

February 2019

Ark MEA

Arkansas Music Educators Association

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**“LEAD A LEGACY”
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President's Note



Hello, and Happy New Year!

As a new teacher attending ArkMEA conferences 20 years ago, I never dreamed that I would be penning the President's Note someday. My, how things can evolve!

Ah, January. That month when we all look towards the spring activities that will finish out the year. Whether we are taking band, choir, or orchestra students to competitions and festivals, groups to Capitol Performances, or planning grade level programs and graduation songs, we are all digging in and expecting great things. What are some of your favorite slogans to keep the students (and yourself!) going? One that I've posted on the wall in big, colorful letters is ENERGY EFFORT ENTHUSIASM. It takes all three Es to get things done well. Another that I find myself repeating is, "I'm giving you my best, and I expect the same in return." Something so simple really brings a consciousness to my students when they are sagging a little. If you're looking for a fresh, new something, check out the ArkMEA Regional Facebook pages for ideas from colleagues, or post some of your own tried and true strategies. These pages are also a great place to post online resources that you may come across, or what you and your students have been up to in your classrooms.

Speaking of changes, the ArkMEA board has some new members, and we have been diligently working on ways to continue helping the music teachers of Arkansas advocate, celebrate, and educate.

ArkMEA is providing several sessions at the All-State Music Clinic on Friday, February 15. The focus will be on mentoring, building choral programs, and more for elementary teachers.

In this issue of the Journal, you'll also find the application for bringing a group to the Capitol Performances for Music In Our Schools month. This event is beneficial to the students because they see several groups perform, hear inspiring words from the guest speaker, and spend a couple of hours in our beautiful Capitol building. Contrary to popular belief, this event is open to all ages. We would love to have more junior and senior high groups apply!

General music teachers, check your local educational cooperatives' July calendar for a one-day workshop with a nationally recognized musician. You will have the choice of attending the live site in Little Rock, or staying close to home at your co-op. Check the ArkMEA webpage and Facebook pages for updates.

I look forward to serving as your President for the next two years.

Sincerely,

Haley Greer



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Beyond Butterflies: Classroom Strategies to Relieve Student Anxiety

She was sweating. That was first thing that I noticed when I looked up from my score across the room. That particular detail stood out to me because it was less than 65 degrees in the studio (we were in that time in between summer air conditioning going off and winter heat coming on). Still, beads of perspiration dripped down her cheeks and her fingers slipped off the keys of her saxophone as she struggled to play a piece she performed beautifully in a lesson just one week earlier. This wasn't a performance in front of a large audience. . . it was a typical, weekly rehearsal—one that I had thought was going very well for a first reading with piano.

Finally, I decided that I needed to intervene, and I asked her and her collaborative pianist to stop. When I asked her if she was feeling all right, without looking up at me, she set her saxophone on the floor and ran out of the room, much to the bewilderment of the pianist and me. Even though the rehearsal seemed totally routine up until that moment, I later learned that for the first time in my career, I had witnessed a student having a full-blown panic attack.

I had seen students battle what I always called "butterflies" before important performances—even before playing parts of their ensemble music alone in front of classmates. But until that day, I had never seen such an intense reaction in a rehearsal. Discussing the moment with her later on, she told me that she had felt like she was disappointing me—stunning, since I had scarcely said a word in the rehearsal up until then! Her perception of the situation was so different from mine.

In recent conversations with colleagues at every level of music education, I have learned that I am not the only one who has noticed a rapid increase in the number of music students experiencing something that they label "anxiety." Scholars have proposed many theories for this perceived increase in students' anxiety, from bullying in and around the classroom (Fung, 2018) to untreated depression (Wristen, 2013) to the rise of social media use (Shensa et al., 2018). Whatever the causes, music teachers are in a unique position to support these students through our actions, and often, through our words, as we cultivate our classroom environment.

What I always called "butterflies," psychiatric clinicians call "Music Performance Anxiety (MPA)." A substantial canon of research exists on this condition, but pragmatic strategies to address more generalized anxiety among music students are still very limited. Fortunately, a growing stream of contemporary researchers have begun to investigate this less distinct, more generalized type of anxiety. While many of these studies focus on children in the general classroom environment, we can draw relevant tactics for application in the music classroom and rehearsal hall.

“ I later learned that for the first time in my career, I had witnessed a student having a full-blown panic attack. ”

“Butterflies” or Anxiety?

When first confronted with a student's claims of anxiety, there can be a temptation to dismiss it as normal “butterflies.” After all, music at all levels is a performance-based, and at some time or another, most musicians face MPA, or “stage fright.” MPA is distinct from more general anxiety: a student battling MPA is usually able to enjoy and participate in the preparation of music for a performance, facing debilitating anxiety only leading up to a performance. For students with more general forms of anxiety, emotional, social, behavioral, and even physical challenges can present themselves throughout the entire process of making music.

Communicating to students that dealing with nerves is a normal part of performing music can go a long way to reassure students that what they are experiencing is normal. Providing them tools to respond to nerves should be an important part of teaching music. For those students who face more than typical, situational anxiety, though, there are a number of strategies we can employ in a musical setting to create a positive, safe, growth-oriented classroom.

Using Impersonal, Unemotional Language

Many student musicians tie their identity into their abilities as a musician. In the fast-paced music classroom, it can be easy to prioritize speed of content delivery over empathy. Working to depersonalize comments about musical problems while also empowering students to provide solutions can help foster a more supportive educational environment, and radically change the tone of a rehearsal. On a small scale, saying something like “John, you're sharp,” needlessly assigns a problem to a student. To make the statement less direct, but equally effective, the director could say something like, “John, let's listen to that again and see if you can lower that note just a bit.” This use of language empowers John to solve a problem (lowering a note to play

it in tune) rather than making him and the problem one in the same (you're sharp).

