

SUPPORT ED

A MAGAZINE FOR INSTRUMENTAL INSTRUCTORS

2018 VOLUME 2



FIND
WORK-LIFE
BALANCE

UNLOCKING
STUDENT

CREATIVITY

WITH CHRISTIAN HOWES

ROMA, TEXAS
**INGENIOUS
TEAMWORK**



THE POWER
OF SOUND
REINFORCEMENT





SupportED 2018 Volume 2

6 A Balancing Act

Try these six tips to manage your work-life balance and become more productive.

8 Christian Howes

A classically trained violinist breaks free of genre conventions to practice and teach creativity.

14 Roma: Small and Mighty

A band program in a Texas border town performs and excels in the same league as other competitive ensembles.

18 Sound Advice

Adding sound reinforcement in a strategic way gives bands a competitive edge.

Industry News	2
Yamaha News	4
Education Insider	12
Artist Events	20

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Yamaha SupportED

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INSPIRING, EMPOWERING AND EQUIPPING MUSIC EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS THROUGH FINELY CRAFTED INSTRUMENTS, ACCESS TO LIFE-CHANGING MUSICAL EVENTS AND THE SHARING OF GIFTED ARTISTS

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Music Educator,




Sometimes I ask myself, “Am I making a difference? Am I contributing at the highest and most relevant level possible?”

During these times of doubt, I usually get reassurances that I am exactly where I should be. In July, we received word that Yamaha SupportED magazine was recognized once again by a Content Marketing Award from the Content Marketing Institute — this time for Best Content Marketing Program in Education. The magazine also placed as a finalist for Best Print Publication, Editorial. The impact of SupportED was further validated at the Texas Bandmasters Association (TBA) conference where several band and orchestra directors told me how specific articles in the magazine helped them!

My inner voice returned and asked, “How can we improve SupportED to help more music directors? How can we reach more people? What can I improve in myself to raise the bar?”

The answer was right in front of me. Earlier that day, I had attended a lecture by music education legend Richard Floyd. He told the packed house (lovingly and gently but with clear intent) that the root cause of problems with music programs often rested with the conductor. He challenged directors to attend a conducting workshop and seek professional growth at every opportunity. We expect our students to improve. Shouldn't we, as teachers, strive to improve, too?

I implore you to take Mr. Floyd's recommendation to heart. I challenge you to look in your personal/musical mirror and determine exactly how you will improve your musical skills. Will you take conducting lessons? Or plan a faculty recital for your students? Or subscribe to two or three new blogs or podcasts on professional improvement?

I respectfully challenge you to go outside your comfort zone and raise your self-expectations in order to inspire your students! Let me know how you took on this challenge. Email me at jwittmann@yamaha.com. 

Musically Yours,

John Wittmann

John Wittmann
Director, Artist Relations and Education

Anthony McGill, principal clarinet of the New York Philharmonic, opens the Harmony Program concert accompanied by the Harmony Program Gala Youth Orchestra.

PHOTO COURTESY OF HARMONY PROGRAM

N.Y.'S HARMONY PROGRAM RAISES \$800,000


Students of the Harmony Program performed with top artists at a gala concert that raised \$800,000 to expand the program, which provides music education in underserved communities of New York City and Long Island. Guest stars at the April concert included GRAMMY®-winning violinist Joshua Bell and New York Philharmonic principal clarinet Anthony McGill, cuatrista Jorge Glem, string trio Time for Three and soprano Larisa Martínez.

"It wasn't just about featuring the performances of these great artists but [also] having them perform alongside these kids," says Anne Fitzgibbon, founder and executive director of the Harmony Program.

The Harmony Program offers up to 12 hours each week of intense instruction that includes afterschool music lessons, Saturday ensembles and summer camps for third through eighth graders in public schools and community-based organizations. It trains all of its

teachers — including those with graduate music education degrees — prior to placement and works with site hosts to design a specific music program.

As a result of the recent fundraiser, the organization hopes to expand significantly from 12 to 20 sites and from 400 to 500 students through 2019.

The Harmony Program originated within the New York City mayor's office as a public service project in 2003 and became incorporated as a not-for-profit in 2004. It celebrates its 10th year of integrating Venezuela's El Sistema approach of "using music as an agent of social change," Fitzgibbon says. "The [music ensemble] is a microcosm within which students are discovering skills like ... confronting and overcoming challenges and how to listen to ... and talk to each other. All of these things make good musicians and good citizens." 

