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ECLECTIC STRINGS AND MOTIVATIONAL DESIGN

ECLECTIC STRINGS AND MOTIVATIONAL DESIGN: GUIDING STRING EDUCATION IN THE PROMOTION OF LIFELONG MUSICIANSHP

By

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This paper explores preliminary data collected in two of Seattle’s public middle schools. The data collected shows that string students have a strong interest in listening to and playing varying types/styles of music. A discussion follows, regarding the usage of Eclectic Strings music (the playing of musical styles appropriate for bowed and strummed string instruments derived from a broad range of sources (including classical) for individual instrumentalists and ensembles) in the public school secondary string program, coupled with the ARCS Model of Motivational Design (Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction) – a tool for effective curriculum design. The premise is that the implementation of Eclectic styles of strings music, along with more traditional orchestral literature typically offered in a secondary public school strings program may lead students to practicing string music as a lifelong endeavor. Ideas designed with the ARCS Model in mind are given for the implementation of Eclectic Strings music in the orchestral and chamber setting and for thinking of Western Art Music in an eclectic manner.

Key words: alternative styles, eclectic strings, motivational design, lifelong musicianship
Eclectic Strings and Motivational Design:  Guiding String Education in the Promotion of Lifelong Musicianship

The American String Teachers Association (ASTA) produced their very first professional gathering of string educators (then called a “symposium”) in October, 2000, at the Eastman School of Music, entitled “String Teaching and Learning in the 21st Century.” A topic of interest and discussion was the integration of additional styles of music into the typical string curriculum.

What was brought to ASTA’s attention at that time was the need to recognize, indeed to validate, some string traditions heretofore considered less “legitimate” than classical. There was a consensus that the new century is bringing greater recognition and confluence throughout the music world, and that ASTA, as a professional educational body, needs to acknowledge and lead in this area (A. Dabczynski, personal communication, February 20, 2001).

After the symposium, ASTA formed their first committee to address these facets of string playing and teaching. Invited to serve were Julie Lyonn Liebeman (violinist, improvising musician, vocalist and author), Renata Bratt (cellist, improvising musician, educator, composer, and recording artist), Matt Glaser (violinist and chair of the string department at Berklee College), Stanley Chepaitis (violinist, jazz musician, conductor and professor of violin and viola at Indiana University of Pennsylvania), all chaired by Andrew Dabczynski (violist, educator and currently a music professor at Brigham Young University). The committee was charged with the
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job of creating the very first ASTA “Alternative Styles” Solo String Competition (Dabczynski, 2001).

News of the string education world’s newly validated interested in learning about “Alternative Styles” was catching wind in other arenas. The now defunct International Association for Jazz Education (IAJE) hosted a panel at their April, 2000 conference entitled, “How to Make Strings a Part of Every Jazz Program.” It was moderated by then IAJE President-Elect David Baker (pioneer jazz educator, cellist, and Chair of the Jazz Department at Indiana University). Included on the panel were Darol Anger (jazz/bluegrass violinist, composer and educator), Glenn Basham (professor of violin at The University of Miami), Martin Norgaard (jazz violinist and assistant professor of music education at Georgia State University), Bert Ligon (composer, jazz musician, and music professor at University of South Carolina), Bratt, and Lyonn Lieberman (Bratt, 2000).

In March of 2003, ASTA (who were then in partnership with The National String Orchestra Association, forming a collaborative organization called “ASTA with NSOA”), hosted their very first stand-alone national conference in Columbus, Ohio. The conference touted a cutting edge (and well received) “Alternative-Styles Track,” which included an “Alternative Styles Competition” for soloists, as planned by the ASTA committee listed above. ASTA with NSOA’s then President David Littrell was thrilled:

American string teaching was forever changed when Dr. Shinichi Suzuki’s students performed at the 1964 MENC (Music Educators National Conference) National
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Conference. Dr. John Kendall, who received the Paul Rolland Lifetime Achievement Award at our 2003 National Conference, spoke at that MENC event thirty-nine years ago: “There are moments in history when a place, a time, a man, and an idea converge to produce results of great significance.” The inclusion of an alternative styles track, and the energy level sensed in the attendees at this first stand-alone conference makes me predict that a similar sea change occurred in string teaching and playing in March 2003 at our ASTA with NSOA National Conference, “Celebrating Strings: All Together Now!” (p. 14).

