

The

NOTEWORTHY



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Coach's Comments

Wow, this Newsletter is soooo late coming out! Not my fault – supply chain issues....

So, not only do we have the holidays upon us, with all the school concerts and other activities, we are also starting to prepare our solos and ensembles for the Winter Recitals on Sunday, January 28th at 4:00 and 6:00 pm (you choose which time). This serves as our "dress" rehearsal for school (and, eventually, district, region and state) Solo & Ensemble Festivals. This is where we find out how well we have prepared and what we still need to do to play our absolute best.

Everyone has chosen their solo and has a printed copy to start working on, and recordings are still coming! So here's our schedule:

The first part of December is when we start our solo preparation, including filling out the Solo Worksheet. Take your sheet music and follow it as you listen to the recording (and more than one, if you'll take the time to look online). Figure out the form of your solo: Do parts repeat? Do tempos and/or styles change? Mark sections, the Trouble Spots, you know you'll need to work on more than the rest of the piece. Try playing through it slowly – slowly enough you don't make mistakes and wire your brain incorrectly. Are there more trouble spots to mark for extra learning? Take the time now to build a solid foundation and framework for your solo, then when the holidays have ended, you are ready to do the finish work.

The week before Christmas you'll receive the formal assignment to arrange for an accompanist (you don't have to wait until then to start looking, however!), and we'll start adding in the expressive parts of the solo – dynamics, articulations, phrasings, etc. – that will start making the piece sound like music. You don't have to do the interior decorating yet, but you need the walls up and the roof on, so you can finish the floor coverings and paint the walls. Keep working on getting those trouble spots fixed – you don't want to have to tear

open walls to fix the wiring!

In January, we'll start getting up to tempo and becoming comfortable with playing all the way through without stopping. We'll add the finishing custom touches that make the solo your own. You'll also make sure your accompanist is all ready to go – it would be terrible to have the open house without having all the utilities hooked up.

Your accompanist will play with you on the Recital, and will also need to attend a Coaching Session sometime the week before, so we can be sure you know where you'll be standing when you perform, how to tune and announce your piece, and to acknowledge the audience. Everyone will need to set up a time for this, even if you come at your regular time. You'll also need to plan to rehearse with your accompanist one or two other times before the Recital. It would be best if you can find someone who will also be able to play for you at school, so you don't have to start the whole rehearsal process over.

SPECIAL OFFER! I need an accompanist as well, so if you have a family member who would like to also play for me on my two pieces (first and last on each Recital), I'll trade for at least one free month of Coaching Sessions. They should be a fairly accomplished pianist, as my solos are just a bit harder than yours. Just let me know!

The Recitals will be held at the Woods Cross City Hall, where masks will be welcomed. We will rehearse and perform using my digital grand piano portable keyboard for our accompanists. I know this isn't ideal, but if we use my downstairs Family Room, as in the past, we'd have to have three recitals!

Please plan to stay for your entire Recital – it will be an hour or less – for the Certificates and Awards (sorry, still no refreshments yet).

Now, it's time to get to work and get our solos learned well, for the Recital and for the school festival(s)!

About that Training Session...

Stumped by how to make progress in your personal training sessions? Do you feel like whatever you do, nothing seems to help you improve? That you're not getting the results you want or getting to everything you want to do in a session? Here are two articles to help you out!

9 Questions to ask yourself for more effective practicing.

July 30, 2020, Jenny Maclay.

1. What am I trying to improve? This sounds super obvious, but I'm always amazed at how many musicians repeat passages endlessly without specific goals in mind. When you hear something you don't like, ask yourself what specific thing you're trying to fix. Tuning? Technique? Timing? Be as specific as possible for optimal results. **Example:** The high G in measure five was sharp, so I need to lower the pitch on that note.

2. How can I improve it? Once you've identified the problem, it's time to troubleshoot. Brainstorm possible solutions which can help solve your problem, and methodically test them to see which is most effective. Effective practitioners have to be creative troubleshooters.

3. How can I make sure this solution sticks? Once you've identified a solution that solves your problem, find a way to practice it so that it sticks. This might be achieved through repetition, recording your process in your practice journal, or another method.

4. What are my main practice goals? Practicing can be overwhelming. There's so much music and so little time, which is why it's so important to prioritize what you hope to accomplish every time you practice. Think of a few goals for each practice session, like improving the rhythm in a certain passage or polishing the technique in a movement of a piece. Don't try to fix everything all at once, because you'll probably become overwhelmed and end up fixing nothing.

5. What am I trying to say musically? There are a lot of nuts and bolts to practicing – getting the right notes, rhythms, technique, and other endless details. But our main goal is to create music that expresses something. While you're practicing, ask yourself what you are trying to express when you perform and how you can portray this musically.

6. Can I do more? (Spoiler alert: The answer to this question is usually yes.) How you sound to yourself and how you sound to listeners are two completely different worlds. It might feel like you're doing a lot with dynamics, pacing, rubato, and other musical elements, but chances are it's not as apparent to audiences. Make it a habit to record yourself regularly so you can listen from a different perspective.