STUBHUB PLEDGES \$3 MILLION TO THE MR. HOLLAND'S OPUS FOUNDATION

In the next phase of StubHub's Next Stage program, the ticket marketplace's social good foundation has committed to donate \$3 million in musical instruments during the next three years through The Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation. Since the collaboration began in 2014, more than \$2.1 million in instruments have been donated to 50 schools nationwide.

"It was very clear from the beginning that StubHub was interested in getting to know music education and supporting it," says Tricia Steel, program director at The Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation. "It's not just a marketing plan. They really care about the impact on students."

In addition to financial support, StubHub hosted a series of benefit concerts and in-school pop


StubHub

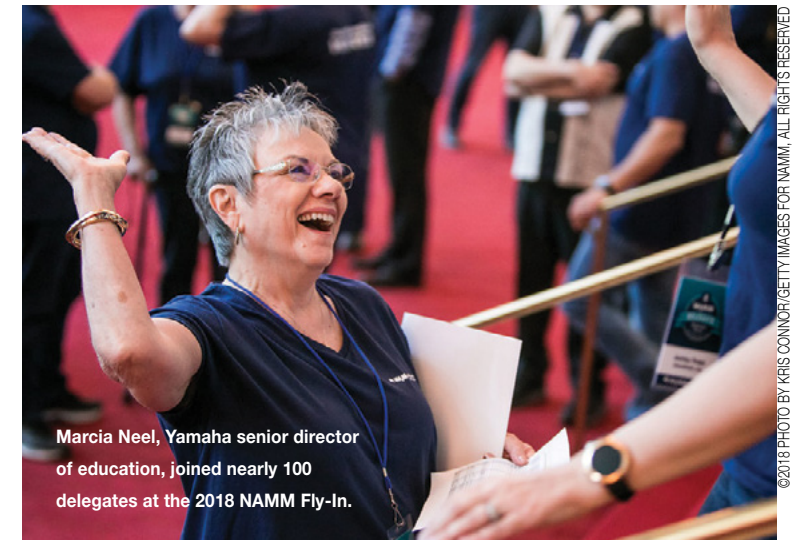
NEXT
STAGE

concerts involving artists such as Bebe Rexha and Portugal. The Man. To launch the new campaign, Jukebox the Ghost took a break from the 2018 South by Southwest Music Festival to perform for Bedichek Middle School in

Austin, Texas, one of the recipients of the grant. Last but not least, StubHub operates a text-to-donate line in support of The Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation.

"StubHub wants to give back beyond a check, [including] being able to give back from an artist relations standpoint to celebrate these students," says Jessica Erskine, head of U.S. consumer communications at StubHub.

Coming up, StubHub plans to incorporate new surprise elements by inviting artists into the classrooms of select grant recipients. "Our intention is to bring talent into these surprises and use the overall experience to help elevate the conversation about the importance of music education, to shed some light on the importance of music education," Erskine says. 



Marcia Neel, Yamaha senior director of education, joined nearly 100 delegates at the 2018 NAMM Fly-In.

2018 NAMM D.C. FLY-IN

Actor Erich Bergen, rapper J. Dash and former New York Yankee Bernie Williams joined about 100 delegates from nearly every state to talk up music education with national lawmakers at the annual NAMM Music Education Advocacy D.C. Fly-In in May 2018. John Wittmann, director of artist relations and education, and Marcia Neel, senior director of education, represented Yamaha Corporation of America.

During the event, delegates received training on the details of the laws affecting music education and then met with their respective state representatives to discuss the issues.


"Regardless of your politics, being in Washington, D.C., and having an opportunity to discuss the importance of music education with our elected representatives is an honor," Wittmann says. "We were well prepared for our meetings and engaged in relevant and meaningful conversations about ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) and the funding needed to secure it for future generations."

According to Neel, the whole point of these visits is to carry a message to our representatives that music is a part of ESSA. "We want [ESSA] to be adequately funded during the Congressional appropriations budget. We have a really clear voice that's unified, and we all carry the same message to our people," she says.

Congressman Mark Amodei from Neel's home state of Nevada asked her to help him research which school districts in the state had applied for music funding and whether they have received the money. "The more you go, the more you realize that your [representatives in] Congress want to hear from you," Neel says.

At an evening reception, NAMM honored Oregon Representative Suzanne Bonamici, who played a major role in getting ESSA passed in 2015, with its SupportMusic Champion Award.

Many of the participants also joined together to volunteer at the D.C. Public Schools Music Festival held at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

The Fly-In is open to all members of NAMM. Information and registration for the 2019 Fly-In event, which will be May 20-23, can be found online at www.namm.org/issues-and-advocacy/fly-in. 