From 2003-2009, ASTA maintained an official “Alternative Styles” Committee made up of educators, performers, and experts from all regions of the United States, and hosted an “Alternative Styles” track (including an “Alternative Styles” Competition every other year) at each yearly national conference. The annual ASTA National Orchestra Festival also included opportunities for participating orchestras to experience “Alternative Styles” instruction by the nation’s leading clinicians, who gathered yearly for the conference.

In 2010, ASTA decided to phase-out the usage of the title “Alternative Styles,” and phase-in the new title “Eclectic Strings,” and to revamp the Eclectic Strings offerings at the conferences, to include an annual “Eclectic Strings Festival,” which in 2012 is in its second year of existence and evolution.

Why the change in title? According to 2011 ASTA President Kirk Moss, “Alternative implies the follow-up of to what? Also, when Googling "Alternative Styles," the top responses
are not pages on fiddle, rock, jazz, and everything else; there are many other things that could be implied or described by this term” (K. Moss, personal communication, July 19, 2010).

ASTA realizes that while “Eclectic Strings” may be a better term for the strand of string music education, it is not prefect. According to 2012 ASTA President Bob Phillips, "Eclectic Strings is better but isn't really the ultimate term either. No one has really coined the perfect term yet." (B. Phillips, personal communication, July 14, 2010).

In 2011, ASTA officially defined “Eclectic Strings” as “the playing of musical styles appropriate for bowed and strummed string instruments derived from a broad range of sources (including classical) for individual instrumentalists and ensembles.” (Fortune, personal communication, October 3, 2011).

ASTA’s new focus on Eclectic Strings music could potentially open doors to new ways for string students (and teachers) to think about music’s role in their lives. Could the study of string music, in many eclectic forms, and in many eclectic approaches promote life-long musicianship in students?

**Thinking of Eclectic Strings as a Gateway to Lifelong Musicianship for Strings Students**

String Instruction is generally still included in most American public school systems. Students are taught critical technique (how to hold a violin, how to draw a bow across the strings). Students learn about note reading, music theory, the great composers as defined by
the Western Art Music canon, and playing in an orchestral setting. Concerts are still staged, and a variety of compositions are performed for supportive audiences.

Unfortunately, however, students often make the initial investment of participating in a school orchestra, and then simply stop playing after the school orchestra opportunities run out (if they didn’t choose to study music in college) because they were not equipped with the tools to initiate independent music making in a community or social environment after high school (Myers, 2008). How, then, in an effort to keep these types of students from leaving music behind, are string teachers fostering in their students a life-long ability and love of music making? Perhaps learning about/participating in eclectic forms of string music could be a key element in convincing string students to maintain a connection to music, to not be afraid to explore realms of music other than just playing printed sheet music (i.e. playing by ear, composition, arranging) and to place a priority on keeping music in their lives.

David A. Williams’ controversial, yet poignant article entitled “The Elephant in the Room,” printed in the September 2011 edition of Music Educators Journal poses the question, “...the elephant in the room is the very model we use for music education in the schools. The large performance model was established as the model for music education in the early 1900s and has remained relatively unchanged for a century. Is this model a significant part of what is causing so few students to enroll in music classes?” (p.51).

Today’s musical ensembles in typical American public schools (whether band, orchestra, or choir) are generally still set up in that century-old “large group” manner, where the teacher
is the “director.” The groups are usually fashioned to resemble a traditional symphonic orchestra, and in many cases still function as a traditional ensemble (Williams, 2011), which may turn some students away from musical experiences in school.

The world outside of the public classroom setting however, is brimming with diverse music making. The ever-romanticized garage band, the local Bluegrass or Celtic jam, sitting on the front porch and pickin’ a tune – these are ways that people of all ages and genders (who may not have ever taken a music class in an American public school) participate voraciously in life-long string musicianship. Whether or not Williams’ assertion that “few students are enrolling in music classes” is true, do students in public string programs have interest in these more vernacular ways of music making to which the dominant culture/mainstream population tend to gravitate? If they did have interest, do they know how to get involved?