7. What would I say if I were talking to a friend or student? Raise your hand if you've never had a negative thought while practicing. Nobody? I didn't think so. We're all guilty of succumbing to negative self-talk when we practice, but try to reframe your thoughts as if you were giving feedback to a friend or student. Chances are, you wouldn't be nearly as harsh to them, so try to adapt your internal dialogue so it's not as judgemental.

8. Am I focused on the present? One of the most difficult things musicians face while practicing is a wandering mind. Make sure to check in with yourself every few minutes to make sure you aren't operating on autopilot and that you're mentally engaged and focused with what you are currently practicing.

9. Can I do one thing better than when I began practicing? At the end of every practice session, ask yourself this question. Even if it doesn't seem like much, all of these tiny improvements can create considerable musical progress over time.

<https://jennyclarinet.com/2020/07/9-questions-to-ask-yourself-for-more-effective-practicing/>. Accessed October 15, 2023.

ASK THESE 7 QUESTIONS FOR A MORE PRODUCTIVE PRACTICE SESSION.

By Buddy Deschler.

1. How Do I Sound? It took me way too long to pay attention to the most important thing about playing a musical instrument; my sound. I spent many years overly focused on flash technique, range, learning new repertoire, and just playing right notes rather than being concerned with how I actually sounded playing all of it. When walking away from a performance or geeking out about our favorite musicians, what is the thing we refer to most? "I love

_____ 's playing; he sounds so good!" You don't say, "I love _____ 's ability to play in G# melodic minor with few to 0 mistakes." That's ridiculous! Similarly, when we talk about the musicians or performances we don't like, sound is the first thing we comment on. Whenever you're working on something, ask yourself "How Do I Sound?" Sound is something we will continue to develop, and it should remain the focal point in our practicing.

2. Do I Know This Already? We try to create a positive environment by practicing the things we already know and can do well instead of putting in the work on our weak areas. Instead of using your valuable time "practicing" things you already know, try putting together a "Laundry List" of things to clean up. Start compiling a list of things that are limiting you and begin washing your dirty laundry! This will not only improve your fundamentals, but also expose you to more solos, etudes, excerpts! Spend your time on the things you don't know rather than what you already know.

3. What is the Fundamental issue? When presented with a new piece, it's easy to look at the big picture and say, "I can't play this." Instead of making such a negative sweeping statement, ask yourself to identify the main underlying problem that's making the piece so difficult. By addressing the fundamental issue, you are spending time on only the stils that are holding you back, enabling you to more efficiently learn the piece and accomplish your goal.

4. Is This Productive? If we're honest with ourselves, we know whether or not what we're practicing is productive or not. Practicing need to be organized and structured to avoid getting off topic and wasting time. Before starting each practice session, mark down what your goals are and how you intend to accomplish them and stay the course. If you find that you have a lot of things to work on, it might behoove you to map out this strategy for the week or longer. The amount of hours you spend won't matter if it's not productive.

5. Have I Recorded Myself? This is another practice protocol we KNOW will help us improve, but we could almost always do more of it. We hear ourselves so much in rehearsals, performances, and practice sessions that we become numb and overly accustomed to the sound quality we produce. Recording ourselves and listening back exposes us to the tendencies we may have missed because now we can hear ourselves from the other side. The sounds we surround ourselves with set the standard of what is normal and good, and we can often lose insight into what a higher standard is or what our goals really are. What is it about recording ourselves that turns us away? Is it the extra time in listening after each take? Is it the hassle of remembering to bring a recording device? Or is it that we don't want to hear the faults in our playing? This may be the toughest lesson to accept, but we must just get over it in order to really hear what's going on and address the issues.

6. Have I Listened to a Recording? Once we start recording ourselves more regularly, it's crucial to compare our sound with our target sound. This doesn't mean we are striving to be just another copy of _____ or whomever you chose as your musical muse, but rather to understand a piece's style, color and meaning. Yes, there's room for your own interpretation and musical expression, but it's very clear when someone doesn't know how the piece is supposed to go. If you LOVE a particular recording of something, why not emulate it and give your practice purpose? Having multiple reference recordings gives us a wide palate of musical decisions to choose from and having the confidence to be flexible often creates the best results.

7. Am I Using the Right Tools? There are many different tools (both physical and psychological) that assist us in our practice session and cause great overall improvement. Here are some reminders with questions: -Am I in time? (Use a tuner) - Am I in time? (Use a metronome) -Am I playing faster than I can handle right now? (Practice slower) -Did I take a good breath? (Breathe) - Do I have my reference recordings at hand? (Have multiple recordings for comparison) -Am I using my recording device? (Record myself). A lot of the time, we assume that we're playing in time, in tune, and just like the professionals, but incorporating these tools in the practice session can turn up surprising results.

I have far too many goals and aspirations to accomplish in my musical career – just as I'm sure you do – to practice inefficiently. Asking ourselves these 7 questions in the practice room will keep us honest and save us time. Humble pie is an acquired taste, but I think I'm beginning to like it!

<https://www.dansr.com/wick/resources/ask-these-7-questions-for-a-more-productive-practice-session>. Accessed October 13, 2021.