The winners of the 2018 Yamaha Young Performing Artists Competition attended a celebration weekend and performed with special guest, trumpeter Allen Vizzutti.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MUSIC FOR ALL AND JOLIESCH ENTERPRISES

30th Annual Yamaha Young Performing Artists CELEBRATION WEEKEND

BY JALISSA GASCHO

For 30 years, the annual Yamaha Young Performing Artists (YYPA) Program has recognized extraordinarily talented young musicians, ready to take the next step in their career development. The 2018 YYPA Celebration Weekend, which took place in June at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana, featured rehearsals, introspective sessions, in-depth conversations about career development and much more for this year's winners.

The weekend culminated with the annual YYPA Concert, where 10 of the 2018 winners received a standing ovation from approximately 2,000 attendees and educators at the Music for All Summer Symposium. The highlight of the concert

was a special solo performance by 2018 Featured Yamaha Performing Artist and international trumpet virtuoso Allen Vizzutti. Yamaha Performing Group Boston Brass played a special fanfare with Vizzutti to kick off the milestone concert.

"[The performance] was really a once-in-a-lifetime experience," says 2018 violin winner Joshua Brown. "I've never felt anything like that. Finishing my last bowing, [I heard] everyone just screaming. I didn't know if I'd ever get to experience something like that as a classical musician. This has been an unforgettable experience."

Joseph Tkach, 2018 trumpet winner, says the YYPA honor and experience makes him feel ready to face the professional

world both in terms of music-making and communication skills.

"What sets this competition apart from others is that Yamaha develops long-lasting relationships with the winners and continues to foster growth throughout their careers," says John Wittmann, director of artist relations and education for Yamaha's Band and Orchestral Division. "Yamaha's support for this program for three decades points to our strong commitment to education and nurturing young musicians and their development."

To learn about the legacy of the program and to find information about the 2019 YYPA Competition, visit 4wrd.it/YYPA2019 or email jgascho@yamaha.com.



Yamaha Continues Support of the NATIONAL STRING PROJECT CONSORTIUM

BY CHRISTINE NGEO KATZMAN

For the fifth year in a row, Yamaha Corporation of America is providing support to the National String Project Consortium (NSPC), which has a dual purpose of "training tomorrow's string educators while providing accessible string instruction opportunities for youth and adults."

"We are here to support music educators and everything that they do," says Ken Dattmore, marketing manager for orchestral strings at Yamaha. "NSPC helps them become better educators while they're still in school learning. Plus it gives the participating community a lift because now there's a music program where there probably would not have been."

In 2002, the United States faced a growing shortage of string teachers with 47 percent of surveyed schools reporting open string positions. Since then, the NSPC has worked to mitigate that problem. Through NSPC, string education majors receive

hands-on teaching opportunities as early as their freshmen year while receiving mentorship from master teachers involved with participating universities.

Launched in 1998 as a program of the American String Teachers Association (ASTA), the NSPC became an independent not-for-profit in 2006. Today, 83 percent of consortium alumni continue to teach strings in schools.

"I'm a product of that," says Elizabeth Reed, executive director of the NSPC. "If I hadn't had the opportunity to teach with the string project, I wouldn't have been as well prepared on how to teach."

Yamaha's grant helps the participating string majors attend the annual ASTA conference in March. "Yamaha's support has been really vital because it allows us to provide professional development opportunities for our teachers," Reed says.

Newly Signed Yamaha Artists

FLUTE

- **Olivia Staton** – second flute with The Philadelphia Orchestra

CLARINET

- **John Warren** – associate professor of clarinet at Kennesaw (Georgia) State University and clarinetist with The Atlanta Opera

TRUMPET

- **Dr. Timothy Altman** – principal trumpet for the Fayetteville (North Carolina) Symphony Orchestra and chair of the music department, director of bands and professor at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke

TUBA

- **Aaron Tindall** – associate professor of tuba and euphonium at the University of Miami Frost School of Music, principal tubist for the Sarasota (Florida) Orchestra and principal tubist and faculty at the Eastern Music Festival (North Carolina)

A BALANCING ACT



A high school music educator shares six tips for managing work-life balance and being more productive.

BY GLEN SCHNEIDER

The job of a music teacher can be overwhelming with so many activities to juggle. As we begin a new school year, it's the ideal time to reevaluate your responsibilities and make a plan for workload management, so you can be at the top of your game professionally while maintaining your personal life.

I teach winds and percussion full-time at Metea Valley (Illinois)

High School, including directing the bands and symphony orchestra. I also teach graduate-level professional development classes at VanderCook College of Music in Chicago. I perform professionally as a percussionist, and I play music at my church. I've been married for 15 years and have five children, ages 2 to 11. I also finished my first marathon this year!