Giving students ownership in the problem solving process can also reduce anxiety in the classroom, encouraging a “growth mindset” style approach to common technical problems. Continuing the conversation of intonation, the remark, “flutes, you are always flat at the end of measure 11!” could easily become, “flutes, what are three ways you can raise the pitch on your E natural at the end of measure 11?” Asking such a question to the group provides leadership opportunities for at least 3 students, and causes all of the flutists to be engaged in the process of solving the problem rather than being defined by it. Following up with praise for those who contributed, the teacher can then frame the activity by saying “Okay, with that in mind, let's play it again and pick one of those techniques to play that E natural in tune with one another.”

Managing Perfectionism with Realistic Goal Setting

Often, high achieving students with anxiety have triggers related to perfectionism. In music, where we tend to consider perfection to be a noble pursuit, this can leave some students hesitant to even try, or prone to quitting at the first sign of failure. Providing students with clear evaluative criteria can help the whole class listen with the same ears and expectations. In a middle school choir rehearsal, the director could say “Altos, please sing from top of page 2 to the top of page 3. I am especially listening for clear consonants this time.” Armed with specific criteria for evaluation, students are more able to monitor their own perfectionism to focus on a single goal at a time, knowing that they are engaged in critiquing the same thing as their director.

This technique also models smart practicing strategies for the student: chunking, and building on progress. Once students achieve one specific goal, the teacher can present another and another until student and teacher alike are satisfied with the progress. Statements like

“we have made a lot of improvement today, great work and focus!” are more encouraging of the process than, “that was perfect!” which only rewards the result.

Being specific with criticism and praise also serves the need of the anxious student. Rather than “Good job, class!” an elementary music teacher could say “I really liked how you listened carefully to stay on the steady beat that time! Great job!” This serves as reinforcement for a specific behavior, and primes the students' for their teacher's expectations of future activities.

Integrating Ungraded Assessments

Student musicians can suffer from acute anxiety during evaluations. To mitigate this and protect limited rehearsal time, some music teachers record pass-offs or playing tests in an office or practice room rather than require students to confront the pressure of performing in front of the group. If you advocate encouraging students to perform in front of each other, one technique that normalizes that behavior involves incentivizing optional, voluntary solo performances at a designated time in the rehearsal. In a beginning band class, the teacher can set aside time for students to volunteer to play a new or favorite scale or line from the book for a sticker or small reward. In this case, the incentive rewards a student for volunteering to play, not necessarily for a perfect performance. This helps create a safe classroom environment where students are more comfortable with making mistakes in front of each other.

Reaffirming Reality & Getting Started

Sometimes, when facing a challenge, students make emotional, inaccurate statements that cause them to feel only more defeated or overwhelmed. Gently reframing these statements can help students develop a more healthy, rational internal monologue for the next time they must stand up to an

intimidating experience.

Learning a new musical work, or a specific technical passage, can sometimes overwhelm even the most advanced students. When I was a student in high school faced with my very first solo piece, I felt panic when I saw all the little black notes on the page. As a ninth grade tenor saxophonist, I was more accustomed to quarter notes, after all! I told my teacher, "I don't know where to begin!" He looked at me and smiled, saying, "I know it looks scary, but it's just notes on a page. Don't worry, you can play notes on a page!" In one small statement, he acknowledged my feelings, showed he had confidence in my abilities, and reframed the challenging music as simply "notes on a page." It validated me, and gave me the courage to try.

Once, I taught a university student who told me that he didn't understand a particular piece of music at all—it was "impossible to play." So, I asked him to be more specific—what was impossible about it? Did he know fingerings for all the notes? (Yes.) Did he understand all the rhythms—the quarter notes, the sixteenths, etc? (Yes.) Did he understand all of the phrase markings, articulations, and musical terms? (Yes, yes, and yes.) What about the tempo? (It's too fast!) I was then able to reframe his statement: "So, it seems like you understand a lot about this piece, but you are worried that the tempo is too fast, is that right? Well, then let's set a goal for next time to play the first four lines at half tempo. How do you feel about that? Does that seem possible?"

For this student, the piece was not impossible, but he had limited experience breaking down a large task into more manageable goals over time. The real problem he faced was being realistic about which specific challenge was keeping him from getting started. His lesson that week was not about making music—it was about managing his anxiety about the tempo, and the two of us agreeing on the same expectations for what he would be able to achieve during that week's practice.

Minahan & Schultz (2014) suggest an interesting technique to help students get started. When faced with a difficult task, the teacher asks the student to assign a number

from 1 – 5 (easy to very difficult) to the task. Typically, a student feeling anxiety assigns a high number to the task. After completing it, the student reflects, assigning a new number to show the actual difficulty, often with the number dropping to a more realistic number. Over time, the authors claim that this intervention challenges the student's previously held belief that an activity is very difficult, effectively motivating the student to try more challenging tasks in the future and make more realistic assessments of the material's difficulty.

Closing Thoughts

Students are not always able to articulate why they feel anxious, but that does not make their feelings any less real to them. It is possible to teach music at a very high level while also prioritizing the mental health needs of students. I hope that we in the music education community will continue to advocate for more comprehensive professional development and coursework related to mental health in the coming years. Further research on the topic of generalized anxiety among music students should be welcomed as we continue to strive to support students and be sensitive to their needs in the music classroom.

Notes

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Dr. Matthew Taylor is the Assistant Professor of Music – Saxophone at the University of Central Arkansas. He returns to his alma mater following five years on the faculty at Morehead State University, where he also serves as the Music Program Coordinator. His multifaceted performance career has taken him all over the world to work with Grammy, Tony, Emmy and Oscar award winning artists. As a soloist, he is an advocate for living composers, and is responsible for many commissions and over 50 world premieres within the past 10 years alone. When he is not on stage, Matt is most fulfilled spending time with students—teaching, giving masterclasses, coaching student ensembles, and participating in residencies in public high schools and at universities.



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ArkMEA Achievement Awards 2018: Administrator of the Year, Hall of Fame, and Advocate of Note

Every year ArkMEA awards three outstanding individuals in the music and education world for their works for music education in the state of Arkansas. The three awards are: Administrator of the Year, Hall of Fame, and Advocacy of Note.

