



by Trista Emmons

Magical.

“Music is probably the only real magic I have encountered in my life. There’s not some trick involved with it. It’s pure and it’s real. It moves, it heals, it communicates and does all these incredible things.” - Tom Petty

At the beginning of this school year, my school’s superintendent challenged each teacher to create “magic” in the classroom and passed out magic wands. My first thought was, “Yeah, sure, I’ll tap this wand at some student and they’ll magically play in tune with a gorgeous, relaxed vibrato. And the instruments will never be out of tune in this building that alternates daily between glacial and tropical.” Back to reality and practicality: coincidentally, the magic wand is the perfect Mollard P-series, 12-inch, baton case. That silly wand (now my baton carrier) reminds me every time I go to conduct that what we do IS magical. The real magic is what happens in our classrooms and studios. It is that spark of energy created by new ideas, insights, and mastery of a concept. It is engaging and motivating students to persist even through the drudgery of technical drills or an exceptionally difficult package. It is unpacking demanding repertoire so that students can learn measure by measure and then build it back up to something recognizable. It is retaining students when they are pulled in so many directions. It is balancing the needs of each student in your ensemble. It is selecting repertoire that inspires and challenges. It is organizing chamber music ensembles and finding spaces for them all to rehearse.

Friends, the tasks we undertake each day are what makes the magic possible. It’s easy to feel inundated with “to-dos”, but I encourage you take a moment to recharge and remind yourself that YOU are the magician. Take advantage of professional opportunities—maybe it is attending the OMEA Conference in February (OSTA meeting and reading session is Thursday evening, February 2) or the ASTA Conference in March (conveniently in Pittsburgh this year) or maybe it is simply inviting a few local colleagues together to sit and chat. Whatever it is, take a moment to reflect on the magical gift you share through music each day.

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



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SCALES. EVERY. DAY.

I'm a nerd. I LOVE scales. Scales are logical, mathematical, and simply make sense. I appreciate the patterns. The thrill of accomplishment spurs me to practice more. I see scales as a vehicle for practicing and focusing on other areas of technique, both right and left hand.

My Eighth Grade Orchestra students. They are not so easily impressed.

This group of kiddos is extremely goal-oriented. I needed to get organized and create a comprehensive plan. I always try to put myself in their shoes. I needed to give students the tools and time to work at their own pace in order to thoroughly teach/coach students that needed extra assistance and simultaneously challenge my musicians that needed a boost. Hence, "The Wall."

The Tools and Plan

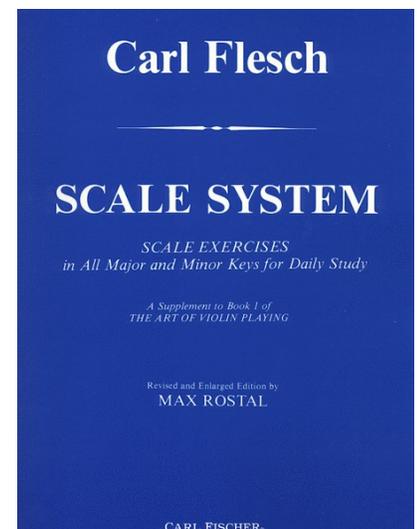
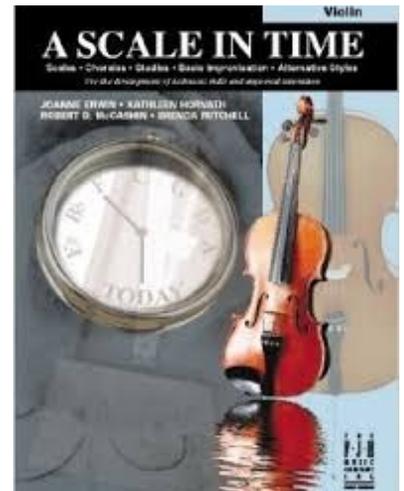
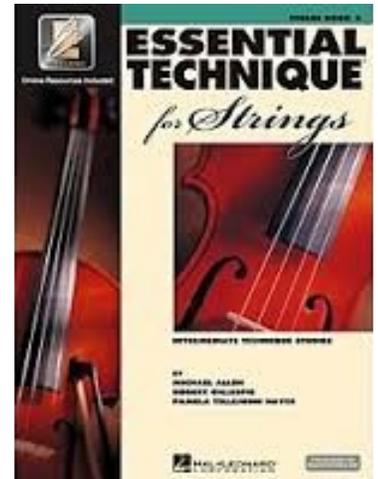
I dedicate the first 15 minutes of our 45-minute class to SCALES. Every day. The expectations for this time are clear—every student is working on scales. Nothing else. Period. This expectation is clear and enforced as I walk around the room, checking on which scale students are working on. When a child is distracted by another piece of music, they receive a stern reminder that we are only working on scales.

