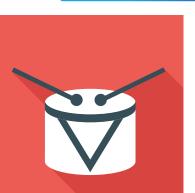


# South Carolina MUSICIAN





Vol. LXXII



























Featured Article:
The 5 T's of
Playing
Low Brass
p. 15



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# Contents



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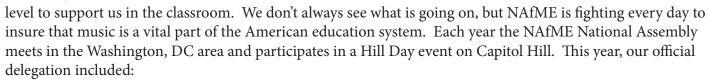
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# President's Message

Martin Dickey, SCMEA President

Welcome to the 2018-2019 school year! I hope you had a fun, relaxing and successful summer. Our students receive the best education when we work together as a united team of music educators. The enthusiasm, support and involvement you bring to the classroom inspires students to do their best. Together we can achieve phenomenal results and build lifelong lovers of music. The new school year offers excitement, new teachers and students to meet, new books to read, new friends to meet and new skills to master...and I look forward to you sharing in these exciting times. I encourage you to fully embrace the moments to come!

The executive board of SCMEA is here for you! Prior to becoming your President, I never realized the full extent of what NAfME does at the national



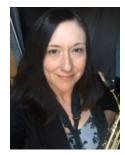


Michael Moore, SCMEA President-Elect Lillian Tague Collegiate Member Martin Dickey, SCMEA President Courtney Vance, Collegiate Member Jenei Peterson, SCMEA Collegiate President Patti Foy, SCMEA Executive Director

In June our state delegation gathered at the National Assembly and Hill Day event in Washington DC to meet with Senators and House of Representative members from across the United States. With the help of our collegiate members we were able to meet with every member of the House and Senate from South Carolina. All of them are supportive of music as part of a well-rounded education and getting to know their legislative assistants that focus on education issues helps SCMEA have a voice in national decisions. The day kicked off with a rally in the Hart Senate Office building, where Congresswoman Nydia Velázquez (D-NY-07) joined us. Congresswoman Velázquez, a vocal champion for music education and recently introduced the Guarantee Access to Arts and Music Education (GAAME) Act (H.R. 6137) into the U.S. House of Representatives. This legislation encourages school districts to use their Title I-A funds (school-wide and targeted assistance grants) to help provide music education for disadvantaged students. The Congresswoman gave a compelling address on the power music holds to transform lives and voiced her support for NAfME's legislative agenda. Our delegation continued this message with our House members and also discussed fully funding the Every Student Succeeds Act's authorized levels for well-rounded education programs. This includes increasing Title IV-A to \$1.6 billion, Title I-A to \$15.46 billion, and Title II-A to \$2.3 billion.

Working with Lisa Rayner, Michael Moore, and Patti Foy is a pleasure as they share the same vision to make SCMEA a strong advocate for music in the schools and a model for diversity in the profession. I take the responsibility to represent the music educators of our great state of South Carolina seriously so please don't hesitate to talk to me about how I can serve you better.

I wish you a wonderful school year and please remember that the South Carolina Music Educators Association and our board is here for you!



# Band Division

Leah Cordé, SCBDA President

It is hard to believe the 2018-19 school year is upon us! I hope you and your families had a wonderful summer break and that you are ready to hit the ground running this

fall! Whether you are wrapping up several weeks of band camp, or are eagerly waiting to meet your beginners for the first time, I hope this upcoming year is your best year yet!

The SCBDA had an incredibly busy 2017-18 school year! After two decades, we were able to get legislation passed allowing PE credit for marching band! This success will affect thousands of band students across our state for years to come. I want to extend a huge THANK YOU to Joe Gulledge for taking the lead on this and spending countless amounts of time and energy on this campaign. To say he was instrumental in the passing of this legislation is a massive understatement. It definitely took a village, though, so I want to extend my thanks to the many of you that were involved in this process as well. Whether you personally reached out to your state representatives, shared information via social media, organized and energized your parents, or participated in our rally...everything helped! YOU made a significant impact and many generations of band students will benefit because of your actions. Yes, we each still have work to do at local level to make this a reality, but the opportunity exists now where it did not before. Ultimately, this was a win for the arts and we cannot even begin to estimate the impact this win will have on our future endeavors.

In addition to this huge success, we added a 6th region to accommodate our growth! It is my pleasure to announce that Denise Hembree, Assistant Director at Dorman High School, has been appointed as the new Region 6 Chairman. Denise is a long time member of the All-State Committee and will do an exceptional job in this new roll. If you are director in the new region, do not hesitate to volunteer your service! No matter how big or small, anything you can do as we approach the region auditions and clinic will help!

As we move into this school year, there are a couple of items I need to make you aware of. First, as you know, our former President-Elect, David O'Shields, is enjoying the first few days of retirement! David fulfilled his obligations as requested, and now it

is up to us to elect a new President-Elect. Therefore, we WILL HAVE a Fall Meeting on Saturday, September 8 at River Bluff High School. Along with the Committee Meetings and the Marching Band Draw, we will have a General Meeting to elect a new President-Elect. Your presence at this meeting is of the utmost importance!! In an effort to accommodate other activities you may have scheduled that day, WE WILL CONCLUDE ALL BUSINESS BY NOON. Please see the schedule below:

Executive Board	8:30 AM
General Meeting/Vote	10:00 AM
Committee Meetings	10:45 AM
New Member Meeting	11:00 AM
Marching Band Draw	11:30 AM

Secondly, after much discussion and taking a vote, the Executive Board has decided to suspend the Winter Ensembles Championships for one year. Due to the new classifications that we voted in this past February, the SCBDA is not in a position to effectively host this event for the 2018-19 school year. The new classifications make our alliance with CWEA null and void, and it is now completely up to us to staff and execute this event. Due to the complexities involved with this event, we will need to take this upcoming year to prepare for the 2019-20 school year. It saddens me that this is the course of action we have to take, but we have no other options at this point. The SCBDA is committed to providing top-notch events for the band students and band directors in our state, and moving forward with the Winter Ensembles Championships would fall far short of what we want to offer our members and students.