The Administrator of the Year is awarded based on an administrator's active participation to further the growth of the fine art's department under their care. The ArkMEA Hall of Fame is given to those music educators who have paved a way in the world of music education. These educators never stop learning and are always willing to teach, to those who are willing to learn. The final award is Advocacy of Note. The definition of advocacy is "public support for or recommendation of a particular cause or policy." This award is given to a person who not only gives unending support to Music Education, but is actively engaged in helping Music Education grow and flourish.

Rhonda Hall- Administrator of the Year



Rhonda Hall is the current principal of Mabelvale Middle School and has provided tremendous support to the band, choir, and orchestra programs each year. She has gone above and beyond the expected norms of an administrator and volunteered to assist with filing music, paying students ACDA fees, and ensuring students have the opportunity to travel the world to compete in choral competitions located in Orlando, New York City, Vienna, Austria, and Bratislava Slovakia. Because of Rhonda Hall, music programs at Mabelvale have been honored on many levels. Congratulation Mrs. Rhonda Hall on Administrator of the Year 2018!

Dr. Deborah Barber-Hall of Fame

Dr. Deborah Barber began her career by singing and playing guitar on the road for ten years. She then earned her Masters in Music Education and taught music in public schools. In 2002, she earned her PhD in Music Education from Auburn University. This past year she retired from teaching at Arkansas Tech University, where she taught for sixteen years. She has been a loved and respected teacher the entirety of her career. She is known for her outstanding professional development that ranges from world music, guitar, and music technology. Dr. Barber has also served as Collegiate Chair on the ArkMEA board, where she helped shape the lives and careers of many future music educators. Congratulations Dr. Deborah Barber on being inducted into the ArkMEA Hall of Fame 2018!



Layton Reeves-Advocate of Note



Layton Reeves recently purchased J & B Music Sales and is honored to oversee Arkansas's local music retail store. J & B Music Sales is actively involved as the distributor of sheet music and musical resources for all ArkMEA sponsored events. In addition to ArkMEA events, J & B Music Sales also co-hosts the AR ACDA Summer Reading Clinic, as well as distributes Arkansas's All-Region and All-State music for ARKCD. Layton has added other categories of products to what J & B provides. In addition to sheet music, musicals, and other paper classroom materials, J & B now proudly distributes Boomwhackers, recorders, ukuleles, puppets, rhythm instruments, and more. J & B Music Sales is honored to have served Arkansas musicians since 1978. Congratulation Mr. Layton Reeves on demonstrating outstanding advocacy for Music Education 2018!

Exercises for Healthier Upper String Posture in Beginning Orchestra

Have you ever looked over at your violin and viola players in beginning orchestra and thought, "Oh my... What horrible postures? What can I do in my limited class time to get them to play with good postures???" I guarantee you are not the only orchestra director who has had those thoughts. As a matter of fact, violin and viola are two of the least ergonomically sound instruments. In order to play an upper string instrument, first you have to contort yourself into such an unnatural position. Bad posture in violin and viola playing is quite common, even among professionals! While addressing bad posture with students can be challenging, there are a few different steps that you can incorporate daily in your orchestra classes to help your students maintain good posture. Here are four ways I have found to be helpful in teaching beginning strings.

Start Standing!

When starting to play, upper string instruments must rest on a balanced body (Thompson-Robinow, 2017, p.35). To achieve that balance, the best way to start is by having your beginning violin and viola students stand. Standing requires the student to be balanced naturally. When we start students sitting down in beginning orchestra, there

**"Oh my...
What horrible
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to get them to
play with good
postures???"**

are too many opportunities to develop bad posture. When they sit to play, the students want to lean back in their chairs. I also encourage the instrument cases to be moved away from the students, so they are not tempted to place their feet on them. I have to admit, I have done that before and it is pretty comfortable, but is not conducive for proper violin playing. If you have a class of 30 violin and viola students along with the lower strings, there is not enough time to adjust everyone's posture individually. If everyone is standing, the temptation to slouch is eliminated.

Some may argue that expecting students to stand could be unrealistic but when preteens and adolescence spend most of their day sitting, standing and playing can be a welcome change. If your orchestra class is too long for the students to stand the entire time, alternate between standing and sitting. Since most professional orchestras do perform sitting down, students must still learn how to sit with proper posture, but the goal behind standing and playing is to transfer the balanced posture of their upper bodies in a standing position to the sitting position.

Sit, Stand, Sit, Stand, Sit...

Once you have your students sitting, what can we do to help our students

regain the natural balance in their bodies? In a recent conversation with my low strings colleague at Southeast Missouri State University, Dr. Sara Edgerton, shared her decades of experience in teaching cello and bass and how she ensures good posture in her low string players. Since cellists cannot stand, and standing through long rehearsals are not necessarily good for the bass players, Dr. Edgerton shared that she gets her students to alternate between sitting and standing to “reset” their postures. Standing is a good way to rebalance the body. Once in a while, Dr. Edgerton will get her cellists to rise to their feet, straighten out, and then sit back down. Immediately after, she gets them to stand again. Rinse and repeat. Not only will this revitalize your students in beginning orchestra, it provides them with an opportunity to change things up and reset their bodies back into balance each time they stand up. This exercise can be done with a series of exercises for bodily awareness or done on its own. To read more about this exercise, a good resource is in one of my favorite books, *The Embodied Violinist: Teaching Violin with Passion and Practicality* by Gwen Thompson-Robinow. Thompson-Robinow discusses this specific exercise on page 25.

Visualization helps!

Let us begin by asking ourselves a simple two-part question: what is the

current shape of your spine and how far is it deviated from the healthy norm?

My guess is that the majority of you are holding yourselves taller than before you read that two-part question. By simply triggering you to visualize your spine, we have already corrected our postures. Before we go on, I would like to share a story that was recently shared with me through a piano colleague and friend. Elizabeth’s back problem began during her doctoral studies. The problem stemmed from playing with tension and stiff posture at the piano for hours everyday. Eventually, Elizabeth lost feeling in her legs, was unable to even walk, and was even briefly confined to a wheelchair. Elizabeth tried yoga on her own with online videos, which eventually aggravated the problem, and she ended up with a ruptured disc. The doctors at the hospital told her that the only way to fix the ruptured disc was surgery or she would be paralyzed from the waist down.

