

“It’s A Bow Thing”

Colorado Music Educators’ Association Clinic/Conference

Thursday, January 29, 2015

Broadmoor Hotel

3:00-3:50 p.m. Jones Room – Golf Club

Nancy Allwein and Beth Wells, Clinicians

This session is directed toward non-string players and/or new string teachers. By carefully examining the use of the bow, orchestra directors can improve the tone quality and precision of their middle or high school orchestra. The session will discuss and have demonstrations by a student ensemble on basic bow technique, and common bowing styles that will improve the overall orchestra ensemble sound. Bring your own instrument to experience bowing examples in standard middle/high school orchestral repertoire.

Introduction: Why this Session? What’s the Problem?

- Bow technique is critical from the brand new beginner to advanced players.
- Bowing is more than “down bow and up bow”.
- Reinforcement is as easy as a daily warm up.
- Daily bowing skills should be incorporated into rehearsals at all levels.
- Directors must be tenacious with students to follow bowings in the literature.
- Most bowing styles need reinforcement beyond what is in the literature.

Issues we are consistently addressing in our clinics, adjudicating, inherited private students, guest conducting:

- Ensemble bowing uniformity - bow direction, bow placement
- Incorrect bow holds
- Inefficient bow weight (weak tone quality)
- Little or no attention to bowing styles

Why is teaching bow technique and bowing styles so important?

- The bow creates the sound on a string instrument
- Bowing effects tone quality
- Bowing effects volume
- Uniformity in bowing determines ensemble precision (articulation)
- Uniformity in bowing determines ensemble phrasing

Bowing skills that affect ensemble sound

- Bow Hold
- Bow Speed
- Bow Angle
- Bow Placement
- Bow Weight
- Bow Distribution

Take your knowledge of how a quality sound is produced on a woodwind, brass or percussion instrument and transfer that knowledge to the bow in string playing.

Woodwind/Brass Instruments:

Embouchure, air control (speed, focus, intensity), articulation

Percussion Instruments:

Mallet height, closer to or farther from the rim, size/style of stick, hardness of mallet

Daily Warm-Up Routines - To Engage Minds and Listening

What bow style will you teach daily or weekly using....

- Open strings
- Different parts of the bow (LH, M, UH)
- Scales in rhythms
- Capet – bow distribution exercises (see handout)
- Chorales – Bach and Before for Strings by David Newell Published by Kjos
Tone quality, detaché bowing, bow distribution
- Matthew Spieker: Warm Up routines for middle and high school level
<http://www.mystringcoach.com/Services.html>
- Customize your warm up routine. Have a couple warm up routines to rotate through so that students do not go on “auto pilot”.

The Nuts and Bolts

Bow Hold Ways to fix (Demos at session) 🙄

Typical problems –

Violin/Viola

- 👉 Pinky is on the bow screw
- 👉 Where does the thumb go?
- 👉 Thumb is not bent
- 👉 Fingers are on top of the stick

Cello/Bass

- 👉 All fingers are not over the stick
- 👉 Where does the thumb go?
- 👉 Thumb is not bent
- 👉 Right hand is not pronating into the stick

Bow Weight - Exercises

Wiggle - Pop At different parts of the bow.

Teacher tries to pull bow out of student’s bow hand. Cellists use back muscles for bow weight.

How does it feel to pull/push the string?

Bow Speed - Exercises

Metronome set at a moderate tempo (Qtr = 60-80)

WB 8 beats, 7 beats, 6 beats, 5 beats, 4 beats, 3 beats, 2 beats, 1 beat

Use the above with open strings, then move to scales when proficient.

Bow Placement/Contact Point & Distribution

Scales in rhythms

Train students in “The One-Inch Rule” -Dan Long

Capet exercises (Capet I handout)

Tips on marking parts and score (The more you mark the score and parts the better you will become at this task. Show your score to a string player or veteran string teacher for suggestions.)

- Ideally, bowings are marked in the parts and score in advance of the first rehearsal.
- Bow direction marks and slurs should coincide. Avoid marking a bow direction in the middle of a slur.
- It is assumed that the bow changes direction with each unslurred note, so avoid marking the obvious. Continuing patterns mark “simile” or “etc”.
- Use abbreviations such as: UH, LH, M, Fr., WB, Tp to designate bow distribution.
- Write the name of the stroke or “on”, “off” when either is possible.
- Measure numbers and rehearsal letters should coordinate between parts and score.
- Measures should be numbered at least at the beginning of each line, preferably more frequently, to save rehearsal time.