A small sample of middle school string students from two public middle schools in Seattle (105 respondents total, each school in a different part of the city), were asked to participate in a study that asked them about their musical habits and desires. The findings showed that students like listening to and participating in music in general – inside and outside of school. They like the regular offerings – what would be considered a “typical orchestra curriculum” where the string classics (i.e. the Elgar Serenade or The Mozart Divertimenti) are performed on a rotating basis, stalwart full orchestra pieces are taught (i.e. Dvorak’s New World Symphony or Beethoven’s Egmont Overture), and “classical technique” is practiced.
Students also indicated, however, that they had an additional interest in learning other types of string music as well. They indicated that they had interest in learning music in different ways (such as aurally), and in participating in other types of ensembles and musical activities.

Results

When asked about their music listening habits, it was shown that students have a strong interest in listening to music. The data indicated that students enjoy listening to music alone, with friends, and with their families.

Figure 1. Students’ music listening habits, Seattle (2012)
Figure 2. Students’ musical listening habits, Seattle (2012)

Do You Listen to Music With Your Family?

- Yes: 86%
- No: 14%

Figure 3. Students’ musical listening habits, Seattle (2012)

When asked about what types of music they choose to listen to when not at school, the answers were extremely varied. Surprisingly, classical music was quite popular among the respondents. Some of the other styles included: Indie, Old-time, Punk, Opera, K-Pop, Grunge, Heavy Metal, Holiday Musc, and Reggae.
Practicing one’s instrument at home is an expectation and pre-requisite of participation in the music departments selected for this survey, so all polled students presumably play their instruments alone. When asked to consider their social music playing/singing habits, students indicated that they indeed enjoy playing their instruments/singing outside of school with friends. Interestingly, however, not as many enjoyed playing instruments/singing with members of their families.

Figure 4. Music that students listen to when not at school, Seattle (2012)
When asked about their level of interest in various musical categories and activities, students responded positively for nearly everything they were asked to rate. These questions directed students to rate each item on a scale of 1 to 10, with one being that they have little/no interest and ten being that they have great interest.

Figure 6. Students’ interest in classical music, Seattle (2012)
Figure 7. Students' interest in playing in a traditional orchestra, Seattle (2012)

Figure 8. Students' interest in playing in chamber formations of 2-4 musicians, Seattle (2012)

Figure 9. Students' interest in playing in a fiddle music ensemble, Seattle (2012)

Figure 10. Students' interest in learning music aurally, Seattle (2012)
Discussion

The results of this study indicate that string programs in Seattle and possibly other American public school systems in general may need a redesigned curriculum and approach to instruction. Students polled have interest in listening to and playing a broad range of music, and in engaging in a broad range of musical activities, which directly supports ASTA’s new definition of Eclectic Strings. The time may be nearing for string teachers in public school music programs to consider the mechanisms for approaching string instruction in an eclectic manner.

How can string instructors create eclectic music programs that, because of their responsiveness to the motivational needs of students, will improve participation and perhaps even attract new young people to strings while preserving the richness and integrity of the vivid world of traditional string music tradition? How can string instructors aid students in developing a life-long practice of music making?

The area of Motivational Design has been created to address and reinvigorate challenges like this. With a special emphasis on Motivational Design, it is suggested that eclectic augmentation of the curricula string teachers and other music teachers impart to their students may lead to more learning, and foster the desire in students to continue being musicians in all phases of life, from the classroom to “the real world.”
The ARCS Model of Motivational Design.

The main premise of Motivational Design is to make instruction more interesting, thus increasing learning. A particularly cutting-edge model of Interaction-Centered Motivational Design called ARCS (Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction) was developed by researcher John M. Keller of Florida State University. These four dimensions form the skeleton of the model. ARCS is a problem solving tool that aids the designer of any type of instruction in finding solutions to the problems of motivation in learners, most specifically the problems that are an outgrowth of the appeal of the information that they are receiving. The ARCS Model guides the instructional designer in the acquisition of techniques for the development of effective instructional materials, effective instructional style, and overall effective curriculum architecture (Keller, 2006, p. 3).

