the hard way—is that rather than empowering students, recording overwhelmed and depressed them (or they didn’t do it!). They often came back with general, negative impressions, like, “It’s bad,” or “I’m terrible.” Incorporating recording regularly into the lessons themselves and making bite-sized, structured assignments has helped them get used to the process. Once they get used to it, they can see the full power of the tool. I have found that small snippets of recording are better than large sections (or pieces). Rather than re-recording when they get used to it, they can see the full power of the tool. I have found that small snippets of recording are better than large ones, both psychologically and practically. The end goals of the recording process for students are to develop critical listening skills and to fuel their burning desire to become better . . . all the time. If you are not currently using video in your studio teaching, here are some ideas for getting started, both within the lessons and during the practice week.

In between lessons, at home assignment:

• **Track improvements.** Ask students to record themselves for half a page and review. Students should spend about 10 minutes making practicing improvements, then record again. Ask them to blog on your website, write in their lesson notebook, or share observations with you verbally.
• **Selective Inattention.** Ask students to record the same excerpt three times and concentrate on their performance and their analysis on three different variables, such as intonation, character, rhythm, etc. Ask them to blog about it in their assignment book, i.e. write just a short bit about what they learned and changed in their playing.
• **First takes.** Have students record first-takes on three different sections (or pieces). Rather than re-recording when they falter, they must analyze their first-takes and discover what these have in common.
• **Progress.** Ask students to record themselves once a week before their lessons and not listen to them until they have a month’s worth of recordings. Review with them what has changed and what has stayed the same in those four weeks.

**In the lesson:**

1. **Record a phrase or section of the student’s performance.** Watch the video with them and ask them only to comment on one aspect of their playing at a time, such as posture, intonation, bow grip, musicality etc. Ask them to be specific, such as, “mark the exact notes that are out of tune on the page with an x.” Guide them through fixing things and record the passage again. This last step is crucial, because it is only through the power of seeing the improvement that students will feel positive about the process. One recorded phrase each week in a lesson can go a long way, since the end goal is for them to start doing it regularly, without your prompting.

2. **Use video as a “delayed mirror” to do side-by-side observations between student and teacher.** For example, video-record your student’s left hand in a passage, and then ask them to video-record your hand playing that same passage and ask them to note any differences. Guide them through improvements, and re-record their hand afterward to see the progress.

3. **Record a part of the lesson (short!) and email them the file.** Ask them to notice something in their playing that you did not talk about, but would like to improve. Ask them to write down what they noticed, and how they went about improving what they saw. This exercise helps build their independent power of discernment, which is crucial for their musical maturity.
do you want to make changes? Practice makes permanent, and; What are you making permanent through your practice habits?

- **Nervous Takes.** Ask students to run up and down the stairs twice before recording themselves. Blog/writing: What happens when you play with a raised heartbeat? Be specific in your observations.

These are just a few ideas on how to integrate video in the lesson environment. The main point is just to use it regularly and see where it takes you and your students. When you develop your own ways of using recording regularly, please share by writing an ASTA article like this one!

P.S. – Trying to get the iPad set up for easy recording? The Felix TwoHand stand is my favorite gadget. It is cheap (less than $10) and readily available from Staples, Amazon etc. To use it, clip it on the front of the iPad so that the front of the iPad tilts down toward the player. For basses and cellists putting it on a stand will work, for upper strings put it on a piano or shelf on the wall.

Felix TwoHand Tablet Stand, pictured here clipped from the back. For best results, clip it to the front instead so the iPad angles forward, toward the player.

---

Susanna Klein is assistant professor of violin and coordinator of strings at her undergraduate alma mater, Virginia Commonwealth University. Before entering academia she was a core member of the Memphis, Colorado and Richmond Symphonies, where she served as principal second. Currently, she enjoys focusing on chamber music through her two trailblazer groups, Atlantic Chamber Ensemble and Trio826. She received her M.M. from Boston University under the tutelage of Roman Totenberg. Read more at susannaviolin.com.
Learn how to improvise from the ground up, and build a strong foundation of rhythm, melody, harmony and form. In a series of articles on basic instruction you can give to your fifth and sixth grade beginning orchestra students, we will be learning how to play accompaniment parts, while half the group practices improvisation all at once. This will be a safe place for you and your students to experiment for the first time with spontaneous composition. You will be able to model this for your students, one step at a time.