Media Center

Print, Digital and Internet Extras

The Origins of Musicality. Ed. By Henkjan Honing. The MIT Press. 2019. 364 pages. Paperback, \$39.21. Kindle, \$28.99. Amazon.com.

Research shows that all humans have a predisposition for music, just as they do for language. All of us can perceive and enjoy music, even if we can't carry a tune and consider ourselves "unmusical." This volume offers interdisciplinary perspectives on the capacity to perceive, appreciate, and make music. Scholars from biology, musicology, neurology, genetics, computer science, anthropology, psychology, and other fields consider what music is for and why every human culture has it; whether musicality is a uniquely human capacity; and what biological and cognitive mechanisms underlie it.

Music Theory Made Simple. Adrian Valia. Page Street Publishing. 2023. 128 pages. Paperback, \$18.69. Kindle, \$11.99. Amazon.com.

No longer will music theory be an intimidating notion! Whether you're new to music and want to know the fundamentals to succeed, or whether you already play, sing and write and need a refresher on the basics, multi-instrumentalist Adrian Valia has you covered. From melody and rhythm all the way to the most essential elements of harmony, you'll learn—or relearn!—everything you need to know in order to understand and make profound and beautiful tunes. Using the same colorful graphics and illustrations made popular in his beloved "Music Visually Explained" series on TikTok, Adrian breaks down concepts like polyrhythm, scales, power chords and the puzzling Circle of Fifths into easily digestible forms. What's more, tools that spin and move on the page demonstrate melody and rhythm in real-time for a fun, interactive flair, as do quizzes and QR codes that lead to video demonstrations. With this book in hand, you'll soon be on your way to making the songs you've always dreamed of.

Jazz Theory Explained in 20 Minutes Video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RpObAWZ0SKM>.

Even for experienced musicians, taking that first step into the world of jazz harmony can be intimidating. In this video, jazz pianist Julian Bradley attempts the impossible – explaining jazz theory in 20 minutes. With different sections on chords, chord progressions, and scales, this lesson might be just the push you need to begin your journey into jazz.

Music on Purpose Podcast. Bryan Crisp.

Music on Purpose takes you on a quest to define success in the field of music. Crisp talks with professional musicians, music educators, and people in the music industry that have been successful at the highest level. This show gives you the secrets to their success through intentional conversations and interviews. Fuel your passion to be the best by learning from the best.

Parent's Column

Reminders & Helps to Enhance Your [Child's] Musical Experience

Five Benefits of Joining School [Band].

Give your child the opportunity of a lifetime.

There are many good reasons for having your child join their school [band], including the fact that it's just plain fun! But more importantly, learning about music and gaining achievements both personally and as part of a team can be the most satisfying part of a child's journey into adulthood.

Let's take a look at five of the benefits your child will gain from taking a seat in the [band].

1. Improved Social Skills.

One of the biggest positives will be the connections your child makes with other students. This development of social skills happens as each student makes new acquaintances with the other members of the [band]. Some of these interactions may develop into friendships that last a lifetime.

2. Learning Teamwork.

From the day a child joins a [band], they become part of a functioning team that has clear goals. They learn that by playing their part, they can add to the greater goal of making fine music. This builds a strong skill set that they can use going forward in their education and beyond, into their future work and family interactions.

3. Developing a Sense of Responsibility.

Joining a [band] gives a child the responsibility of taking care of their instruments... and [band] instruments are among the most fragile. A child learns from the start to treat their instrument with respect, not just to prevent damage but to keep it clean and in good playing condition. It also teaches children the responsibility of learning and overcoming difficult tasks as their progress advances from beginner to skilled player. The commitment to practicing and improving can translate into their other school studies as well as helping them to cope with future life challenges.

4. Improved Cognitive Skills.

Learning to read music and making an instrument what your child wants it to do (and sound the way they want it to sound!) offers benefits to eye-hand coordination as well as increased cognitive skills such as concentration and visual recognition. Studies indicate that this tends to give kids who participate in [band] programs higher success in other learning areas like math and reading. It also offers them the ability to increase their creativity, which opens other opportunities over the course of a lifetime – whether it be in the arts, sciences or business world.

5. Increased Enjoyment.

Adults who participate in musical activities as a child often reap a lifetime of benefits as they get older. Some find increased enjoyment and relaxation by continuing to practice their instrument, or by just listening to the music that they once played. They become lifelong enthusiasts and share that passion and appreciation with others around them. Some musically talented children choose to remain actively playing, even if not as a professional. Amateur chamber groups and community [ensembles] offer a great deal of joy and camaraderie.

Of course, there's even a chance that your child will decide to make music a career choice. In addition to professional [ensemble] players, there are lots of options, including soloists, arrangers, music educators, artist managers performance venue management...even in the medical field as a music therapist. Whatever path your child ends up following, there's no question that joining school [band] can help pave the way to a better, more fulfilling life.

Five Benefits of Joining School Orchestra, Ken Dattmore, July 23, 2020.
<https://hub.yamaha.com/strings/s-how-to/five-benefits-of-joining-school-orchestra/>.
Accessed July 13, 2022.