



by Trista Emmons

Be the Gift.

“My father gave me the greatest gift anyone could give another person; he believed in me.” - Jim Valvano

Throughout the summer, I sat on my phone looking up ways that Pinterest would transform me into the perfect teacher. My dreams consisted of the perfectly decorated classroom, sleek worksheets to guide students’ learning, and polished, hand-carved instruments strung with Evah Pirazzis. Then, August hit, and reality struck. I had a cello with a hole in the rib (seriously, how does this happen?), I was scrambling to find rosin between the three buildings I work in each day (what student took the Jade out of my case?), and the worksheets... Oh my, let’s just be honest and acknowledge that some days rhythms scribbled down on a legal pad will suffice. Then, my students arrived and I suddenly remembered that my sole purpose is not to put on a show for them; my gift is to share the beauty of music with them, believe in their potential, and help them achieve. My students simply need ME to be the gift. They need me to be tough and compassionate, to be energetic and calm, to cheer them on and hold them accountable, and to guide them to think beyond “What’s in it for me?”.

This year, how will you be “the gift”?

I once asked my mentor why I should belong to OSTA. I believe the “What’s in it for me?” question actually came out of my mouth. In his great wisdom, he responded, “Sometimes it’s not what you receive, but what you give.” Our organization is only as great as the gifts we collectively give to each other and our students as we strive to ensure that every child in this state has the opportunity to receive a quality string education. We each have a unique set of talents; **SHARE THEM.**

In the coming months, OSTA will host four “Fall Socials” to facilitate relationships between our private studio and school orchestra teachers. I encourage you to attend **AND** to bring a friend! Together, we can be the gift to each other and to our students.

Trista Emmons is OSTA President and Director of Orchestras at Indian Hill Exempted Village Schools in Cincinnati, Ohio.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Sight-reading in the Private Studio	2
Write for OSTA.....	3
OSTA Board.....	4
The Need for Speed.....	4
Fall Socials.....	5
OSTA Awards.....	6
Mini Grant Application.....	7



SIGHT-READING IN THE PRIVATE STUDIO

Sight-reading music requires skills of identifying notes, rhythms, dynamics, tempos and keys. We add to that the subdivision of the beat, bowing variations and articulation markings, fingerings in first and upper positions, and pretty soon we have students who are competent readers.

The usual audition template includes many wonderfully prepared solos, some okay excerpts and so-so scales, and then there is usually sight-reading. Sometimes it can appear as if another student sight-reads, not the student who just performed that beautiful solo from memory. This would not be very important if the director was looking for a bunch of soloists, but they are looking for section players, students who can open a folder of new music and be able to somewhat get through it at the very first rehearsal.

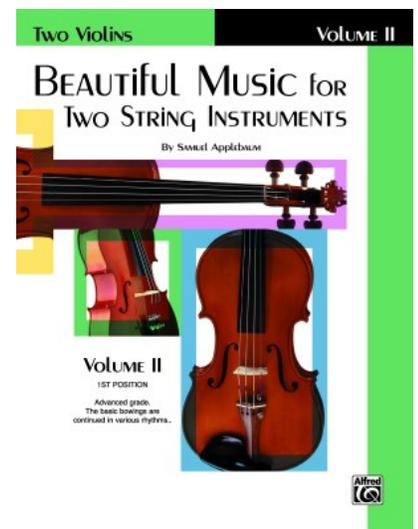
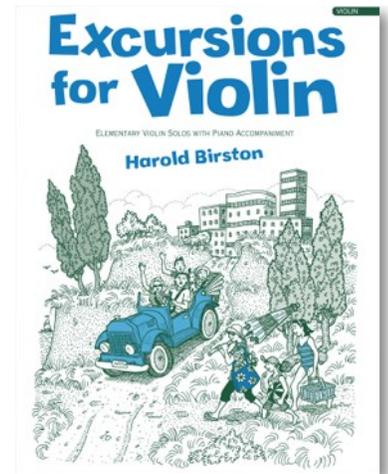
Start at the Beginning

Sight-reading skills can be taught at the very beginning. Flash cards and music notation apps are wonderful tools that can be adapted as skills progress. Start simple by having them identify the notes on the spaces and lines, then by string so they see how they are placed on, above and below the staff. Have them identify just their open strings and be able to locate them on the staff and the keyboard. Clap a song through each week before having them play it for you. Give them sight-reading segments with only two different notes on the same string, then gradually add notes. There is a wonderful new book which has pages devoted strictly to each string for sight-reading called “Excursions for Violin,” by Harold Birston. Each segment is two lines long and might only include the open string and first finger in quarter notes and half notes, but with a variety of patterns. The next segment might add the second finger or another rhythm or both. There are ten segments for each string and are short enough for the student to feel quite accomplished after reading through just a few at a time. This helps to complete the cycle, the recognition of the note, assigning a finger to that note, and tactilely finding it on the fingerboard while learning to keep the eyes on the music.

“It is a process that requires constant adjustment and direction from the teacher.”