As a reminder, please be sure your NAfME membership is current and that you update your information on Bandlink. If you have not joined NAfME, visit the SCMEA webpage (www.scmea.net) to join. You MUST be a member of NAfME/SCMEA in order to register and participate in SCBDA events. If you have any issues with your Bandlink registration, please contact our technology chairman, Ryan Tinker (webmaster@bandlink.org). As the year progresses, please be mindful of our registration deadlines. If you ever need help or have questions, please reach out to a member of the Executive Board so that we may assist you. It is up to each of us to honor our professional obligations.

I hope that you have a wonderful start to your school year and I look forward to seeing you all at our events throughout the year.



# Choral Division

Gregory Pittman, President

Another year has arrived and with it, endless opportunities to make music with our students. This year, we will continue our tireless efforts to instill in our students the tenacity and dedication true art demands. As we seek to create young artists, it will be important to remember that we, too, are artists. In fact, we're artists first and educators second. If we lose passion for our art, then we can never be successful in creating artists.

So, as you receive seemingly endless reminders about the next after school professional development session, or the next faculty meeting, or the next IEP meeting, remember: those are important parts of our job, but never more important than our own artistry.

Artists create. As music educators, we're lucky enough to be able to create music and more artists.

# Elementary Division

Todd Monsell, President

It's with a heavy heart that I write to you that Elementary Division Past-President Donna Barrick passed away on July 11 at her home in Landrum. Donna was a loving and giving mother, wife, daughter and friend. She inspired others, she motivated them academically and



spiritually. The rock of her family, she gave 110% to everything she was involved in. Donna had a love of education, specifically music. She shared her love of music with many children in her years in education. Her laughter was contagious and she was heartfelt and loving. I had the pleasure of working closely with Donna for three years, and she worked tirelessly on behalf of our membership and the children of South Carolina. We will miss her greatly. I would like to invite any interested Elementary Division members to contribute to the Donna Barrick Memorial Honor Choir Scholarship. This scholarship will provide elementary singers for whom the honor choir fees are a financial hardship to participate in this wonderful musical experience free of charge. Donations to this new scholarship may be made through our division treasurer at the following address:

Donna Barrick Memorial Honor Choir Scholarship c/o Mandy Rushe,Treasurer SCMEA Elementary Division 36 Pointe Overlook Dr. Chapin, SC 29036

We hope to see all of you at our annual Elementary Division Fall Workshop! This year's workshop will take place at Round Top Elementary in Blythewood on Saturday, September 8 from 9AM-12PM. Noted composer and clinician Andy Beck will be with us to present an exciting 90-minute session: MOVIN'! New Elementary Music and Materials It's amazing what kids can do when given the right materials! Join clinician Andy Beck to experience the newest 2-part chorals, songbooks, movement ideas, musicals, and other classroom resources—perfect for those energetic young singers of yours! A complimentary music packet will be given to each director in attendance.

Also on the 8th, we will do a preview/read-through of this year's SC Elementary Honor Choir repertoire and give some tips about recording and uploading auditions, go over some business items such as a new website in the works, and enjoy breakfast (come hungry!) and snacks. We'll also have some fun door prizes to give away. Look for the registration form in your email in August. Hope to see you there--pray for no hurricane this year!

# **NEW DIVISION!**

SCMEA WELCOMES the

# **GUITAR DIVISION**

# Guitar Division

Jason Sprankle, President

Welcome everyone to the new 2018-19 school year! Exciting things have happened in the



SCMEA over the summer and I am very pleased to announce the birth of our newest division, The Guitar Division! How did this happen, you ask? To make a long story short, the Guitar Committee has been working over the past couple of years to build state-level programs in guitar music education by creating the first ever Spring Guitar Festivals (2017 and 2018) and by auditioning the first ever All-State Guitar Ensemble in October 2017. During the SCMEA Executive Board meeting held in Columbia this past May, guitar committee members Benjamin Broughton and myself along with chairman L.H. Dickert, presented a proposal to amend the SCMEA By-laws to create the new division. The motion passed and was sent to SCMEA membership for final approval. The SCMEA general membership voted unanimously in favor of the amendment in July 2018. Following the favorable vote, members of the guitar committee met to assume duties as the new executive committee of the Guitar Division and to discuss and approve a set of by-laws. After the bylaws were adopted (by acclamation) and in order to get the division rolling for the new year, election of interim officers took place. However, we still need regional chairpersons to fill four positions, so, if you are interested please contact me at <a href="mailto:isprankle@">isprankle@</a> lexington1.net.

Since our by-laws closely follow those of the SCMEA and other divisions, we will hold new elections during the regularly scheduled Guitar Division meeting at the SCMEA Professional Development Conference in February 2019. The new officers will assume duties on July 1, 2019. Some of the benefits of creating this new division will be to improve communication and visibility with others who teach guitar. We are constantly seeking out resources and clinicians to assist in improving the ways in which we teach our students. Having a state level visibility may help us to share resources more effectively, to keep in touch with each other more efficiently and to let others know that they are not alone when it comes to teaching guitar. On behalf of the Guitar Division executive committee, we invite you to reach out for more information and to join us in our quest to unite guitar teachers in the state of South Carolina for the mutual benefit of everyone involved, teachers and especially, our students! Our first official Guitar Division meeting will be held on September 7 at 5:00 p.m. at River Bluff High School, 320 Corley Mill Road, Lexington, SC. Best wishes for a productive and prosperous new school year.