Unwilling to accept surgery as her only option, Elizabeth turned, oddly enough, to a healer recommended by a family member. The healer had Elizabeth go through guided meditations and visualization exercises. When Elizabeth was asked to visualize her spine, she straightened her spine subconsciously, making room for the ruptured disc to heal itself. Within ten days of working on these exercises, Elizabeth started to feel better. Within a month, her pain went away completely. In the course of the next few months, Elizabeth regained all

sensations in her lower extremities.

What can we learn from Elizabeth’s experience? While I am not suggesting a guided meditation session with your beginning orchestra everyday and I always recommend following the advice of medical professionals, it might be worthwhile to include a brief visualization sentence prior to giving constructive criticism on the music. Simple verbal cues could reinforce good posture within your orchestra.

Yoga Orchestra!

One of my favorite ways to reset an upper string student is a variation on a forward bend: the toe-touching exercise. Everyone is familiar with toe-touches so why not put a spin on that with a violin or a viola? This exercise not only gets the students stretching, but it also makes one hyper-aware of their shoulders, arms, and placement of the instrument. Have the student begin by standing with their instrument on one side and bow on the other. Then start to bend over slowly as if they are planning to do a toe-touch. As the students continue to bend, ask them to relax their shoulders and arms, while being careful not to drop their instrument or bow. While they are bent over and completely relaxed, have them bring their instruments to playing position without coming up from the forward bending position. Rise and straighten the spine one vertebra at a time with the instruments in position. Not only does this reset the posture and spine, it helps

“Everyone is familiar with toe-touches so why not put a spin on that with a violin or a viola?”

the student feel what their natural alignment is like and how to fit their instruments to their bodies.

While there are many different exercises to help develop better posture, these are the ones that I have found to be most helpful. I have used these techniques teaching beginning and intermediate strings students, string technique courses, and in conversations with colleagues. Our bodies are important, and perhaps even the most important thing to keep healthy and functional in order to be musical. So the next time you see a slouching string player, get them on their feet and try some of these exercises!



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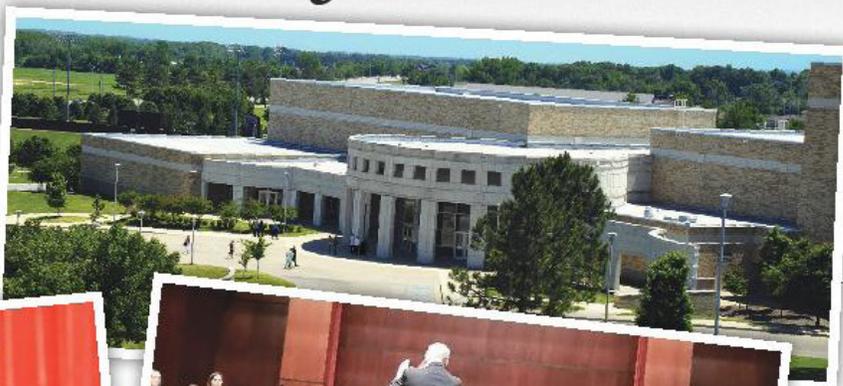
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Described by the Classical Voices of North Carolina as "a polished [and] fully professional performer," violinist Sophia Han is the Assistant Professor of Upper Strings and Concertmaster at Southeast Missouri State University. A versatile musician, Han is equally comfortable in classical and popular music settings having performed as guest soloist with orchestras across the US as well as appearing on tour with artists such as Michael Bublé, Audra McDonald, and STARSET. Currently serving as the Associate Concertmaster of Paducah Symphony Orchestra, Han has also appeared as the Assistant Concertmaster of Tallahassee Symphony, Concertmaster of the 2016 Lake Tahoe Music Festival Orchestra, and is in demand as an adjudicator across the nation. With degrees from Florida State University (DM), University of Michigan (MM), and University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (BM), Han's principal teachers include Corinne Stillwell, Aaron Berofsky, and the late Richard Luby, and has participated in masterclasses with Gil Shaham, Jennifer Koh, and Patinka Kopec, among others.

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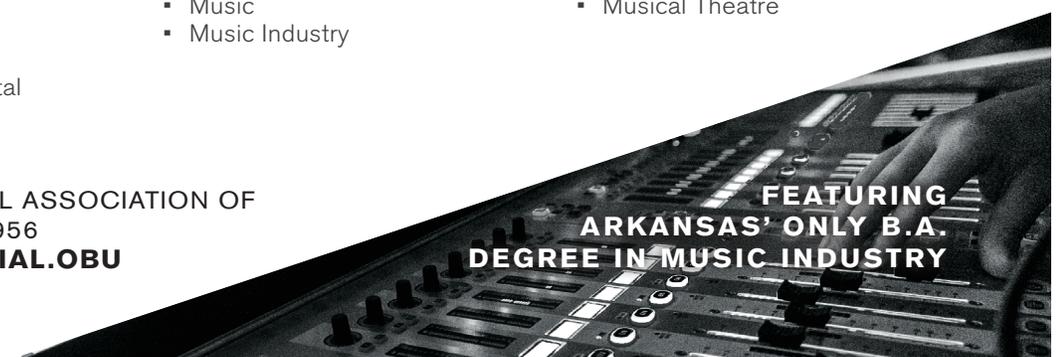
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Early registration can be found on ASBOA.org or you may register on site.



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April Shelby
"Leading a Legacy: Mentoring Student Teachers"

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5 Apps to Make Fundamentals more FUN

Generation Z students are the first group of individuals to be raised in a truly digital era (Turner, 2015). In a recent study, researchers found students today are exposed to media more than any other activity, aside from sleeping (Rideout, Foehr, and Roberts, 2010). By incorporating games and technology into the music classroom, perhaps students will invest more time in practicing and learning the skills required to be a good musician. However, with over 2.1 million applications (apps) available in the App Store, finding quality apps for the music classroom can prove to be exceptionally time consuming and challenging. Listed in this article are low-budget apps that can be useful in teaching note reading and rhythm reading to students. While these apps could have a positive influence on the new technology savvy Generation Z music student, I am in no way suggesting that these apps should take the place of classroom teaching.