Keep the Momentum by not Jumping Ahead

Teachers are quite attracted to students who can play by ear, and even encourage them to do so; they learn to create a wonderful tone and perform memorized works. A student with a strong ear may play and memorize well, but their reading skills may be weak and overlooked. Try duets at each lesson, at an easy enough level so that the student can sight-read, and insist they not stop and fix anything.





The teacher's part helps students envision the subdivisions of the beat, hear the subtle harmonies, and gain other listening skills which are necessary for small and large ensemble playing.

But You Already Taught the D Major Scale

Students should not only know how to play the D-major scale, but they should also know how it relates to the fingerboard. Be sure they know where all the D's are on the fingerboard, the staff, and can find them without looking at the fingerboard. This will help build their trust in what they feel and hear and lessen the amount of peeks they take at their fingers. They should also learn major and minor scales from the start so the patterns become fluid and their ear recognizes these basic scale types.

Get Rid of Those Arrows

Arrows to show high finger or low finger, speed up or slow down, can slow down a student's reading ability. The information is already in the music and they need to recognize it without further marks. Audition sight-reading is not going to come with arrows and glasses and a bowing over every note, so students should learn to read without them. Instead, teachers can make copies of etudes and have students mark fingerings, note names, beats, and half-steps. This will help the teacher find out what the student can and cannot do easily.

Students can begin to read music at the same time as letters and numbers. It is a process that requires constant adjustment and direction from the teacher and helps to insure strong reading skills for students who want to perform in orchestra ensembles.

Examples of flash cards and sight-reading books:

Orchestra Flashcards Violin, by Berets Publications

Birston, Harold. *Excursions for Violin*. Toronto: Frederick Harris Music Co., 2013

Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music. *Violin Specimen Sight-Reading Tests*. London: ABRSM, 2011

Eve Warner is a founding teacher of the Royal Conservatory Music Development Program (MDP) www.musicdevelopmentprogram.org and private violin teacher in Cincinnati, Ohio. She may be contacted at eve.warner@zoomtown.com.

WRITING FOR OSTA

Your ideas are valuable to our professional community. Our mission is to enhance string education across the state of Ohio. The best teachers are thoughtful and reflective learners, constantly prodding themselves to discover new solutions and ideas. You are encouraged to share your expertise with our members.

The best newsletter articles usually begin with the simple question, "What do I want to know more about?" A good way to brainstorm is to ask questions. What has been done on this topic in the past? What do I wish I knew? What would be helpful for other teachers to know? How did my students respond to my teaching when I made a change?

For even more fun, enlist the support of a colleague and co-author your great ideas!

For more information, to submit a manuscript, or if you need affirmation that your topic is a winner, please feel free to contact us.

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Search: Ohio String Teachers Association

Past President Gretchen Zunic and President-Elect Gerry MacDougall are heading up the OSTA Facebook page in order to have a stronger communication presence for our membership. Please take a moment to “like” the page so that news pops into your feed.

If you have string events that you would like to advertise or feel would be beneficial to OSTA members, please forward that information to Gretchen at gzunic@uaschools.org or Gerry at geraldmacdougall@solonboe.org.

A wonderful, online community of school orchestra teachers is a wealth of support and knowledge. If you are not part of the “**School Orchestra and String Teachers**” Facebook page, stop whatever you’re doing and JOIN! In addition to the message board dialogue, there are many downloadable resources.

NEWLY ELECTED OSTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The OSTA members below will serve in the following positions from 2015-2017. Many thanks for their dedication. Please feel free to contact them if you have an idea to share.

- Trista Emmons, President—Orchestra Director, Indian Hill
- Gretchen Zunic, Past President—Orchestra Director, Upper Arlington
- Gerry MacDougall, President-Elect—Orchestra Director, Solon
- BettyAnne Gottlieb, Treasurer—Assistant Professor of Music Education, University of Cincinnati
- Jesse Martin, Secretary—Orchestra Director, Avon
- Erin Broadhurst, Webmaster—Orchestra Director, Hilliard
- Eve Warner, Newsletter Editor—Private Studio Teacher, Cincinnati
- Jim Bates—Assistant Professor, Otterbein University
- Dorothy Han—Private Studio Teacher, Cincinnati
- Gayley Hautzenroeder—Retired Orchestra Director and Private Studio Teacher, Cincinnati
- Penny Kruse—Professor of Violin, Bowling Green State University
- Juliet White-Smith—Professor of Viola, Ohio State University

THE NEED FOR SPEED

BY TRISTA EMMONS

My school orchestra and private students have something in common—they have a “need for speed.” They love to play fast, and for them it is tangible evidence of progress.

In my school environment, data is king. Instead of fighting this trend, I’ve learned to play the game and speak the lingo. So now my students graph their scales’ tempi. This satisfies my need for them to practice and reinforce precise technique, their need for speed, and my administrator’s need for data.

Here’s how it works:

Each student receives a piece of graph paper (one piece for each scale).

Label one side “Date” and the other side “Tempo”. For tempo, I start at the quarter note = 40 and go in increments of 5. You can define this for your students.

Students track their progress. They must start at 40 and work their way up.

We keep these “data sheets” in their orchestra binders so it is easy for them to see where they were at the day before and where they’re headed.