Your New Guitar Division Executive Board:

Jason B. Sprankle, President L.H. Dickert, Past President Benjamin Broughton, President Elect Jeff Harris, Executive Director Chris Essig, Conference Chair

# Higher Education Division

Michael Weaver, President



Welcome back! The 2018-19 school year has started and I hope that you had time over the summer to reflect on last year's challenges and victories. I also hope that you have the opportunity to employ initiatives to be better prepared for the ups and downs of the school

year. Another hope is that you have more students in your programs this year. This brings me to one of the challenges higher education is facing across the state, accurate reporting of information to state agencies. USC hosted an Arts Higher Education Forum in May with presenters from the SC Education Oversight Committee (EOC), the SC Commission on Higher Education, the SC Department of Education Office of Standards and Learning and the Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention and Advancement (CERRA). During the forum there were six areas identified as "critical issues:" recording accurate data; alternate certification; recruitment and retention; STEAM; legislative advocacy; and school and state accountability. South Carolina is facing a teacher shortage, including music teachers in all areas, and state agencies are looking for ways to have qualified teachers in the classroom. According to the SC Commission on Higher Education, SC has 34 program providers that produce certified teachers, 30 traditional programs and four alternative programs. Of these program providers, in 2015-16, there were just 21 program completers in music for all of our traditional programs (colleges and universities across the state) and one program completer in alternative programs (PACE, Teach for America, Teachers of Tomorrow, etc.). As you can see, the numbers are quite low and were recognized as inaccurate during the forum. In fact, USC's Dr. Wendy Valerio was in attendance and mentioned that USC had more students graduate with degrees in music education in one semester than the SC Commission on Higher Education acknowledged for the whole state for the year. The problem really comes when the SC Commission on Higher Education passes these numbers along to policy makers in Columbia who

are making decisions concerning arts education using inaccurate data. This forum was helpful in many ways, the least of which was to have direct contact between the higher education professors and the agencies collecting data, so numbers could be identified as inaccurate and agencies could take steps to identify why and consider how they might be able to rectify the problem. Also, CERRA has a critical needs list of teachers for the state. All arts areas, including music, are on the critical needs list for teachers. CERRA is proposing to increase the amounts for teacher loans, that eligibility requirements be eliminated with the only requirements being that the recipient be an education major (a junior or senior admitted to the teacher education program), and a proposal concerning forgiveness rates. If you have students in your music education programs needing more funding, teacher loans can be done in addition to the teaching fellows program. These loans are through the SC Teacher Loan Corporation and offer a five-year forgiveness rate, but if the teacher is in a critical subject (which music is one) in a critical school, the forgiveness rate is three years. More information can be found on the CERRA website, www.cerra.org. If you find this information helpful, this was just the "tip of the iceberg" of all of the information discussed during the forum. We are wanting to have this as an annual meeting/forum, but we need you to participate. I would encourage you to consider attending next year's forum.

The SCMEA Professional Development Conference is just around the corner, February 7-9, 2019. Higher Education is considering sessions concerning PRAXIS preparation, modernizing music education, and the exemplary music educator. We are also looking to partner with the Elementary Division and host Peter and Mary Alice Amidon from Vermont to provide sessions on music and dance. You can learn more about the Amidons by visiting their website, www.amidonmusic.com. This has not been confirmed yet and is subject to the availability of funding. Also, this is an election year for the Higher Education Division. If you have someone in mind you would like to nominate for president elect of the Higher Education Division, please be sure to attend our meeting during the conference. We will have more specifics concerning Higher Education Division offerings at the conference in the next SC Musician.

# Orchestra Division

Christopher R. Selby, President



Greetings, Orchestra Division! I hope you had a restful summer. We have an exciting year in the works for you, and I hope you can appreciate all of the hard work our new board members are doing to create a great year for our kids. The 2019 South Carolina All-State Orchestra event will be held on

February 22nd through the 24th at both Irmo and Lexington High Schools in Columbia. This year's event has a wonderful group of music educators and conductors with Amy Sckipp for the Junior All-State Orchestra, Robert Dale Gardner for the Senior All-State Orchestra, and Miles Hoffman for the Senior Honors Orchestra. The students are in for a weekend of tremendous music and learning opportunities.

Amy Sckipp has a terrific program planned for our middle school group including a little Mozart, a little Tchaikovsky and some "Lord of the Dance" as our full orchestra repertoire. Robert Dale Gardner's program will bring an air of surprise this year as we are still narrowing the choices of works his group will perform. Finally, South Carolina's own, Miles Hoffman will close out this fantastic program with the Senior Honors Orchestra performing Mendelssohn's "Overture to a Midsummer Night's Dream" and Wagner's "Rienzi Overture." Though this appears to be a selection of overtures, the Mendelssohn was originally intended as a concert overture and not designed to introduce anything - only later was it added to his "A Midsummer Night's Dream" work. Both pieces provide high excitement for strings, winds and percussion. It will be a weekend of educational opportunities and fabulous musical experiences for the top string, wind, brass and percussion students of South Carolina's Band and Orchestra programs.

President-Elect, Ginger Greer is putting together an inspiring collection of orchestra sessions at the SCMEA Conference February 7-10 at the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center. Congratulations to the following school orchestras who have been selected to perform at the conference this year. Southwood HS and Dutch Fork MS will perform during the session times on Friday and Saturday, and Alice Drive will perform in the exhibit hall. Our headliner this

year will be Carrie Lane Gruselle, sponsored by FJH. She will be doing four sessions:

- 1. Making Each Moment a Musical Moment—from "Ants" to Adagio for Strings.
- 2. Middle Level Madness: Managing the Menagerie
- 3. Comprehensive Musicianship through Performance (CMP) 101:
- 4. New FJH Music Reading Session

Also this year we will be working together to review, revise, and align the portions of divisions' bylaws where we have common ground. The state organization is in the process of reviewing and revising some of its the bylaws, and as the Orchestra Division is under the umbrella of the state organization, is doing the same. Margaret Selby and her committee are working hard to revise the bylaws in a way that will help strengthen our division and state organizations. We will start voting on sections of the bylaws that were presented at All-State in September, at the meeting on September 8. We will also present the remaining sections of the bylaws for members to review, before we vote on all sections at the Conference in February.

I hope you and your students have a wonderful year. As your President (again), I will do my best to listen to all concerns and steer this ship in the a direction that is best for all orchestra teachers and students. If you have any questions, the best way to contact me is via email: Christopher\_selby@charleston.k12.sc.us. Make this year your best ever, and let me know if I can help.



# Piano Division

Karen Buckland, President

I want to extend my sincere thanks to Dr. Tony Lenti for his many years of dedicated service as president of the SCMEA Piano



Division. I am honored and thrilled to be "following in his footsteps" and look forward to an exciting year! I hope your summer was wonderful and restful, and as you look forward to a new year of teaching music, I want to share information regarding the SCMEA Piano Division with you and your students.