- Sound and Silence
- Melody and Chord Progression
- Long and Short Melodies
- Rhythm
- Groove
- Ornamentation of Melody and Rhythm
- Melody Notes outside of the Chord
- Preparing for Harmonic Change
- Chord Tones
- Guide Tone Lines
- Ornamentation of Guide Tone Lines
- Harmonic Progression

**Melody and Melodic Guide**

A familiar tune can be used from the beginning string repertoire, e.g. *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star, Mary Had a Little Lamb, Go Tell Aunt Rhody, Are You Sleeping, Long Long Ago,* or for more advanced students, *Over the Rainbow,* etc. Use easy songs that the student knows rather than a new melody.

First, learn the melody.

1) Do each phrase rubato, playing each pitch very slowly. Look at the shape of the melody.
2) Memorize each phrase shape.
3) Then experiment with different rhythms with each phrase.
4) Combine the phrases with different rhythms, still observing the shape of the melody; e.g. *Long Long Ago* starts like climbing a mountain (2 measures), diving down a waterfall (1 measure), getting up, and doing it all over again (1 measure).

*Long Long Ago (ABA Form)*

Once you have memorized a melody, it functions in your musical mind as a guide when you improvise. The melody is like a road map on a familiar path. Through the journey of the form and harmonic progression of the song, the melody helps guide you. As Hal Crook says: “This is an important advantage to have before trying to solo on a tune since it greatly reduces the chances of losing your place while improvising. And if you do get lost, finding your place in a song's form will be much easier if you can hear the song's melody while listening to the harmony (which is often outlined or implied by the melody).

The following procedure emphasizes visual as well as aural practice and can be used to memorize song melodies:
1) Rewrite each phrase of the song's melody using closed notes without stems, i.e. simply note the actual sequence of pitch levels in the melody without assigning rhythmic values. (Choose a song with a simple melody for now. Save busy active melodies for later.)
2) While reading the rhythmically adjusted version of the melody, i.e. playing it by eye, play the first melodic phrase (or just a portion if it is lengthy) out of tempo (rubato), four or five consecutive times.
3) Play the same melodic phrase four or five more times, rubato without reading the music i.e. playing it by ear and memory, glancing at the music only when necessary.”

**Chord Progression**

Learning a chord progression for a song is just as important as learning the melody. Apply the same steps that you did for learning the melody until you know the chords by memory.

*Long Long Ago* chord progression:

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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A7</td>
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See the music examples for written out notes.
First, learn the chord fingerings. Then focus more on keeping the rhythm than playing all of the notes!

Improvise on the chord progression to Long Long Ago by thinking the melody but not playing it. Be sure you know the chords as well as you know the melody. When you know the chords, you can improvise by adding notes that are within the chord. D chord notes are: D, F#, A. A chord notes are: A, C#, E. Add a couple of changes in the melody or rhythm. Keep it simple at first and experiment.

Teachers: The best way to improvise on the chord progression is one soloist at a time. Have the entire class strum with violins and violas playing guitar style. Hum the melody for the soloist to help them keep their place! The soloist is the only person who uses their bow. When they are done soloing, they look to the person next to them and nod to let them know it is their turn. At first, it is easier for each soloist to play through the entire melody. Later on soloists can trade 4s, which means every 4 measures there is a new soloist.

Soloists: When trading 4-measure phrases, don’t start at the beginning every time as the class may be in the middle of the song. You need to improvise exactly where the rest of the class is in the melody and chord progression.

In our next article we will look at Long and Short Melodies. Stay tuned!

Easy chords to Long Long Ago

Violin and viola play guitar style (to strum, use your thumb or back of fingernails).

Advanced chords to Long Long Ago

Violin and viola play guitar style (to strum, use your thumb or back of fingernails).