When my principal asked me how students know they’re improving, I asked the class to take their scale graphs out and show him their progress.

POWERFUL.

FALL SOCIAL GATHERINGS

Southwest Ohio:

October 4, 2 p.m.: Christian Moerlein Malt Room , 1621 Moore St. (located in OTR; this is NOT the Lager House location at The Banks). Plenty of free parking available! Join us as we have the opportunity to grab a pint and enjoy catching up. If you bring a friend, your first pint's on the house!

For more information, contact Trista Emmons at trista.emmons@ih.k12.oh.us.

Central Ohio:

October 10, 6 p.m.: The Columbus OSTA Gathering will take place in conjunction with the Pro-Musica Teacher Gathering. It will be hosted at Julie Castor-Ellis' house—728 Schyler Ct. Gahanna, OH 43230. All Columbus and surrounding area string teachers (public & private) are invited and welcome to attend!

Northeast Ohio:

October 25, 4-6 p.m.: Corleone's Ristorante and Bar , 5669 Broadview Rd., Cleveland, 44134. Come join your fellow string teachers as we celebrate a Browns victory! The Ohio String Teachers Association will provide appetizers as well as information about opportunities for you and your students in the coming school year.

For more information, contact Gerry MacDougall (gerladmacdougall@solonboe.org) or Jesse Martin (martinj@avonlocalschools.org).

Northwest Ohio:

November 1, 7-10 p.m.: Bowling Green State University, Wolfe Center, Conrad Room

Special Guest: Dr. Patricia Buchanan, MD, and Feldenkrais Teacher

For more information, contact Penny Kruse at krusep@bgsu.edu.



O.S.T.A. AWARDS

SCHOOL TEACHER OF THE YEAR

STUDIO TEACHER OF THE YEAR

YOUNG TEACHER OF THE YEAR

ADMINISTRATOR OF THE YEAR

Each year the Ohio String Teachers Association recognizes outstanding string and orchestra teachers in Ohio by presenting an award to one or more teachers. The form below is used for nominations by the membership. The O.S.T.A. Board will select the award recipient(s) from the nominations submitted. We urge you to submit the name of a person or persons whom you believe to represent outstanding teaching.

Send or email nominations to:

Juliet White-Smith, 4044 Savannah Grove Lane, Columbus, OH 43221

white-smith.1@osu.edu

The awards will be presented at the OSTA Membership meeting during the 2016 O.M.E.A. Conference in Cincinnati in January.

NOMINEE'S NAME _____

AWARD CATEGORY: PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHER

STUDIO TEACHER

YOUNG TEACHER

ADMINISTRATOR

SCHOOL _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ ZIP _____

PLEASE ATTACH A SHORT SUMMARY OF THE REASONS FOR THE NOMINATION.

PERSON SUBMITTING NOMINATION _____ PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

NOMINATIONS DUE BY OCTOBER 31ST

Ohio String Teachers Association

Mini-grant application form

2015-2016

Criteria

Mini-grants are designed to support projects that enhance and support string and orchestra education in Ohio.

Mini-grants will be awarded for no more than two consecutive years for the same person for the same project; new projects will receive precedence.

Recipients agree to submit a brief summative evaluation (and photos, when possible) of the success the mini grant helped achieve. These results may be published in an OSTA newsletter, web site, or social media.

A budget proposal will be required as part of the application process

Name/contact person _____

Address _____

Phone number _____

Title of Proposal _____

Please attach a brief proposal and budget. Itemize expected income and/or expenses, showing how the funds will be spent, and how or if any additional funds will be provided.

Amount of Grant requested \$ _____ (up to \$200)

Person/Organization to whom the check should be made payable _____

Send electronically to:

Jesse Martin, martinj@avonlocalschools.org

DEADLINE: October 31, 2015

Grant recipients will be decided at the November OSTA Board meeting.

National Solo Competition

The annual ASTA solo competition is undergoing changes and expanding to include harp and guitar. In addition, the solo competition is now an ANNUAL event.

This year's entry deadline is NOVEMBER 12, 2015. The national preliminary round is completed via video audition submission and is open to students ages 16-23. The live final round will consist of 6 finalists chosen from among entrants. It will be held on Thursday, March 3 at the National ASTA Conference in Tampa, Florida.

For more information, see the ASTA site (www.astaweb.com).

OUR MISSION.

The Ohio String Teachers Association is dedicated to promoting, supporting and sustaining string and orchestra education in Ohio.

The Ohio String Teachers Association mission will be achieved by:

- Developing and sponsoring workshops and conferences for string and orchestra students and educators
- Publishing and disseminating education and informational materials to its members
- Providing communication and networking services that serve and respond to the needs and concerns of the educational/professional string and orchestral community
- Providing leadership and visibility for the string and orchestral community resulting in an active and positive image statewide
- Promoting within the state educational community recognition of the need for a well-balanced music program in which the study of strings is made available to all of Ohio's youth

PLEASE
PLACE
STAMP
HERE

Ohio String Teachers Association

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ASTA
the ohio string teachers association