There are three upcoming events for the 2018-2019 academic year. The SCMEA Piano Festival will be held in January, and both the Piano Division Master Class and the Piano Division Student Honors Recital will take place during the 2019 SCMEA Professional Development Conference held February 7-9, at the Columbia Conference Center. All activities are for teachers interested in piano whether or not your specialty is teaching piano - everyone is welcome!

The Piano Festival will be held on Saturday, January 26. Audition sites are Presbyterian College in Clinton and Charleston Southern University. The Festival is for every student from beginning through advanced levels of study. There are no repertoire requirements and scales are not required. The goal of the Piano Festival is to provide a positive performance experience for the student and their teacher. Each student receives comments with a grade and a certificate of participation. The registration form is included and the deadline for registration is January 14 which allows time to schedule auditions and contact teachers. I would greatly appreciate if you send an estimated number of students attending the Festival by December 14 so I can secure judges. I will gladly accept questions regarding repertoire or the Piano Festival and hope you will encourage your students to participate.

The two events at the 2019 SCMEA Professional Development Conference in February are the Piano Division Student Honors Recital and a Piano Master Class for Students. Piano Festival judges will choose a selected number of students, based on musicality and preparedness from elementary, intermediate and advanced levels of study, to perform in the Piano Division Student Honors Recital. They will also choose students to perform in a master class conducted by Dr. David Thompson, Professor of Piano and Piano Pedagogy at Limestone College. Most likely the Master Class and the Honors Recital will be on Saturday. The Piano Division will finish with the annual Piano Division Honors Recital which motivates students and highlights student piano performance and teaching in South Carolina.

I would like the Piano Division to continue to offer services to SCMEA teachers. If you are interested in a presentation or master class for your students, or a class or presentation for teachers, please contact me so we can work together to further piano education and teaching.

I look forward to meeting and hearing from you. All the best for a new year of teaching.



Be ready for whatever the school year brings with NAfME in your backpack!

Visit: bit.ly/NAfMEBackpack



# PIANO DIVISION 2018-2019

# SCMEA Piano Festival Registration Form January 26, 2019

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Name	Age	Years of Study	Composer(s)		Title(s)	Solo or Ensemble	Time of Piece
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adjudicator.  5. No photocopied music will be permitted in the Piano Festival; students will not be allowed to perform with photocopied music.  Teacher's Name:  NAfME ID Number:  Address:			·	Mail to: Dr. Karen Buckland Presbyterian College Department of Music 503 South Broad Street Clinton, SC 29325			

Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Office: (864) 833-8467

Home: (864) 938-1164 E-mail: kbuck@presby.edu

# Accepting Nominations

# 2019 SCMEA AWARDS



Nomination Deadline: October 31st

# <u>Categories</u>

Deborah Smith Hoffman Mentor Award
Friend of Music Education Award
Friend of Music Education Business Award
Hall of Fame Award
Honor Administrator Award
Memorial Scholarship Award
Outstanding Young Music Educator Award

# In Memoriam

SCMEA would like to honor the South Carolina music teachers we've



William J. Moody



Donna Barrick



Matthew Shrewsbury



**Eddie Shealy** 



Traci Drummond



Hamilton Love



John Kenneth Adams



**Eleanor Avant** 



William Patrick Wylie



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# The 5 "T's" Playing Low Brass

Five pillars for students to self-assess in solo or ensemble experiences

by Michael Johnson

Developing quality low brass musicians can be a challenge. Assessing them can be even more difficult when their music is not as difficult as their high brass and woodwind counterparts. Here are five pillars to help develop low brass players to maturity. These five "T's" can also be used to assess students and provide feedback for improvement.

# 1. Time

Time is the most important facet of low brass playing. Even with all the other T's operating perfectly, students with poor time will not perform well. Playing in time means the breath before the note is in time. Generally, a two-beat breath before the entrance. The instrument speaks with a full sound right on time on the desired pitch. Time and rhythm are different entities but placing rhythms inside of time is one facet of playing but that is a different aspect of performance skills. Time also affects the ends of notes. Do our notes of shorter duration rush or drag behind? Do students read rhythms fluidly and without pauses? This is especially important with tied and dotted rhythms. Having students working with subdivision early can be helpful in developing this skill.

Remedies for addressing TIME:

- Play long tones with a metronome with proper breathing technique on the front and back of the pitch with 2% increase in dynamic at the end of note values.
- Practice playing subdivisions of longer note values to evaluate if students are behind or ahead. For example: have students play three eighth notes to understand the length of a dotted quarter.
- Subdivide every activity into 8th or 16th notes

and keep the pulse internalized even while playing whole notes.

• Ask half the group to play the subdivision while the other half plays the actual note value.

# 2. Tone

Tone is the next pillar of importance. When students play in time consistently it is now time to focus and develop great tone. Great tone is a consistent, resonant sound in all registers of the instrument. It does not sound stuffy, forced, or anemic. Good tone comes from releasing warm air into the instrument from a relaxed body. Low brass tone generally has three parts: warmth, core, and brilliance. Warmth, is the darkness of the sound while the core is the pitch being played and the overtones that instrument produces. Brilliance is the brightness and "pep" in the sound. Great musicians learn to manipulate those three variables to produce variety. For example: a fanfare or march might require more brilliance in the sound while an adagio might require more core and warmth for balancing an ensemble.

Remedies for addressing better TONE:

- Play recordings of great musicians to hear what different low brass players sound like with varying levels or warmth, core, and brilliance. What do American players sound like? French? English? German? etc.
- Use *Beautiful Sound Studies from the Brass Gym*,<sup>1</sup> these activities focus on playing with a full sound while moving through the tessitura of the instrument. *The Brass Gym* is a comprehensive daily workout for brass players written by Sam Pilafian and Pat Sheridan.
- Play long tones a with focus on playing with

an open syllable AH or OH. Do these in the medium, low, and high range appropriate to experience of the group. Low B-flat (Bb 2 to Bb 1) for trombone and euphonium, F3 to low F2 for middle range, and Bb 3 down to Bb 2 for the high tone. For tuba play down the octave from octaves for trombone and euphonium.