Dr. Thomas Kopp of Miami University, in Ohio is a leading specialist in Motivational Design, and a proponent of Keller’s ARCS Model. He urges all educators to use all components of ARCS in any endeavor where learning is the goal. In addition to his work as a Professor of Education, Dr. Kopp is heavily involved in the Bluegrass music support organization, The International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA). His work with IBMA has centered on the design of educational opportunities for those that are involved in IBMA (musicians, music educators, and music industry professionals). Kopp has made use of the ARCS strategies in his approach to education in Bluegrass music, and strongly feels that ARCS can be an effective tool for other area of Music Education as well.
Motivation can be defined as “the decision to invest effort in a given task or enterprise.” Therefore, if an educator wishes to create a situation in which learners will, of their own volition, invest effort in an enterprise, the educator must address the four components of Keller’s ARCS Model: Attention (provide moments/ stimuli that spark curiosity), Relevance (supply content and methods that address what learners deeply value), Confidence (furnish cues and information that will help learners truly believe they can be successful), and Satisfaction (do all that can be done to help the learner feel a sense of accomplishment)” (T. Kopp, personal communication, March 5, 2012).

The Components of Keller’s ARCS.

Attention

Sustained attention at specific stimuli is a prerequisite of learning any objective. The challenge is not just in obtaining a student’s attention, but in keeping that student’s attention. A fine balance needs to be struck between stimulation and overstimulation in order to create an optimal learning scenario. The goal is to appeal to the student’s “knowledge-seeking curiosity” (Keller, 1987).

Keller suggests that the usage of inquiry through the creation of creative associations and analogies; the usage of problem solving activities; allowing students to self-select certain activities, projects, and assignments; and the instituting of games and “role-playing” activities will cater to students’ “need to explore” and thus increase sustained attention. (Keller, 1987).
Relevance

When educators write lesson plans, they start out with an objective. That objective will connect to other previously learned objectives with the goal of imparting to the learner insight into the overarching concept that is being taught (for example, learning about trapezoids builds on one’s understanding of the overarching concept of geometry). Educators commonly aim to be transparent with learning objectives, in an effort to promote the feeling of relevance among their students.

One goal of an effective teacher may be for students to feel inherent an “relevance” when they simply “learn” an objective. There are other factors, however, that lend to the sense of relevance. Keller proposes that often it is not just the content being taught that is giving learners a sense of relevance, but the manner in which the content is conveyed. He identifies certain “needs” various types of people have, that when met give them a sense of relevance. Two examples include “the need for affiliation,” where if a learner is given the opportunity to work in a non-threatening cooperative environment with other learners, that person feels that the activity is relevant. The other example is “the need for achievement,” where the learner feels a sense of relevance simply by being given the opportunity to set challenging goals for themselves (Keller, 1987).
Confidence

Learners that feel they can learn a given skill will be more likely to actually put forth the needed effort to learn the skill. Confidence is an extremely important component of ARCS. Keller says that confident people usually do not credit their success at various tasks to ambiguous attributes such as “luck” or “talent,” but actually to hard work and learned ability. Confident people feel that if they work hard at a task, it will eventually be accomplished (Keller, 1987).

Conversely, Keller identifies unconfident people as having more ego involvement, and having more concern with what others think of them. He revealed another problem with those that lack confidence as having a fear of failure.

Fear of failure is often stronger in students than teachers realize. A challenge for teachers in generating or maintaining motivation is to foster the development of confidence despite the competitiveness and external control that often exists in schools (p. 5).

Keller warns educators that if in fact the concept or skill cannot be learned after a reasonable amount of time and effort has been given, the impression should not be given that some level of success is possible. The educator is urged to redesign the instruction, or provide proper counsel to the learner in these instances (Keller, 1987).
Satisfaction

Satisfaction is feeling good about one’s accomplishments. Keller describes “reinforcement theory,” which states that people should feel motivated if there is a defined task and reward, with a defined reinforcement strategy (Keller, 1987).

Keller advises that if a person senses that his/her “sphere of control” is interrupted (for example, the teacher controls when and if a student gets a reward) there is a possibility that the learner may feel resentful – especially if the reward that the teacher controls is something that the student “enjoys for intrinsically satisfying reasons.” Care needs to be taken in the consideration of what to use as a “reward” (Keller, 1987).

There are appropriate ways to use extrinsic rewards in learning situations, and to stimulate intrinsic reward. A challenge is to provide appropriate contingencies without over controlling, and to encourage the development of intrinsic satisfaction (p. 6).