~James Kjelland Orchestral Bowing: Style and Function

Who is Responsible for the Bowing?

Beyond the most fundamental technical skills bowing is a direct reflection of interpretation. Ultimately, bowing is the conductor's responsibility whether or not he/she is a string player. It is the player's responsibility to realize the conductor's interpretation.

~James Kjelland *Orchestral Bowing: Style and Function*

Bowing Style Examples in the Literature

Attached: **Bowing Reference Guide** from **Orchestral Bowing: Style and Function** by James Kjelland

Scores of the following excerpts:

Détaché & Martelé

Bach *Brandenburg Concerto No. 5*
(Arr. by Isaac)

Martelé, Spiccato, Retakes, Marcato, Staccato

Warlock *Capriol Suite: I. Basse Dance*

Staccato

Warlock *Capriol Suite: III. Tordion*

Spiccato

Mozart *Eine Kleine Nacht Musik I. Allegro (brush spiccato)*

Warlock *Capriol Suite: IV. Bransles (bounce spiccato)*

Ideas on ways to teach spiccato to a class.

Find the balance point.

“Half-moon” visual

Discover how the bow will bounce by dropping the bow on the string.

Close to the string

Less than one inch of bow

Relaxed bow hold

Less bow hair (tilt the stick away from the bridge)

Brush Stroke & Legato

Warlock *Capriol Suite II. Pavane*

Sound Quality: Transparent

Britten *Simple Symphony III. Sentimental Sarabande (detaché & accented detaché)*

Sound Quality: Intensity

Portato/Louré

Britten *Simple Symphony III. Sentimental Sarabande*

Hooked Bows

Holst *St. Paul Suite IV. Finale - The Dargason*

Retakes

Meyer *Incantations* (Bowings are marked, but director should always check these.)

Orchestra Director Tool Kit

Below are a few resource ideas to help you and your students understand and practice bowing technique and styles.

People

- Veteran / master teacher colleagues
- University string faculty
- Retired string teachers
- Ask a string player for their comments and suggestions regarding your own bowings and fingerings in the score.
- Attend professional, university, community, school orchestra concerts. Observe bowing and tone of ensemble quality.

Books

- James Kjelland Orchestral Bowing: Style and Function Published by Alfred
- David Newell Bach and Before for Strings Four-Part Chorales Published by Kjos
- Bob Phillips & Kirk Moss Sound Innovations for String Orchestra: Sound Development Published by Alfred

Web Sites

- Michael Hopkins String Pedagogy Notebook
<http://stringtechnique.com/>
Dr. Hopkins' web site is comprehensive. Sections on bow holds for each instrument and common bow strokes with pictures! He lists helpful books and web sites regarding string pedagogy. A wealth of good information.
- Gabriel A. Villasurda: Mr. Villasurda's web site has mostly free teaching materials to elevate technical and musical skills of young string players AND the pedagogical potential of string music educators.
<http://www.StringsSkills.com>
- Matthew Spieker
<http://www.mystringcoach.com/>
Dr. Spieker's web site includes orchestral warm up downloads for middle and high school levels. (Explanation and parts only - no score)
- Bob Phillips & Kirk Moss - Video Master Classes Sound Innovations
<http://m.alfred.com/SoundInnovations/SoundDevelopmentAdvVideo.aspx>

YouTube

- Professor V www.toddehle.com Click on: My YouTube Channel
Scroll to Bow Techniques for Violin (videos)
- Cello Professor – Jaime Fiste Several videos on cello bowing technique, including “Loose Bow Hand on the Cello”
- David Finckel Cello Talks – 100 short videos on cello technique. Talks 8-15 are about the bow. (former cellist with the Emerson String Quartet)
- Seth Gamba Double Bass Lesson – How to use the French Bow

Thank you to the Demonstration Orchestra!

Violins: Carmen Martinez (Rock Canyon HS), Trey Yu (Mountain Vista HS), Tony Swope (Mountain Vista HS), Jake Shi (Rocky Mountain HS)

Violas: Garret Durie (Rock Canyon HS), Garrett Figueroa (Rock Canyon HS)

Cellos: Cole Azulay (Rocky Mountain HS), Joshua Greiner (Rocky Mountain HS)

Bass: Crystal Pelham (Colorado State University)