• Play pedal tones. Pedals are the first harmonic in the harmonic series on a given finger combination or slide position. It is considered the first partial. The embouchure must be relaxed and the air and buzz must be slow. Ask students to keep the same openness and movement of air throughout the range of their instrument. The pitch produced for trombone and euphonium should be an "Bb2" on the keyboard in first position or no valves depressed and the tuba should be a "Bb1" on the keyboard with no valves depressed.

# 3. Tonguing

The tongue is a sly muscle that can enhance great tone and time, or wreck it. The tongue must develop into a muscle that knows its place and is able to release the air. The tongue also dents the air in trombone legato articulation and directs air when used in syllables. Often beginners use a glottal, air or tongue stop on each note that sounds abrupt. Encourage students to play long and connected tones and focus on playing a phrase or a group of notes at a time rather than each individual pitch. There are many ways to look at the tongue but for simplicity, base it on the range students are playing in. For high register playing (anywhere from "G3" upward) use a Tee tongue that touches the upper hard pallet right where the teeth start. For middle and low register playing, use a "Thah" or "Thoh" syllable which is right between the teeth. Note: Everyone has a different facial and jaw structure.

Remedies for addressing TONGUING:

- Practice starting different notes with the appropriate tongue placement as described above
- Practice single tonguing one note at different speeds in varying registers
- Practice attacks without the mouthpiece using air then with the mouthpiece then with the instrument

# 4. Tuning

Playing in tune is one the pillars that often

goes ignored in the early-stages of low brass playing. Focusing on tuning from the beginning with the low brass ensemble would be an incredible investment in the quality of the ensemble sound.

Tuning tubas in the low range can be difficult because the sound waves are moving slowly but in the higher register they are very evident. Making large tuning adjustments, or the "macro phase" must be addressed on the instrument through tuning slides, mouthpiece selection, and instrument quality. "Micro" tuning must be handled with embouchure and fingering combinations substitutions. Ask tubas to be mindful of intonation when playing their long tones, attempting to remove the "beats" out of the sound when playing with others. Playing in tone with one another by blending their sound will make the ensemble better immediately.

Tuning at any moment throughout rehearsal is a skill that is important for all instrument, but especially helpful for trombonist. Having them be mindful of playing in tune with themselves and with their section will make the ensemble better. Have two trombones play long tones in unison and later, at different intervals and have them try to eliminate the "beats" between them. As they develop the pitch correction skill their micro intonation skills on the slide will also improve.

Tuning also should also be prominent when playing in extreme dynamics of loud and soft. One of the most important facets of playing in tune is also playing in tone with one another, blending the sound to provide a rich base for the rest of the ensemble to play on top of. Dr. David Vining has a terrific resource called *Long Tone Duets*<sup>2</sup> that provides students of all levels resources on how to get their section to sound their best.

Remedies for addressing TUNING:

- Play pitches against a drone. Play unison and then tune intervals. Play scales with drones.
- Practice playing in unison and chords in tune at varying dynamics
- Ask tubas and euphoniums to bend the pitch with their embouchures. Pitch bending is a incredible skill to cultivate for them and will help them manipulate pitch in ensemble playing later.
- Ask trombones to play a pitch and ask them to play it flat and sharp so they understand what those pitches played incorrectly sound like. Stu-

dents tend to hear flat easier than sharp so practice playing a little too flat then bringing the slide hand closer until the pitch is matching.

- Play chorales, and other exercises like the *Long Tone Duets* and the *Voxman duets* that help focus on intonation
- In ensemble music, isolate chords and ask students to adjust. Teach them how parts of the chord must be adjusted to make a chord ring true. How should a major third be played? How should a 5th be approached? Do your students understand where they are in the chord on their own?

# 5. Technique

Technique is one pillar that requires extensive work to do well. Technique also varies from instrument to instrument, but there are fundamental parts of playing that are foundational. Correct fingerings and tongue placement fit in this category. There are other parts that are more specific to the instrument.

For trombone, a smooth and clean slide movement from note to note with no glissando, and clean slurs (whether natural slurs or legato tongued passages). Playing the trombone with a smooth sound requires a well lubricated slide to be able to move quickly and smoothly for best results. I like to think of trombone slide technique in three sections: 1. the elbow controls large movements, 2. the wrist should be loose and controls smaller movements, and 3. the fingers should pivot and work as micro-tuners. Often what trombone teachers notice is too much of one or the other. Too much elbow movement looks jerky and is not accurate while a locked wrist may prevent long positions from happening or too loose a wrist may cause scooping up or down on pitch and sounds sloppy.

Proper finger technique for tuba and euphonium means pushing down valves firmly, straight down, and in time. Perfect tongue placement for where the note is on their instrument. Fast fingers with well lubricated valves will prevent "smears" and slow valve action. For euphonium, this becomes more and more important as their function in middle school turns from a doubling of tuba parts to playing counter melodies and more challenging parts in the high school ensemble. For all instruments this means movement from note to note no matter the interval.

Remedies to improve TECHNIQUE:

- Practice scales in multiple combinations, ascending and descending, in thirds, fourths, and fifths.
- Practice scale activities slurred and tongued

• Lip slurs and lip flips from *The Brass Gym*<sup>3</sup>

# Conclusion

The 5 pillars can help us develop better low brass students by focusing on these five aspects of their playing. Using rubrics with these five pillars can also help students see their weakness and assess themselves and others. Provided is a sample rubric that can be used to assess students formatively. There are no grades assigned in the rubric so that the students learn about achieving one facet at a time. Peer assessment with these five T's can also develop the ear of students and help them to develop error detection skills. Giving solutions to students who struggle on one pillar or another can help students become better problem solvers and give them resources to improve their own playing outside of class.

#### **Endnotes**

- <sup>1</sup> Sam Pilafian and Patrick Sheridan, *The Brass Gym: A Comprehensive Daily Workout for Brass Players*. Fort Wayne, Indiana: Focus on Excellence, 2008.
- <sup>2</sup> David Vining, *Long Tone Duets*. Texas: Mountain Peak Music, 2007.
- <sup>3</sup> Sam Pilafian and Patrick Sheridan, *The Brass Gym: A Comprehensive Daily Workout for Brass Players*. Fort Wayne, Indiana: Focus on Excellence, 2008.