Those that receive intrinsic satisfaction from an activity may be more interested in pursuing that activity on their own in the world outside of the classroom. Eclectic Strings instruction includes the teaching of musical styles that are often played by people outside of the classroom setting. Eclectic Strings fits into Keller’s ARCS.
Eclectic Strings in Public Secondary School Strings Curricula through the Lens of Keller’s ARCS Strategies

The world of Eclectic Strings music is full of opportunities to appeal to students’ attention, desire for relevance, personal confidence, and intrinsic satisfaction. And, considering the augmentation of a comprehensive strings curriculum with Eclectic Strings components, elements designed with ARCS in mind may increase the effectiveness of the design. Utilizing ARCS in Eclectic Strings education/ the string education arena in general may be a relatively easy and intuitive way to foster more learning in string students. Each letter of ARCS is broken down below, this time involving specific Eclectic Strings teaching strategies.

Attention.

Dr. Bret Smith of Central Washington University researched the concept of interest in relation to the string music classroom. He feels that the presence of interest (both personal interest and situational interest) can make a positive impact on learning. “In general, the presence of interest in the task appears to have a positive relationship to memory, attention, comprehension, and deep cognitive engagement” (Smith, 2003).

Learning music that is different than the norm will gain students’ interest and attention. If the music chosen is accessible to the students’ present abilities and limitations, their attention may be more likely to be prolonged. If students are clued into interesting ways that
others make that particular type of music, their “knowledge-seeking curiosity” may lead them to trying music in new ways.

**Scenario** (this could occur as a warm-up activity over the course of a few days or could be spread out over a few weeks):

- Students are taught aurally, by call and response, the fiddle tune “Angeline the Baker” in the key of G Major (because it utilizes mostly the D and G strings, which all orchestral string players have).

- Students are taught aurally, by call and response, a possible bass line and various accompaniment styles over the chord progression (i.e. the “Bluegrass shuffle”/ “Down-puppy-up-puppy” rhythm or chord “chops”).

- Students play the tune together numerous times with various student-chosen combinations of melody and accompaniment.

- Students listen to a recording of a professional fiddler/ band perform “Angeline the Baker” and then identify/ discuss the differences in how the recording sounds versus the way they sound.

- With guidance from the instructor, students incorporate an idea gleaned from what they heard while listening into their “arrangement” of “Angeline the Baker.”
Relevance.

The simple act of participation in secondary level orchestra class may supply students with fulfillment of the “need for affiliation.” Showing students that they can learn in new ways (i.e. aurally), and the act of giving students some independence in how the aurally-learned music is arranged, thus giving them ownership of a “creation” may also fulfill their “need for achievement.”

Students who perceive that the activity of, for example, learning and arranging a fiddle tune is relevant, may then become more interested in what the teacher feels is relevant – i.e. concrete string techniques, such as shifting into third position – especially if the fiddle tune the students are arranging includes the need for shifting into third position.

Scenario

- Students are divided into small chamber groups of varying instrumentation (i.e. each group has an instrumental soprano, alto, and a bass presence).
- Each group is given the task of locating a fiddle tune to learn aurally amongst themselves (by locating a recording of the tune and using the call and response technique previously taught), practicing it, and then arranging it with accompaniment and bass-line in a way they feel will be interesting for their peers, and that incorporates a series of previously learned, and new techniques (the acquisition of which is facilitated by the teacher).
Students perform their arrangements for their classmates in an “open-mic” setting that lasts for one class period.

Confidence.

Socially, adolescent students are very vulnerable, and establishing a supportive environment can be difficult. Well before embarking on anything eclectic, a culture in the classroom must be firmly established, that creates an environment where students are willing to take risks in order to learn.

Ideas for establishing a culture of confidence in the music classroom.

- From day one, students are taught explicit procedures for when they are acting as performers and more importantly as audience members.
- Students are given numerous opportunities to act in both roles – a quick and easy way for doing this is to have individual and group playing tests done in the classroom, amongst peers.
- Singing happens in the string classroom every day.
- From day one, procedures are in place for when and how a student “gets the floor” to talk about the subject at hand in the classroom during class time. It is important for the students to feel as though when they speak appropriately in the classroom, they are understood, and their ideas are thoughtfully considered. The students must also
understand that with many Eclectic Strings styles, they must take ownership, and make their own decisions about “how the song is going to go.”

**Scenario** (this can be an on-going classroom warm-up so that everyone in the class has a chance to contribute)

- Students are taught a one-octave D Mixolydian scale by the teacher, aurally, using call and response.