"I never take home paperwork – ever."
If you leave things at school, you will become more efficient while you are at work.

I volunteer as much as I can, having served on the board of two not-for-profit music organizations. I am an educational consultant for the Music Achievement Council and a representative-elect for the Illinois Music Education Association.

People constantly ask me, "Glen, how do you do it all? With five kids, high school band, part-time college, how do you find time for all of that?"

I usually reply, "I'm sure you are just as busy as me!"

In the 18 years that I've been teaching, I have figured out that the secret to work-life balance is planning. Plan your tasks, workload and personal time, and stick to it. Here are some processes I use, so I don't feel overwhelmed.

- 1 Sort Paperwork**
Paperwork drove me crazy because I tried to get through it all the same day. I would get frustrated because I couldn't get it all done. Now I use a desk pile system called the "7-7-7." Gather all of your assignments, bills and receipts, printed out emails and lesson-planning documents. Then separate them into three piles.
- The first pile is work that must be done in the next 7 minutes. Realistically, I get through this pile during my 45-minute planning period. The items in the second pile must be addressed in 7 hours. The third pile are the things that must be done in 7 days. Rebalance these piles daily, so that you always know what must be done and when.
- I never take home paperwork — ever. If you leave things at school, you will become more efficient while you are at work.

- 2 Sort Email**
Another way to simplify your life is to use an email management system called "zero inbox." Once you open a message from your inbox, you reply immediately, or you put it in the trash or an action folder. Realistically, my inbox will look great for a few weeks, and then I need to spend 20 minutes cleaning it up again.




ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Glen Schneider is a music educator at Metea Valley High School in Aurora, Illinois, where more than 900 students are enrolled in the music department. In addition to teaching a variety of wind and percussion classes, Schneider directs the marching band, jazz orchestra and symphony orchestra, and he is the music department professional learning community leader. He is also an adjunct instructor at VanderCook College of Music and has been involved with the Music Achievement Council since 2008.

- 3 Enjoy and Share**
I used to think that once I mastered all of my work-related stuff, then I could solely focus on the other things in my life. Wrong!
- By planning time for personal activities, I found that sharing those experiences helps me explain ideas from different perspectives, enriching class discussions and student relationships. For example, I told my students about my marathon training, and they were a huge motivation throughout the process.

- 4 Evaluate Priorities**
I realistically can't do everything, so I have had to give things up from time to time. When I was serving as a board member for two not-for-profits, I realized that I only had time for one. I decided to give up the position of website designer for ARTSpeaks because it was not as purposeful as the position I had with the Alyssa Alvin Foundation for Hope, where I serve as an educational consultant.

- 5 Plan Ahead with Co-Workers**
The music department staff at Metea Valley doesn't have planning time built into our daily schedule. So we decided to meet every week for 30 minutes at 6:45 a.m., which has saved us many hours of chaos. We actually solve a lot of problems during these weekly meetings because we know who is doing what and who is leading particular events or projects.

- 6 Develop Yourself**
The more classes, seminars and conventions I attend or books that I read, the more motivated I am. Consider starting a master's degree or taking a professional development class at a nearby college or online. Online classes are convenient because there is no travel time, and you can connect with teachers and classmates across your state and the entire country.
- In my continuing education, I have met others with whom I share ideas, successes and failures in the classroom and in my life. This networking is so important! 

CLASSICALLY TRAINED CREATIVELY INSPIRED

VIOLINIST CHRISTIAN HOWES BREAKS FREE OF GENRE CONVENTIONS TO PRACTICE AND TEACH CREATIVITY.

BY SAVY LEISER

At 15 years old, violin virtuoso Christian Howes found himself envious of his school's last-chair second violinist. Howes recalls how that classmate was composing and recording his own original songs. "He couldn't play his way out of a paper bag, [but] ... he was writing his own songs," Howes recalls. "I remember feeling a pang of jealousy because I thought, 'He's creating something of his own.' ... The thing about creativity is [that] it's the ultimate equalizer."

Howes had been classically trained throughout his childhood, beginning in the Suzuki program at age 5, and he had spent the past few summers in conservatory programs. But the admiration that Howes felt for his classmate inspired him to step out of his comfort zone and try something new — forming a rock band with his friends. "I started to discover things about music that I hadn't discovered as a classical violinist," he says.