Advanced bass line to Long Long Ago

Originally published in MNSOTA’s String News - Winter 2012/2013 (Vol. 15, No. 2.)

Cristina Seaborn has produced an instructional video for fiddling Anyone Can Play Country Fiddle (Mel Bay), CDs entitled Inside the Heart of a Musician, Seaborn Breeze, and Spirit Wind, and many arrangements for string orchestra of fiddle music, jazz, Celtic, Cajun, and original. Expert at fiddling and jazz improvisation, Cristina holds a Bachelor of Music Degree in jazz violin performance from Berklee College of Music in Boston, and a Masters in Conducting for Orchestra, from St. Cloud State University. Cristina is a violinist and fiddler with over thirty years of experience. In symphonies, quartets, jazz ensembles, and folk/rock bands, her musical background includes influences in classical, jazz, Celtic, bluegrass, and Texas swing fiddle.
My Turn

Kudos Winner: My Professor Was Right—Joining ASTA Was One of the Smartest Things I Ever Did

Dear American String Teachers Association:

I am deeply grateful to Tom Tatton, our CalASTA President, for nominating me and to ASTA for honoring me with this Kudos award.

I joined ASTA when I was in college at Brigham Young University. My professor, David Dalton, required all members of his pedagogy class to join if we wanted a passing grade. He said this would be one of the smartest decisions we could make, not simply because we would need the credit for graduation, but because our membership in ASTA would connect us with other string teachers throughout the country and provide us with constant access to invaluable professional training.

He encouraged us to form a student chapter and told us to commit to keeping our membership active throughout our lives. I took his words to heart and enjoyed receiving the AST journal even while living in Italy for many years. It was a wonderful way to stay connected to what I found to be a world-wide, string-teaching community. While teaching violin and chamber music at the Accademia Musicale Mediterranea in Taranto, Italy, I was able to take some of ASTA’s promotional materials, “Why Strings,” to elementary classrooms where many of the children had never before seen a violin.

When I moved back to the states, I started up a private teaching studio in Berkeley, California and learned about the ASTA Certification Advancement Program which Stephanie Railsback and Wendy Clymer had just introduced to the ASTA San Francisco section. In 2011, I began sending my students to these exams and relished how well they responded to the entire process. They were motivated to practice and they looked forward to performing for one another during our group classes in preparation for the exams. On exam day they received supportive feedback not only from the adjudicators but from all the ASTA teachers who served as monitors at the examination site.

I must confess, however, that as wonderful as ASTACAP was for my students, my favorite part of the day was getting to spend time with other string teachers. Teaching from home has its perks, but networking in person with other teachers certainly isn’t one of them. Being able to talk with other teachers about our students, our challenges and accomplishments was, in many ways, cathartic. In fact, I couldn’t help but feel that something was amiss. Surely, I wasn’t supposed to have so much fun at music examinations!

When I was asked to serve as Treasurer of our section in 2012, I was thrilled to be able to finally contribute something meaningful to my ASTA section. After a few months, I was asked to replace Wendy Clymer as President of ASTA San Francisco. I was terrified, but I accepted and immediately set about inviting colleagues to serve on my board. I knew that if this were to work the way I thought it could, I would need all the support I could get.

I have had the privilege of working with some incredibly dedicated string teachers who have helped me bring ASTA-sponsored programs to our constituents. We’ve successfully offered $4500 in grants to musical organizations which initiate and promote activities that advance the art of string playing through special projects or the purchase of equipment. We offer regular workshops called Teacher Symposiums which are open to all members of our string teaching community regardless of their affiliation to ASTA. We offer annual ASTACAP exams in four locations, including one dedicated solely to harp students. We support chamber music initiatives, recitals and hold annual Solo Competitions at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

I continue to look for meaningful and creative ways to reach out and serve our string teaching community and to do my part to fulfill ASTA’s mission of enriching “lives through the joy of teaching and playing stringed instruments.”

Thank you again for honoring me with this Kudos award.

Sincerely,

Cybèle D’Ambrosio

Thank you again for honoring me with this Kudos award.

Sincerely,

Cybèle D’Ambrosio

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