Staff Wars & Staff Wars Live

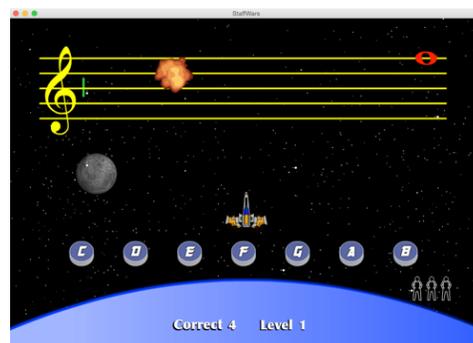
Developer: TMI Media, LLC

Cost: \$0.99

Video Demo: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dGO5r7wY8no>
& <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZT-s2cQ-ndM>

The Staff Wars app has two different versions; each version is \$0.99. The first version of this app, Staff Wars, has students select the name of each note as they float across the screen. Prior to starting the game, the student is able to select their staff and the range of notes they want to have in the game. As students provide more correct answers, they move onto the next level. As the levels excel, the tempo at which the notes appear increases. When a student makes three mistakes, the game ends and they are able to restart and try again.

The second version of this app, Staff Wars Live, has students play each note as it comes across the screen rather than just selecting the note name. Similar to version one of the Staff Wars app, prior to starting the game, the player selects their instrument, key signature, and note range. Once the instrument is selected, the notes then appear in the instrument's written pitch rather than concert pitch. This app is also useful for helping students practice transposition. If the key is left in the key of C, students are able to practice transposing concert pitch to their instrument's notes. Comparable to version one of this app, once a student plays three incorrect pitches, the game ends. Both of these apps are useful in practicing note reading; by starting out with version one of this app and then moving onto Staff Wars Live, the difficulty of the note reading task steadily increases.

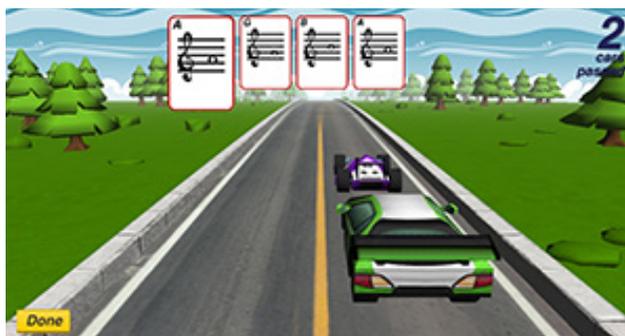


Instrument Racer
Developer: AtPlayMusic LLC
Cost: \$3.99



Video Demo: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VU0jzf1w5no>

The instrument racer app is an app that is available for a variety of instruments. In this game, students are racing in a car race. In order to pass the car in front of them, they have to play four correct notes on their instrument. If a student plays an incorrect note, they do not pass the car in front of them and their fuel continues to deplete. As time passes, the fuel in their car also gets lower. Therefore, the longer a student takes to play a note, the quicker their fuel gets used. Once the student's fuel reaches empty, the race is over. The game tracks their longest race, the most cars they have passed, and the overall total number of cars they have passed. This app offers a fun way to practice note recall and is similar to the Staff Wars Live app, which incorporates the student playing on their instrument.



Rhythm Cat- Learn To Read Music Lite

Developer: LMuse Limited

Cost: Free

Video Demo: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JrplPwzybbs>

Rhythm Cat- Learn To Read Music Lite is the free version of the full app, Rhythm Cat (\$3.99). The developers have also recently introduced a second version of this app called Rhythm Cat 2 (\$3.99). In all of the versions of this app, students tap the rhythm shown to a drum beat. As the student taps the rhythm, the rhythm is played to different melodies on various instruments. When the student taps the correct rhythm in tempo, the notes light up green. If the student taps an incorrect rhythm, the notes appear yellow or black depending on if they tapped the note at the wrong time or did not tap the note at all. The student is only allowed to move onto tapping the next rhythm if they get the majority of the line correct. As the levels advance, the rhythms get longer and harder and new rhythms are introduced. This app provides students with a fun way to practice rhythm reading.

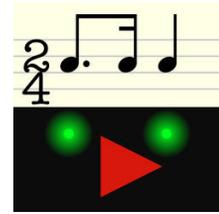


Rhythm Sight Reading Trainer

Developer: Rolfs Steenge

Cost: \$2.99

Video Demo: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Z2qsBJuYK0>



There are two different modes in Rhythm Sight Reading Trainer, practice mode and test mode. In practice mode, students are able to listen or tap along while the rhythm is being played, whereas, in test mode, the student taps the rhythm along with a metronome and is judged for accuracy. At any time, the student is able to adjust the tempo for however slow or fast they want to practice or perform the rhythm. There are a large variety of exercises in many different time signatures with a vast assortment of rhythms to include in each exercise. The student is also given the option to practice and perform each rhythm in swing style if they are working on something jazz related. With the diversity of rhythms, styles, and tempos available in this app, it can prove to be beneficial to improving any musician's rhythm reading skills, regardless of their level of experience.