- Individual students volunteer to teach the class a rhythm with which all students play the D Mixolydian scale. (Teacher intervention may be necessary in this case if the students’ rhythms become too intricate or complicated).

**Scenario**

- Students learn the fiddle tune “Old Joe Clark” in D Mixolydian, aurally, using call and response.

- Accompaniments and bass-lines are developed in the aural manner as described above.

- The orchestra plays an accompaniment and bass-line, while the teacher demonstrates a simple “improvised” solo over the chord progression, utilizing the D Mixolydian scale and some of the discussed rhythms.

- Students can either volunteer to take solos while the orchestra plays accompaniment/bass-line, or students can be again divided into their chamber formations for the
creation of arrangements of “Old Joe Clark,” this time involving “improvised” solos over the chord progression, utilizing the D Mixolydian scale and some of the discussed rhythms (Dabzcynski, Phillips, 1996).

- Another “open-mic” can be scheduled.

**Satisfaction.**

David E. Meyers of The University of Georgia, in his 2008 article in the International Journal of Community Music, “Freeing Music Education from Schooling: Toward a Lifespan Perspective on Music Learning and Teaching,” discusses at length the problem of the inapplicable nature of public school music education as it is currently configured:

...producing successful ensemble performances at schools, while a worthy effort in some respects, does not necessarily instill skills and understandings that empower people to fulfill their musical drives and potential over a lifetime. It is not hard to get people to say enthusiastic and positive things about school music programs, or about the value of music study. According to an *Americans for the Arts* survey, some 90 percent of parents believe the arts are important in preparing students for the future and that they should be part of a well-rounded education. However, what is not clear is whether people perceive tangible links between school arts experiences and the lasting intrinsic values of arts education. As John Goodland (1984) noted two decades ago, there is a frequent dichotomy between the transcendent values ascribed to arts learning and the practice of arts education as it occurs in schools (p. 50).
Students that pursue something on their own volition may be seeking/receiving “intrinsic” satisfaction from the activity. How can string educators promote the same ambition for musical activities (which Myers points out is so sorely lacking) in their students? The scenarios described above are hypothetical examples of scaffolding that could potentially aid string students in the journey of becoming independent musicians, who don’t need the orchestra class period, the conductor’s baton, or even printed notes in order to initiate intrinsically satisfying music making.

How then, does an instructor guide his/her students across the break into the world of “life-long musicianship?” Meaningful ways in which music educators can empower students to strike out on their own in the pursuit of music making for the sake of making music need to be developed. Students need to be shown instances where people in society go out and make music, and then be given a chance to try it too. Students’ outside musical habits need to be shown to the school music instructor and validated. Students need to see the teacher as a musician. The usage of Eclectic Strings styles may be a great first step in this process.

**Ideas -- Setting the stage for the creation of intrinsically satisfying lifelong musicianship as a part of the Public Secondary School String Program.**

- Involvement of the music-making community at large (from inside the school building, to the neighborhood, to the city, to the state, to the country, to the world) is perhaps a key component in guiding students to lifelong musicianship.
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- Involve teachers/administrators that play music (the music faculty included), or want to learn

- Involve parents of students that already play/perform music, or want to learn

- Involve local, national, and international ensembles/bands

- Involve university students and professors

- Involve music industry professionals and people that have other careers in music

- Involve regional and national Music Educators’ associations like ASTA, or the National Association for Music Education (formerly MENC).

- Reach out to regional and national Music Industry associations like The International Foundation for Bluegrass Music, or The Grammy Association.

- Involvement of students in the musical activities of the music-making community at large may assist in bringing them out of the classroom and into the real world of music making.

  - Facilitate opportunities for students to see a variety of performances of stringed instruments being played in eclectic ways

  - Facilitate music making and performance opportunities for students with the music making community at large

Scenario
• After building an arsenal of learned Bluegrass fiddle tunes with knowledge of how to make appropriate accompaniments and bass-lines (“Angeline the Baker” and “Old Joe Clark” are fabulous examples), the phenomenon of “jamming” is described in detail to the students.