Text: Every child has Essential Technique. I like the thorough explanation for the two-octaves scales in this method book, but you can use whatever resource you so choose. For this grade level, I begin with two octaves scales for every instrument.

Perfect scale = SIGN THE WALL!

The plan is simple: I created a colorful poster for each scale in the book (7 major, 5 natural minor) and created "The Wall" in the back of our classroom. Students memorize a scale and arpeggio. I'm stationed at the front of the room, they line up, and individually play their scale for me. (Meanwhile, everyone else is still practicing scales!) It must be perfect—no incorrect pitches, no hesitations, no sloppy shift. Perfect. Some of my most gifted students realized how serious I was after being repeatedly sent back to practice and work on a specific shift, hand shape, or incorrect arpeggio. As soon as I hear a perfect scale, I celebrate, give a high five, and shout, "Sign The Wall!" They run to the can of Sharpies and victoriously autograph the scale they completed. The plan is that over the course of three quarters, every student will master these two-octave scales.

Accountability: Every student is expected to "sign the wall" four times per quarter, and this is part of their quarter grade.





Competition and Celebration

Game on. My competitive musicians were ready. They came to class early to be “the first” to sign for a scale. There was strategy: a few students started identifying which scales hadn’t been signed for yet, and that was the scale they chose to work on. I built in an element of student choice by not dictating a specific order they need to tackle the scales. (I do teach the scales in a specific order, but that is another topic for another time.) Students take pride in their accomplishment—you can see the pride and celebration in their autographs.

To make the “competition” more interesting, there is a trophy for the first person to complete all of the scales. Every student that completes them by the end of the year will also be recognized.

Just Keep Moving

To my surprise, one month in, we celebrated and crowned Peter the “Scale King”. He finished all of the two-octave scales. For him, the fun was just beginning! He is not done with scales. Oh, no, we cannot have that. As soon as the two-octaves are complete, we celebrate, and then I hand them a present: THREE-OCTAVE SCALES, ARPEGGIOS, AND MELODIC MINORS! They hit the jackpot! And the process begins—practice, memorize, play for me, sent back for more practice with specific feedback, play again, SIGN THE WALL!

Beyond the Instrument

I also use this as an opportunity for students to demonstrate knowledge of key signatures and scales with a written assignment. For each scale, there is a corresponding paper they keep in their orchestra binder that includes:

- 1) Sign off spot for 2-octaves
- 2) Sign off spot for 3-octaves
- 3) Write out key signature
- 4) Write out the two-octave scale (ascending)
- 5) Compose an eight-measure technical exercise in the specific key and explain what technique this exercise addresses

This is not busy work. I am amazed by some of their compositions and thoughtful approach to the assignment. Now, we’re in the process of developing a class etude book exclusively composed by these young musicians. To me, that is true learning.

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.

Trista Emmons,
trista.emmons@ih.k12.oh.us
Eve Warner,
eve.warner@zoomtown.com



ACCEPTING NOMINATIONS

Each spring, we elect new members to the OSTA Board of Directors. That process begins NOW! We are currently accepting nominations. If you are interested in serving OSTA in this capacity and would like to be more involved in this organization's leadership, please submit your name and a brief bio to Gerry MacDougall at geraldmacdougall@solonboe.org no later than February 28, 2017. Elections will be held March 2017 via online voting.

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

Eve Warner, Secretary —Private Studio Teacher, Cincinnati

BettyAnne Gottlieb, Treasurer— Assistant Professor of Music Education, University of Cincinnati

Erin Broadhurst, Webmaster— Orchestra Director, Hilliard

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

COLLABORATIVE COMMUNICATION

We are fortunate to have a wide variety of numerous string educators in our State of Ohio. We are private teachers who work from home or travel to several schools during the week; we are public school teachers who travel to several schools during a single day; we are collegiate level professors who keep us supplied with the next generation of professional educators. It is a wonderful web of educators whose paths crisscross in some of the most exciting ways.

There is nothing more satisfying than to see your student succeed, but sometimes there can be stumbling blocks, big or small, that you just cannot figure out on your own. This is the time to reach out to your student's other teachers and share your concerns, find out what else might be going on, and come up with a plan that will benefit your student's long-term musical journey.

OSTA wants to help keep these lines of communication open by having social gatherings throughout the school year. We also wish to encourage teachers to collaborate in various ways to share their interests and expertise. Host recitals or master classes in your school, share your skills as a master class teacher, and attend each other's' concerts and recitals. Try something new this year, see where it leads!

By expanding our circles, we prevent ourselves from becoming isolated on our individual islands. We benefit from the rich mix, and most of all, so do our students.

-Eve Warner

Ohio String Teachers Association

10th Biennial

Chamber Music Competition

Otterbein University Riley Auditorium

Sunday, January 22, 2017

Apprentice and Jr Division 9:00 AM – 12:30 PM, Sr Division
1:00-2:00pm

Cash Prizes!!