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# The 5 "T's" of Low Brass Rubric

by Michael Johnson

	by Michael Johnson					
Notes						
We've got work to do	More than 6 pitches not centered Sound not characteristic	Steady tempo is not maintained throughout the exercise Rhythms are not performed in time	Articulations are ignored or not performed well Slurs are ignored Tongue, air, slide or valves are not synchronized at all	Pitches are not played in tune Ignoring of others Intervals are not played accurately	Incorrect hand position Slow slide and finger movement for trombone Rough movement from pitch to pitch 6 or more errors on slide positions or valve combinations	
	0 0	0 0	0 0 0	0 0 0	0 0 0	
Working on it	3-5 pitches not centered Sound rarely character- istic	Steady tempo is developing with some pauses Rhythms are generally in time	Some notes are articulated well Only some slurs are observed Tongue, air, slide or valves are not synchronized well	Some pitches played in tune  Not listening for the "beats"  Intervals not played consistently accurate	Inconsistent hand position Jerky movement of elbow, wrist and finger move- ment not evident Inconsistent movement from note to note 3-5 errors on slide posi- tions or valve combina- tions	
	0 0	0 0	0 0 0	0 0 0	0 0 0	
Almost There	1-3 pitches not centered Sound not always charac- teristic of instrument	Tempo is mostly steady throughout the exercise Rhythms are mostly played in time with some rushing or dragging	Most notes are articulated well Slurs are observed but may not be smooth Tongue, air, slide, or valves are generally synchronized	Most pitches are in tune some evidence of microtuning Listening to others but over/under adjusting Most intervals are played in tune	Mostly proper hand position  Mostly smooth movement of fingers, wrist, and elbow for trombone  Mostly clean movement from note to note  1-2 errors on slide positions or valve combinations	
	0 0	0 0	0 0 0	0 0 0	0 0 0 0	
Got it!	Full and resonant sound in all registers from beginning to end of each note Sound characteristic of instrument	Steady tempo is observed throughout the exercise Rhythms are played in time with no pushing or dragging.	Proper start to each note with correct articulation Correct slurs are observed Tongue, air, slide, or valves are matched perfectly with no glissando's	All pitches are in tune with evident use of micro-tuning Listening and adjusting to others is evident Intervals are played in tune	Proper hand position Smooth movement of fingers, wrist, and elbow for trombone Clean movement from note to note Proper valves combinations and slide movements observed	
	0 0	0 0	0 0 0	0 0 0	0 0 0 0	
	Tone	Time	Tonguing	Tuning	Technique	



# Embracing Learner Variability: Sight-Reading Strategies for Everyone in Choir

by Dr. Kate Evans

It was my first day teaching the newly formed high school choir in my northern Michigan school district. The energy level was high and I smiled as I looked out at the students in my class, a mixture of my former middle school students who continued in choir at high school and new faces who were singing in a choir for the first time. We had just finished introductions and singing a few vocal warm-ups, and students were looking through the folders of music that I had carefully prepared for their first day of choir. A hand went up in the back, and I called on the student, who said, "I have a question. Why are there hockey sticks all over this?" I was confused and asked him to show me what he was referring to, and the student pointed to the musical notation on the octavo. He thought the quarter notes and other note values were hockey sticks (remember, this was in northern Michigan). I looked around and saw other students nodding their heads in agreement. Trying not to panic, I asked if anyone else was unsure of what those "hockey sticks" meant, and two-thirds of the class raised their hands. I quickly realized that I was going to have to rethink my grand plans (and a few of my repertoire choices) and spend some quality time working on musical literacy.

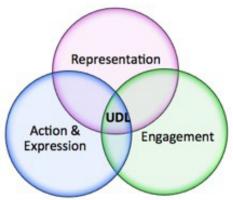
How could I best serve the needs of the diverse learners in my class? In the field of education, our mantra is "Experience before label!" Students must experience concepts before putting a name to them. With such varied levels of experience in aural skills and reading musical notation within this one class, I knew that I must devise creative ways to motivate my choir members on their paths to musical literacy. The principles of Universal Design for Learning provided the framework I needed to teaching sight-reading skills to choral students through engaging experiential and multisensory activities.

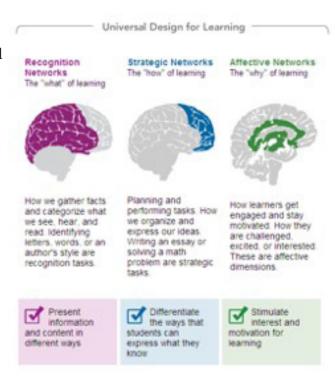
# What is Universal Design for Learning and why should we utilize it?

In architecture, Universal Design is an approach to design that works from the inception of planning to ensure that buildings can be used by all people regardless of their age, size, ability, or disability. It goes beyond making provisions for certain segments of the population to emphasize a creative and inclusive approach that enhances the environment for all people. In education, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a framework for proactively designing curricula and learning environments that recognize and support learner variability, giving all students an equal opportunity to learn. "UDL provides a blueprint for creating instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments that work for everyone – not a single, one-size-fits-all solution, but rather flexible approaches that can be customized or adjusted for individual needs." Because the individuals in our classrooms bring unique sets of skills, needs, and interests to learning, it is our responsibility to teach and design curriculum and assessment with learner variability in mind.

### How does UDL help teachers in the classroom?

The three overarching principles of UDL involve providing multiple means representation, action and expression, and engagement to learners. These principles and related guidelines "offer a set of concrete suggestions that can be applied to any discipline or domain to ensure that all learners can access and participate in meaningful, challenging learning opportunities." The UDL framework provides options for engaging the recognition, strategic, and affective networks of learning. <sup>3</sup>





## **Strategies for Sight-Reading!**

Research suggests that no single system of sight-reading has emerged as most effective. "All sight-singing methods are a means to an end, not an end to themselves." Making time for building musical literacy in every rehearsal must be a priority, as small amounts of distributed practice will be more effective than "cramming" sessions right before assessments. Demorest found that individual assessment and accountability resulted in significant improvement in sight-singing performance. In my own experience, I found that the most important aspect to consider when choosing sight-reading materials is that the approach is supported by a logical learning sequence. Where to begin?