• “Jamming” is practiced as a classroom activity

• The teacher invites numerous community Bluegrass musicians (adults and children) to attend a class period, or a scheduled after-school hours “jam” where students are interacting seamlessly with the community musicians in a supportive/safe environment.

  o Of special note – Bluegrass musicians play an array of different instruments that are usually not taught in public schools including guitar, mandolin, banjo, resophonic guitar (dobro), plucked upright bass, and singing – which may become extremely interesting and appealing to students once they see the instruments utilized in an authentic manner.

  **Scenario**

• After practicing “jamming” *inside* the safe confines of the school building, an organized “outing” to a community Bluegrass jam is organized by the instructor (a lot of Bluegrass communities host monthly or quarterly jams in various types of public locations such as grange halls, libraries, or churches on evenings or weekend days, and the organizers of
these regularly scheduled events will likely be willing to be team players in an endeavor like this).

- Students that attend are given the task of filling out a “punch card” with various action items on it that will ensure that they are each participating properly in the “jamming” protocol. “Punches” are given by “jammers” or the teacher as the student is observed executing each task. Students turn in completed “punch cards” before they leave the “jam,” or at school the next school day.

- The instructor facilitates a discussion of the students’ impression of the outing.

- The instructor facilitates future events/ outings that are similar in nature, and provides easily accessible information for students and families who wish to seek out these experiences themselves.

  **Scenario**

- The instructor facilitates (and possibly instructs) an after school Eclectic Strings ensemble that not only participates regularly in the practice of “jamming,” but also stages performances of Eclectic Strings music with and without community member participation.
A note about what is considered “Classical Music” and approaching it in an Eclectic Manner

The “Classical” masterworks of string literature, more appropriately termed “Western Art Music,” are for many people astoundingly beautiful, intricately complex, and moving. Western Art Music is as a key element in a comprehensive strings curriculum.

Above are ideas for including non-typical musical styles into the typical public school strings program. The reader is also urged to consider the word “eclectic” as it relates to Western Art Music. An open mind should be kept when applying the word “eclectic” to Western Art Music. It is not necessarily suggested that string teachers need to start adding rock drum beats to Beethoven music, or that in order for Western Art Music to be “eclectic,” it must be performed on electric instruments. There are a multiple ways of “thinking outside of the box” when considering the way Western Art Music can and should be treated in a string curriculum.

Ways to Eclectically Innovate the Teaching of Western Art Music.

• Take in performances by differing configurations of professional performers of Western Art Music

• Use a different form of ensemble directing.
  o Obtain students’ attention by conducting without a baton.
• Have the students learn / perform the piece using chamber technique, and no conductor. The completion of an activity like this includes all ARCS components.

• Utilize a guest conductor.

• Perform Western Art Music with a guest artist or a guest ensemble.

• Perform Western Art Music in hip (relevant) non-traditional venues (i.e. a coffee shop, a rock music festival, or an all-ages night club).

• Team teach Western Art Music with the school’s band instructor where students perform as a “full orchestra,” incorporating the entire concert band, and strings.

• Sight-read different types of Western Art Music with the orchestra often, and guide students in how to obtain resources for doing this themselves at home, or with friends/family for intrinsic satisfaction.

• Facilitate the making of Western Art Music for fun and for casual performance in chamber formations among students. This is like “Classical Jamming.” The “open-mic” scenario would work well in this instance.

  • This is also a great way to involve the community at-large

• Rehearse and perform relevant Art Music written by contemporary composers – maybe even local composers that can interact with the students as they are learning the music.
• Delve into the world of Music Education and boost confidence with orchestra participants by teaching about conducting/directing and then utilizing a student conductor for the rehearsal/performance of Western Art Music.

Conclusion

The music education world is progressing into this young century, and there is no better time to adopt a more inclusive view of string music education. String Educators have so much to gain by considering Eclectic Strings instruction and how it can innovate string programs nationwide. Eclectic forms of music are becoming more and more accepted in societies of all kinds, and it is becoming evident that there is nothing (musical, that is) to hide. If string music is to perpetuate, those that are currently learning how to play stringed instruments need to catch the spark that will keep the torch lit for the future. People that choose the practice of string music as a lifelong endeavor will be the carriers of that torch, and Eclectic Strings may be the match that lights the fire.
References


3. Bratt, R. (2002). Transcription from International Association for Jazz Education National Conference Clinic; Panel: Post Secondary Education for Improvising Strings; January 11, 1:00 pm, 2002 in Long Beach, CA. Moderator, Dr. Renata Bratt.