Band Blast

Developer: Music Lifeboat

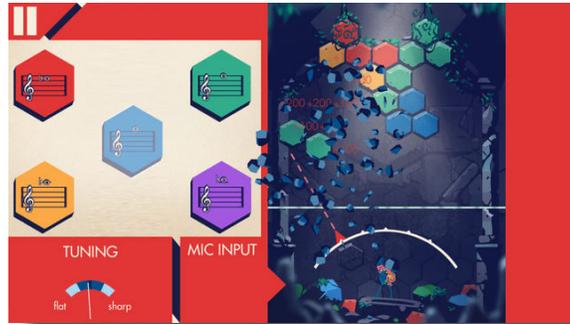
Cost: Free

Video Demo: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j0RmQHznI5Q>

The Band Blast app incorporates many aspects of note reading, rhythm reading, and performance into one app. Students start the app by selecting their character and instrument. The app then has many different areas for students to explore. Band Blast has two different games students can play to work on rhythms and note reading. In the rhythm game, students have to tap along to a rhythm to move their player through an obstacle course. In the note-reading app, students have to play the named notes on their instrument in order to move through each level. If a student plays a wrong note, the app lets the student know what note they were playing so they are able to see what they are doing incorrectly. Both of these games are also available in a practice mode, which are a little more guided and allow the student more tries to get the correct answer. In addition to the two games that are offered, this app also allows the student to record themselves playing various songs with a drum beat and backup band performing with them. The student is then able to send these recordings to their teacher, themselves, or post them to social media. In addition to these features, the app also has many instrument specific videos of professional players, which provide students with mini lessons on their instrument. The app is available for most of the band and string instruments, however, there are no videos available for horn, euphonium, tuba or percussion. Lastly, the app has different missions for students to complete which incorporate all aspects of the app, rhythm games, note games, recordings, and video lessons, into a

variety of missions for students to complete.

The apps listed throughout the article can be used to enhance your note reading and music reading lessons. Due to the ability to track progress and send reports, the use of these apps can also prove to be beneficial for students to use at home in their individual practice outside of the music classroom. If every student has access to a smart device in school, students in the classroom can also use these apps individually during class time. However, if access to smart devices is limited, these different apps can still be utilized in the music classroom through the use of a SMARTboard, projector, or document camera. Whether they are used inside or outside of classroom instruction, apps can be helpful in connecting and relating to the tech-savvy Generation Z music student.



Other apps to consider:

Rhythmist

By: Ars Nova Software, LLC
Free

Flashnote Derby

By: Luke Bartolomeo
\$4.99

NoteWorks Lite

By: Azati Corporation
Free

Music Tutor (Sight-reading)

By: JSplash Apps
Free

Musicated Note Reading

By: Andrew Maddock
\$0.99

I Read Rhythm Lite

By: Interplay Software SRL
Free

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Victoria Warnet is a doctoral student in music education at Florida State University in Tallahassee, Florida. Prior to returning to graduate school, she was the Director of Bands at Tavares Middle School and the Associate Director at Tavares High School.

MIOSM: MUSIC IN OUR SCHOOLS MONTH

March 2019!

Music In Our Schools Month or "MIOSM" is NAFME's annual celebration during March which engages music educators, students, and communities from around the country in promoting the benefits of high quality music education programs in schools.

Music teachers celebrate MIOSM in many ways by offering special performances, lessons, sing-alongs and activities to bring their music programs to the attention of administrators, parents, colleagues, and communities to display the positive benefits that school music brings to students of all ages.

Music In Our Schools Month began as a single statewide Advocacy Day and celebration in New York in 1973 and grew over the decades to become a month-long celebration of school music in 1985. (Nafme.org)



Each year during the month of March, students from around the state of Arkansas come together at the Capitol to inspire, create, and advocate for music education. This is an experience that you and your students will never forget. Please consider joining us as we celebrate Music in Our Schools Month! **We will be singing our hearts out on Thursday March 7th, and Wednesday March 13th. If you are wanting to bring students, please fill out the form on the adjacent page, and send in to Bart Dooley by February 22.**



2019 ArkMEA Capitol Concerts
Thursday, March 7 and Wednesday, March 13, 2019
MIOSM Participation Application

Please type or print all information legibly. Application deadline is **February 22, 2019.**

Please send your application to:

Bart Dooley
19 Deerwood Drive
Conway, AR 72034
dooleyb@conwayschools.net

Date _____

Director's NAFME Member Number: _____

School name _____ School address _____

City _____ Zip _____ Phone _____ Fax _____

Name of group(s) (for certificate):

Type of ensemble(s)

(chorus, woodwinds, strings, Orff ensemble, etc.)

Grade Level(s) _____ Number of performers _____

Which date? (check one) Thursday, March 7 _____ or Wednesday, March 13 _____

Director's name _____ Home address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

(H) Phone _____ (W) Phone _____ (Cell) Phone _____

Email _____

Are you interested in your ensemble performing alone? Yes No

Has your school participated in the Capitol Concerts before? Yes No; When? _____

Director's signature

Administrator's signature

The following conditions apply:

1. The Director must be a member of NAFME/Arkansas Music Educators Association (ArkMEA).
2. The selection of participating ensembles will be the responsibility of the MIOSM committee. Priority will be given to schools that have not previously participated.
3. The repertoire will be selected by the ArkMEA MIOSM chair.
4. Accompaniment for the mass chorus will be provided by tracks/piano.
5. All travel expenses are the responsibility of the school.
6. Student behavior and discipline must be exemplary.
7. Due to volume restrictions by the Capitol staff, brass ensembles are discouraged.
8. A piano and/or CD player will be provided for accompanying featured ensembles.

The Best Seat in the House

The benefits of conscious attention to wellness offer advantages to modern musicians. Who can afford to injure themselves through neglect of healthy practices? In this article, I invite you to consider the importance of good posture, especially when seated at a keyboard. This is not limited to keyboard musicians; it extends to computer users typing at their keyboards, something many of us log hours doing weekly.

Keyboards have been around for a very long time. Musical keyboards began to be used during the Renaissance in Europe, when the virginal and then the harpsichord came into use. Computer keyboards began to be widely used during the 1980s, as personal computers became affordable. As long as there have been keyboards, there have been complaints from some users about arm pain, neck pain, and back pain. These ailments are termed repetitive strain injuries, aka RSI. Repetitive Strain Injury covers several different physical conditions, such as tendonitis, carpal tunnel syndrome, thoracic outlet syndrome, and focal dystonia. It is also known as Cumulative Trauma Disorder. Symptoms may include shooting pain, weakness, numbness or tingling in the arms or hands.

What causes RSI? Think of it as a negative formula: Muscle Tension + Incorrect Posture + Repetitive Motion + Over-Use = RSI. Many doctors and physical therapists believe that RSI can be prevented, through careful attention to good posture and use of ergonomically designed tools. Ergonomics draws on many subjects including anatomy, physiology, kinesiology, and principles of design. Ergonomically designed objects are easy to use because they work well with the natural shape of the human body.