The Ohio String Teachers Association Chamber Music Competition is open to precollege ensembles and collegiate ensembles comprised of any combination of string trio, quartet or quintet as well as mixed groups of strings with winds and/or strings with piano. Prize-winners in each category will be selected based on live performance. Groups will be judged by prominent chamber musicians from the region and will receive written comments on their performance. Each participating group will also receive a certificate of participation from OSTA.

Applications for participation must be postmarked by January 10, 2017. (A late fee of \$10 per ensemble member will be charged for applications postmarked after January 10, 2017. Acceptance of applications postmarked after January 10, 2017 will be at the discretion of the competition organizers.)

DIVISIONS:

The **apprentice and junior divisions** are open to students who are not more than 19 years of age as of June 1, 2017 and to students whose 19th birthday occurs before June 1, 2017 and whose grade level is not higher than grade 12 during the 2016-2017 school year.

The **senior division** is open to ensemble members who are all currently full time students enrolled in an Ohio college. The senior division may include members who are younger than 18 years of age.

PRIZES:

Apprentice & Junior Divisions:

One junior division group may be selected to receive First Prize consisting of \$200.00, a certificate stating "First Prize" for each participating member and coach, and may be invited to perform at a future OMEA/OSTA event. A "Second Prize" winner from the junior division may be awarded a cash prize of \$100.00, a certificate stating "Second Prize" for each participating member and coach, and an article and photo of the group will appear on the OSTA website. Honorable mention certificates may be awarded at the discretion of the judging panel. The Apprentice division does not include cash prizes, however groups will receive a Certificate of Participation and are eligible for Honorable Mention awards.

Senior Division:

One group may be selected to receive a First Prize consisting of \$400.00, a certificate stating "First Prize" for each participating member and coach, and may be invited to perform at a future OMEA/OSTA event. An article and photo of the group will appear on the OSTA website. A "Second Prize" winner may be awarded a cash prize consisting of \$200, a certificate stating "Second Prize" for each participating member and coach, and an article and photo of the group will appear on the OSTA website. Honorable mention certificates may be awarded at the discretion of the judging panel.

Inquiries may be directed to:

Jim Bates, OSTA Competition Organizing Chair
Director of Orchestra Activities, Otterbein University
1 South Grove Street, Westerville Ohio 43081
614-823-1553 (office), jbates@otterbein.edu (email)

CLASSIFIEDS

Have an opportunity to advertise? An upcoming event you want other string teachers to know about? E-mail your request to Trista Emmons at: tristaemmons@indianhillschools.org.

Cincinnati area:

4-Way, Cincinnati's String Quartet, is seeking an experienced violinist and teacher for its free lessons and chamber music program at Woodford Paideia Elementary School in Kennedy Heights.

Applicants should have significant experience teaching violin to elementary school age children, a passion for community service, and ideally, high-level experience playing chamber music, as performance opportunities alongside 4-Way's members may be part of the position.

Duties:

Teach individual and group violin lessons to 5th and 6th grade children; coach beginning chamber music groups; participate in planning of repertoire and performances; perform alongside children and other teachers.

Qualified applicants should send a resume to nchaitkin@gmail.com or call Nat Chaitkin at (513) 375-2136.

O.S.T.A. AWARDS

SCHOOL TEACHER OF THE YEAR
COLLEGIATE 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 2017 O.M.E.A. Conference in Cleveland in February.

NOMINEE'S NAME _____

AWARD CATEGORY: PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHER
COLLEGIATE TEACHER OF THE YEAR
STUDIO TEACHER
YOUNG TEACHER
ADMINISTRATOR

NOMINEE'S SCHOOL (if applicable) _____ EMAIL _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ ZIP _____

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

NOMINATOR (Must be a current OSTA member) _____

PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

NOMINATIONS DUE BY DECEMBER 30th.

Ohio **S**tring **T**eachers **A**ssociation
Mini-grant application form
2016-2017

Criteria

- Mini-grants are designed to support projects that enhance and support string and orchestra education in Ohio.
- Mini-grant applicants must be OSTA members in good standing.
- 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.

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

Amount of Grant requested \$ _____ **(up to \$200)**
Person/Organization to whom the check should be made payable _____

Send electronically to:
Trista Emmons, tristaemmons@gmail.com

DEADLINE: DECEMBER 30, 2016

National ASTA Conference in Pittsburgh

March 1-4, 2017

Compose a movement. Conduct an experience. Connect the community.

Join fellow musicians, teachers and vendors at the largest gathering for string professionals in the United States. 3 days of sessions, inspiring performances & network with the who's who of the String Industry at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center Pittsburgh, PA. With 200+ interactive sessions, there is something for everyone. 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
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Ohio String Teachers Association

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