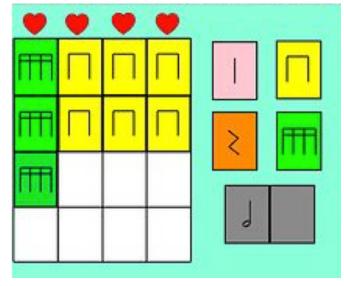
Start simply and remember the music education mantra, "Experience before label!" Young children imitate sounds and speak before they learn to read and write, and our choral singers must follow a similar sequence when learning to sight-read. Singers must develop a sense of steady beat and must listen and imitate various rhythmic and melodic patterns to build an aural "memory bank" they can later access when learning to read and write musical notation. The more aural musical "change" we deposit into this "bank" early on, the more we will be able to "withdraw" later when it is needed.

# **Rhythmic Training Steps**

The first step is to choose a rhythmic reading system (syllables or counting) and use it consistently. Have students move to feel steady beat and then echo rhythmic patterns performed by the teacher, building from simple to more complex over time. Provide multiple means of representation and increase engagement by having students perform rhythms with a beat track or instrumental cover in the background. In addition to clapping, students should speak and sing rhythmic patterns – why miss an opportunity to reinforce musicality and vowel shapes? Allow students to create their own rhythmic patterns aurally, and once they are fluent and comfortable, introduce notation. I prefer to start with manipulatives, such as the heartbeat kit or interactive whiteboard activities to help visual, kinesthetic, and tactile learners, rather than writing formal notation. The act of writing notation is a skill that takes practice in itself, and students often get stuck on drawing the notation perfectly instead of creating their own patterns or listening to the rhythmic dictation example!



Above: Heartbeat Kit Manipulatives



Above: Interactive whiteboard dictation

When completing a rhythmic dictation exercise for the first time, I utilize the "think-aloud" strategy to model the following steps for students:

- 1. Listen carefully
- 2. Think rhythm syllables
- 3. Write what you know using stick notation



- 4. Move on rather than getting stuck on one tricky beat
- 5. Fill in missing notes on subsequent repetitions

The opportunity to use manipulatives provides multiple means of representation when presenting new information and enables students to demonstrate their knowledge through multiple means of action and expression. Additional UDL connections are made utilizing multiple means of

engagement by providing scaffolding in the form of a think-aloud and dictation checklist as students begin the dictation process. Allowing students the choice to work alone or with partners also increases engagement and provides support for students who may need additional assistance.

# **Melodic Training Steps**

Choose a melodic reading system and use it consistently, as this will provide a strong foundation for aural skills and later for reading skills. I personally prefer moveable do solfege with la-based minor, but any system that is used regularly will be effective. Start with the pentatonic scale, using solfege and Curwen hand signs to benefit kinesthetic and visual learners. These tools provide opportunities for multiple means of representation, action and expression, and engagement. For beginners, practice frequently used intervals and stepwise motion first. The Kodály Method provides a logical sequence for introducing solfege that works well for singers of all ages! (Note that the solfege syllables in the main middle C octave, Do Re Mi Fa So La Ti Do, are notated in shorthand as DRMFSLTD' and that pitches above the main octave are notated as D' R' etc. and pitches below the main octave are notated as L,S, etc.) Progressively add each pitch and practice intervals and patterns in combination.

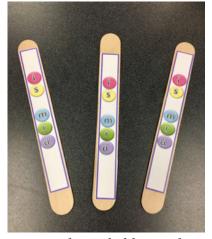
- 1. SM
- 2. SML
- 3. SMD
- 4. LSMD
- 5. SMRD
- 6. LSMRD (pentatonic scale)
- 7. MRDL, (minor mode)
- 8. MRDL,S,
- 9. D'LSMRD
- 10. F and T are introduced later as needed, as they are more difficult for young singers

The over arching progression of building melodic literacy follows the natural sequence of language development, which is aural, written, and then read. In this process, "Experience before label!" is once again our mantra. Building an aural and oral awareness of pitch and interval relationships before writing or reading notation is a vital step on the path to musical literacy.

# Strategies to Build and Reinforce Skills and Increase Engagement

Contrary to popular belief, sight-reading does not have to be a painful experience that is dreaded by choral directors and singers alike! It is a skill that should be practiced regularly and eventually incorporated in the process of learning new music as we help our singers become independent musicians. Manipulatives, movement, games, and of course simply singing provide opportunities for singers of all ages to interact with and demonstrate their understanding of the content in various ways.

Tone ladders provide a useful representation of pitch when careful attention is paid to the accurate portrayal of distance between intervals. All of our students are variable learners, and there are many opportunities for them to interact with pitch in visual, kinesthetic, and tactile ways. Many singers utilize Curwen hand signs as a kinesthetic and visual approach to seeing and feeling the distance between intervals. This strategy also allows the choir director to visually assess which students are struggling with the solfege. Solfege "texting sticks" serve as a portable tone ladder for tactile and visual learners and are easily stored in a choral folder for easy access during rehearsals. These "texting sticks" may be customized to include solfege or hand signs for the pentatonic scale, a one-octave diatonic scale, or other options as needed. Templates and directions to create your own solfege texting sticks are available at https://www.ariosostudio.com/manipulatives.html.



These assorted tone ladders and manipulatives may be used for a variety of activities that reinforce aural skills, including echoing patterns and unison or even two-part singing if the teacher is coordinated enough to perform different solfege with each hand! Playing games, such as Rhythmic Poison or Melodic Poison, are also effective in increasing student engagement while practicing sight-reading skills. Directions and resources for Poison games may be found at http://www.musicalaabbott.com/2013/02/poison-game-and-new-messenger-game.html. To

save one's voice and to increase the challenge level for students, teachers may also use the soprano recorder to play rhythmic or melodic patterns and have students echo back by clapping or singing solfege with hand signs.