In the music world, a great deal of study over several centuries has been devoted to the subject of healthy keyboard technique. Experts emphasize how to develop good coordination, to play piano, harpsichord, or organ in ways that prevent injury. Study of Alexander technique, Feldenkrais, body mapping, and yoga are now commonplace in the music world as means of staying healthy, or recovering from injury. There are many books, conference sessions, and DVDs that address the subject. The Music Teachers National Association maintains a web site devoted to Health in Music Teaching, which includes a bibliography of current materials, that is updated annually <https://bit.ly/2Pb4k1a>. What works well for pianists carries over to compute keyboards.

“Who can afford to injure themselves through neglect of healthy practices?”



Illustration 1



Illustration 2

Prof. Barbara Lister-Sink, a leader in injury-prevention for pianists, and the producer of the video *Freeing the Caged Bird: Developing Well-Coordinated, Injury-Preventive Piano Technique*, summarizes healthy piano technique this way:

- Optimal skeletal alignment
- Letting gravity work for you
- Efficient muscle use

How do you ensure that you use your computer in a healthy space? Start by consciously choosing to set up your computer at a specially-designed work station. Prevent injuries before they start by using good posture and ergonomically designed tools at a computer desk. Give yourself “the best seat in the house.” This promotes optimal skeletal alignment. According to Dr. Emil Pascarelli, in his book *Dr. Pascarelli’s Complete Guide to Repetitive Strain Injury*, “The most frequent

physical finding in patients seeking care for RSI is postural misalignment. I found this in almost 80 percent of my patients."

Good posture at the piano means setting the bench height so that the player's arms are parallel to the floor, and the head is level, supported by the natural curves of the spine. [illustration 1] It's crucial to sit such that your arms are parallel to the floor, so that the flexor and extensor muscles in the forearms are in a neutral position.

A computer desk should have a tray for the keyboard which allows you to type sitting with your arms parallel to the floor, your arms hanging freely from the shoulder sockets, and your elbows at approx. a 90° angle. [see illustration 2] A kitchen table cannot substitute as a computer desk. A kitchen table is optimally designed for eating, not for typing on a keyboard. It is too high, forcing a person to reach up to type on a computer keyboard, which strains the flexor and extensor muscles in the forearms.



Illustration 3



Illustration 4

The computer screen, the monitor, should be at a height that allows you to look at it with your head level, not sitting hunched over. The human head weighs approximately 8 pounds. When you sit up straight, with good posture, your spine supports the weight of your head, and there is no stiffness in the neck and upper back muscles. Hunching, however, forces those muscles to stay contracted, holding your head at an awkward angle. It's easy to see the distortion caused by hunching at the piano [illustration 3] If you hunch at the computer at a poorly designed work station, and you get busy typing, it's easy to forget how much time has passed. Before you know it, those contracted muscles complain that they're tired and sore. [illustration 4] The solution is prevention: sit at an ergonomically designed work station when you know you're going to be spending a long time working at the computer.

If you are a user of a "certain age" whose eyes need extra help, you might consider carrying over another adaptation from musicians. At a certain point, instrumental ensemble players and keyboard players who rely on glasses to read the score have special glasses made, designed to focus on the music stand. To do this with your optometrist, measure the distance from your eyes to your music stand or keyboard music rack, and provide that information to the optometrist, having a pair of single-focus "music glasses" made. These glasses might serve well at the computer also. Or, if the distance between your eyes and computer screen is dramatically different than the distance between your eyes and music stand, you may need to get a pair of "computer glasses" made. It's essential that you can comfortably read your computer screen while sitting up straight. If you have to lean forward to read the text on the screen, you're distorting your posture. Your spine can't support the weight of your head in that position; neck and back strain is the uncomfortable consequence.

Laptops are a great convenience. However, the same features that make them easy to carry, are the culprits that lead to RSI muscle pain. The keyboard and the screen are too close together, a laptop

"Become aware of the difference between unhealthy postures and gestures that involve unnecessary tension, versus healthy ones that allow muscles to freely contract and release."

is not ergonomically designed. If you're going to work for an extended period of time typing on your laptop, set the computer on a monitor stand, to raise the screen, and plug in an external keyboard, setting that in a keyboard drawer. Don't use a laptop while sitting in a recliner.

Music teachers and students benefit from developing kinesthetic awareness - notice how you are using your body. Become aware of the difference between unhealthy postures and gestures that involve unnecessary tension, versus healthy ones that allow muscles to freely contract and release. Be able to feel the difference, and consciously make healthy choices. Some factors that can pre-dispose a person to RSI include poor posture, improper work station set-up, long sessions at the computer without breaks (high-intensity marathon video game tournaments, major report deadlines, etc.), lack of sufficient sleep, and lack of physical conditioning from regular exercise (stretching and strengthening exercises).

Q&A

- Q. How do I find a doctor or physical therapist who treats RSI?

A. Your primary care physician may be able to refer you to a practitioner who is experienced in treating RSI. An organization such as the Association of Occupational and Environmental Clinics www.aoc.org/ may direct you to RSI resources. It may also be beneficial to ask someone who has been successfully treated for RSI for a recommendation.

- Q. How do I talk about my RSI symptoms with a doctor?

A. Providing detailed information to your doctor will help in analyzing the causes of your case of RSI and in devising a treatment plan. Suparna Damany, in *It's Not Carpal Tunnel Syndrome*, recommends keeping a log, with three headings:

- Date
- What I Did
- What I Felt

Her book includes a variety of descriptive techniques, such as evaluating your symptoms according to a Pain Scale of 1 - 10, with 1 meaning "no pain," 3 meaning "minor annoyance," 5 meaning "discomforting pain that can't be ignored for more than an hour" without non-prescription drugs to ease symptoms, 8 meaning "severe pain" that limits day-to-day activities, and 10 meaning "debilitating pain" such that hospitalization is required. She also includes a classification system for 1st degree, 2nd degree and 3rd degree RSI.

Remember, you can work long hours at a computer if you employ good posture. But you can't work even a short time comfortably if you sit in an unhealthy posture and use inefficient gestures. Invest in ergonomically designed tools for your desk, your work station; prevent problems before they start. Forget that myth about "No pain, no gain." . It has absolutely no place in healthy keyboarding. Lets be mindful out there!

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Dr. Linda Holzer is an experienced pianist and computer-user. Healthy technique, at keyboards of all kinds, is one of her special interests. She is Prof. of Music, and Coordinator of Classical Piano Studies at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, where she is in her 24 th year on the faculty.

Note: The material in this article is intended only as an informational resource. It does not constitute medical advice, and is not intended to substitute for advice from your physician. If you are experiencing symptoms of RSI, please consult a doctor for professional treatment.

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Lead a Legacy: Dr. I.J. Routen

Interviewer: Thank you so much for taking the time to share your wisdom and experiences in music education. Could you give our readers a background of your long and successful music education career?

Dr. Routen: I taught at Woodruff Elementary for three years but only one year as a music specialist. The other two years were as a 5th and 6th grade classroom teacher, which really increased my "teaching" skills. I then took a position at Rockefeller Incentive School for 9 years as a music specialist. That span increased my "music educator" skills as I taught 2 year olds through 6th grade, which required a well-sequenced music program. It was during this period that the Rockefeller Show Choir performed as part of the National Children's Choir at Carnegie Hall. The group was part of three mainland choirs under the direction of Henry Leck that participate in a Children's Choir Concert in Hawaii. They performed an original program, "Soul of the South", for students in London and Paris and won gold at Heartland in Branson, Mo. I also had the privilege to teach undergraduates Elementary Music Methods for Classroom Teachers, Elementary Music, Commercial Voice, and Music Appreciation at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock for ten years. For the past 16 years, I have provided



mentorship and professional development for Little Rock School District elementary arts educators.

Interviewer: With such a successful career, what is a favorite memory that you hold?

Dr. Routen: My favorite memories as an educator have been the choir tours and teaching the two and three year olds.

Interviewer: What would you say your greatest success has been as a music educator?

Dr. Routen: Many of my students have become life-long learners and supporters of music. Former students and members of my show choirs are performers at the local and national level. I am thrilled that many of my students are now music educators and education administrators. Most importantly, I have been able to see my students develop into wonderful human beings.

Interviewer: In today's classroom environment, I think we would both agree that it is imperative that all music educators have influences and mentors. Who were a few of your biggest influences and mentors?

Dr. Routen: Wes Abbott, music chair at Los Angeles City College, who convinced me to be a music major when all I wanted was to learn orchestration. Robert Linn, composition, University of Southern California, who patiently nurtured my musical “stylings”. As a performer, Carmen McRae, Nina Simone, Sara Vaughn, Chris Connors, Frank Sinatra and Duke Ellington.

Interviewer: We know it can be tough in today’s classroom. What contributed to your longevity as a music educator?

Dr. Routen: I started teaching after a 25-year performing career. My experiences afforded me the opportunity to share my training and adventures with my students and young teachers.

Interviewer: What advice do you have for young and developing music educators?

Dr. Routen: Listen to all types of music from as many different countries and cultures as you can. Exposure to and immersion in differences of all kinds makes for a better educator and human being.

Interviewer: Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me. What final thoughts would you like to leave with the reader?

Dr. Routen: “I’m not dead, so I’m still learning”.



*Photos provided by Dr. I.J. Routen

Editor's Note

Sea Monkeys! I remember when I was a kid, I wanted my parents to buy me Sea Monkeys. I wanted them more than anything. If you don't know what they are, let me describe. According to the commercials, Sea Monkeys were tiny aquatic pets "trapped in time capsules". You could create your own "world". To 5 year-old Ken, it was my responsibility to not only rescue these creatures but to build a worthwhile and utopic environment for my "time-traveling" friends. The commercials were clear, all you needed to do was add water, the "time capsules", patience, and magic dust, then BOOM... your own universe of wizardly pets would thrive. My water-based society was going to be called "Kengri-la". It would be the perfect world for all domesticated aquatic organisms. Why was this not talked about and reported in all the papers? This was news worthy stuff and the lack of discussion made me question every adult in America.

After many chores and seeking loose change in the sofa, I had managed together enough money to buy them. Hmm... the container seems a bit small. I only need a cup of water? These "Time-Capsules" are extremely tiny... Still, my unbridled enthusiasm and imagination could not be contained. I was a few days away from having my own kingdom. Now, anyone that has owned Sea Monkeys knows what happened next. The mysterious habitat that I created was not what I expected. The small container was more than adequate for the microscopic creatures that struggled to survive. The commercial with talking Sea Monkeys was not even close to reality. In just a few days, my hopes and dreams were dead... like my Sea Monkeys.

Many of us have a similar story but with our music classroom. We had inflated expectations of what being a music educator meant, only to realize it was not what we had envisioned: Dealing with scheduling conflicts, paperwork, head lice, broken equipment, inadequate facilities, and parents. After what may feel like a constant inundation of negatives and hard fault failures, some days it takes all we can do from throwing in the towel. In Gary Gackstatter's book *Spark: Notes from the Podium*, he discusses the "spark" that we all had at one-time: The spark that drove us to become a music educator, the spark that drove our vision, the spark that we desired to share with our students. Maybe our ideals have changed; maybe we have struggled to come to grips with what we do on a day-to-day basis. To be a successful music educator does not warrant a trophy, a medal, or even a first-division rating. To be a successful music educator, we need to reach that kid - just like we were reached. We need to ignite that fire in us and hope our glow sparks our students. Successful music education classrooms can look very different but the focus is the same - the student.



Kenneth Goff is the Director of Bands at University of Arkansas at Little Rock. He has been a music educator for 20 years and is an active clinician, guest conductor, and adjudicator. As a secondary school band director, Dr. Goff's bands traveled throughout the Southeast United States, the Caribbean, and Japan. He holds a Ph.D. in Music Education with emphasis in instrumental conducting from Florida State University. Dr. Goff has been published in music education journals and has spoken at conferences throughout the United States.

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