Before transitioning to reading and writing notation, I wanted to be sure that my student were confident singers. As part of our daily warm-up and aural skills time, students worked on building part independence. We sang simple folk songs in unison and added movements to the beat and the rhythm to work on autonomy as well as listening to the group. Students eventually created their own rhythmic and melodic ostinato parts to accompany the songs, then progressed to partner songs and canons. To scaffold part-singing and increase buy-in, I used silly terms to break the singers into groups. Students singing the same part would form "smircles" - small section circles – to face the others singing their part, which provided additional support focusing their listening on their own part. When they were successfully singing in "smircles," the singers transitioned to a "larcle" – a large circle – to better hear how their own part fit within the context of the whole ensemble. The opportunity to physically change positions in the room and to work with their peers in small groups provided multiple means of engaging students and offered additional scaffolding for all singers. After much practice, students were consistently able to sing and move independently with confidence, and they were ready to transition to reading and writing formal notation Transitioning from Aural Awareness to Writing and Read-

# ing Notation

Once a strong foundation of experiencing aural and oral skills has been established, singers may progress to labeling those rhythmic and melodic sounds through writing and reading notation. As a young teacher, I made the mistake of jumping right into written notation with my choir students, and my students struggled. As I gained more teaching experience, I understood the importance of having students experience and internalize rhythmic and melodic patterns before trying to read notation, and also realized that many students needed additional assistance in order to be successful. Looking through the lens of UDL, simple modifications in the representation of content and multiple levels of scaffolding would help my variable learners find success in sight-reading.

The key to helping students become confident sight-readers was to progress from simple to more complex skills in a logical sequence. I started asking students to create and perform their own rhythmic and melodic patterns using the foundation of aural skills we had been upon since the start of the school year. They began by

creating individual patterns, then combined with classmates to compose longer patterns or two-part examples. Students started by using manipulatives, such as heartbeat kits or solfege flashcards, then progressed to written notation. Once they were comfortable writing and performing their own creations, they moved onto notated melodic exercises, which I created. For my beginners, we started with rhythmic examples and then moved to melodic examples. Using the exact same melodic example for each stage, this simple, three-step sequence allowed my students to quickly make connections between what they heard and the notation on the page.

- 1. Teacher sings the melodic pattern with Curwen hand signs and students echo to access their aural memory
- 2. Display and perform the same melodic exercise with solfege off the staff with rhythmic notation



3. Display the same melodic exercise on the staff (key of C only for beginners) with rhythmic and melodic notation

By adding in the second step, I saw the light bulbs go on over my students' heads and I knew I'd found the missing link in my sightreading instruction. By using the UDL principal of providing multiple means of representation, the singers were able to access their prior knowledge and more easily decode the symbols that have previously caused so much frustration.

### **Authentic Assessment Opportunities**

As they became more comfortable sightreaders, I presented students with rhythmic and melodic dictation exercises to challenge them and assess their skills. Some assessments used paper and pencil, but I was also able to use the manipulatives mentioned earlier, such as heartbeat kits and flashcards, to allow students to demonstrate their understanding in different ways (multiple means of action and expression). When singing in an ensemble, it can be easy for individuals to hide within the larger group. In my role as a sight-reading adjudicator, I sometime hear groups that perform very well as a large ensemble. However, when also looking at the ensemble members, it becomes apparent that many of the confident sight-readers are loudly carrying the less confident students along.

As educators, we must find efficient ways of assessing individual singers within the large ensemble. In order to assess individual sight-singing skills regularly in an authentic context, students could record themselves using phones or a tablet in class during the daily sight-reading portion of rehearsal. Train students to use the technology and list the names of 3-4 students who will record themselves each class. They simply state their name and record themselves while the class sings the sight-reading exercise, then submit the recording to the teacher. This provides a nonthreatening assessment of skills that is more authentic than singing alone in a room for a recorder without the context of the other voices that normally surround the singer. Alternately, students could form pairs or small groups and listen to each other sight-sing, providing specific feedback and using a rubric to guide assessment and discussion. This allows students time to engage socially while learning to assess their own skills as musicians.

## **Embracing Learner Variability**

Every single person in our choir, including ourselves, is a unique individual with varied preferences, approaches, and challenges in their own learning. As educators, it is our responsibility to create a welcoming environment that encourages all students to take risks and grow as musicians. By proactively designing instruction and assessment with learner

variability in mind, we create opportunities for all students to be successful in our choral classrooms. The principles of Universal Design for Learning provide a framework for students to learn new information, demonstrate their understanding of content, and create connections to motivate and engage their interest in building their sight-reading skills. The more varied, engaging, and relevant our approach to sight-reading, the more invested the singers will be in building their own musical literacy!

#### **Endnotes**

- <sup>1</sup> CAST, "What is UDL?," 2014, http://www.udlcenter. org/aboutudl/whatisudl.
- <sup>2</sup> CAST, "Universal Design for Learning Guidelines Version 2.2," 2018, http://udlguidelines.cast.org.
- <sup>3</sup> CAST, "What is UDL?:, 2014, http://www.udlcenter. org/aboutudl/whatisudl.
- Steven M. Demorest, Building Choral Excellence:
   Teaching Sight-Singing in the Choral Rehearsal (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 36.
   Ibid.



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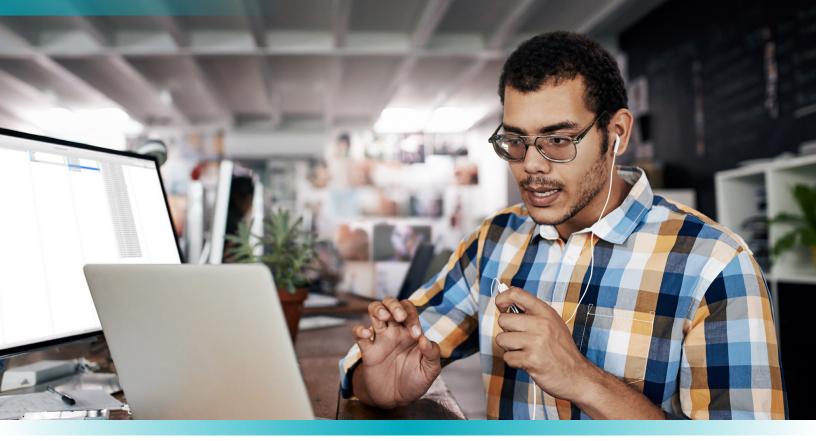
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