Now Howes is a world-renowned performer and educator, and he is recognized for his willingness to step outside of traditional string genres. After serving as an associate professor at Berklee College of Music in Boston for three years, Howes founded Creative Strings Academy in 2011, a not-for-profit focused on encouraging

creativity and originality within strings education.

Through Creative Strings Academy, Howes provides a variety of educational services — online lessons, instructional YouTube videos and podcasts, and hands-on experiences such as school visits. He also runs workshops that have been held in Ohio, Texas and North Carolina as well as in Toronto, London and Lausanne, Switzerland. Howes' online academy has reached at least 50,000 string players; his YouTube videos have exceeded a million views; and approximately 150 adult and youth musicians participate in the Creative Strings Academy workshop and festival in Columbus, Ohio — in its 16th year — each summer.

OPENING THE HOOD OF MUSIC

In music just as with any other creative arts, a basic understanding of the art form's construction is needed in order to be creative, Howes says. "We can't be creative with information we don't have already," he states.

For musicians to bring their own perspectives to a piece, they must first study its inner workings. "This is opening the hood of music," Howes says. "Imagine a



SHARE MUSIC IN THE WORLD

Classical musicians [tend to] hide [their work] in a practice room, like it's private. No!

IT'S ABOUT COMMUNITY.



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racecar driver who goes fast, but they open up the hood and don't know what's there."

In Creative Strings Academy's school residency program, Howes encourages students of all ages — from elementary school to high school and college, as well as private studios — to use this "opening-the-hood" approach. How? By taking apart a constructed piece of music, examining its individual parts and understanding how those parts fit into the song as a whole.

"If you think about a classical string player, [he or she is] focused on playing a melodic line as crisply and beautifully as possible, not paying attention to the broader view of all these parts," he says. "It's [about] presenting that [information] in a way that can be useful for classical string players. That can relate to the internalization of harmonic information, rhythmic information, the groove, the different parts of each song."

Once students have knowledge of music theory and an understanding of how different songs are arranged, they can start to formulate their own ideas about music. "If you tried to write a piece in Spanish, that might

Artist in Residence: Violinist Christian Howes instructs orchestra students at the 2018 Music for All Summer Symposium.

be difficult if you don't know Spanish," Howes says. "We [give students] clear choices that conform to the knowledge they're already comfortable with. You're going to be creative within the parameters given to you — which is sort of an irony to creativity. There's so much freedom; it's paralyzing."

COMPOSING CREATIVITY

One of Howes' goals with Creative Strings Academy is to empower students by giving them an outlet to develop their own musical style. He believes that composition, arranging and improvisation should be part of every musician's education.

"When you teach kids to compose, you show them they are creative," Howes says. "A lot of classical musicians have this belief [that] 'I'm not creative; I can't do that.' To give kids [the opportunity to say], 'I made that,' is really empowering."

Music educators value Howes' focus on composition and improvisation. Students from Blue Valley Unified School District

in Overland Park, Kansas, participated in Howes' workshop during one of his school residencies. "[Improvisation is] part of the 'whole person' in learning music," said Kathleen McCullough, retired Blue Valley orchestra director. "If you teach music, you should be teaching all music, not just one corner of it."

Having the ability to showcase creativity also removes the hierarchy that often comes with a competitive musical ensemble. "In the world of first [chair], second, third, fourth, last, we want to show [students] that even if [they are] not first chair, they can make just as big a splash by having the courage to create and follow whatever their voice is," Howes says.

As an innovator in his field, Howes believes in sharing his knowledge with a range of people. Consequently, his extensive online platform covers topics from instructional videos about how to play blues scales on a violin to advice on how to run your musical career like a business. "The willingness to

THREE PILLARS OF PEDAGOGY

Renowned strings performer and educator Christian Howes presents his pedagogy in what he calls "a trifecta of pillars" in order to expand students' understanding of music.

1 Break Down the Music: Howes advises that students learn not only their own parts but also examine how those parts fit into the whole. "What's happening in the melodies?" he asks. "What's happening in the countermelodies?"

2 Nurture Creative Abilities: When Howes does a school residency, he teaches students about composition, arranging and improvisation. "[Teach] them how to nurture their natural creative abilities in a musical context," he says.

3 Expose Students to Different Styles: Instructors should expose students to a variety of musical traditions. Connecting different cultures was one of Howes' main goals when he started Creative Strings Academy. "The purpose is to help people feel more connected, to change the music education community at large, to make it more integrated," he says.



PHOTO BY ROB SHANAHAN FOR Yamaha Corporation of America

Education at Your Fingertips: Founded in 2011, the Creative Strings Academy offers live workshops as well as online lessons.



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Master Improviser: Christian Howes teaches composition and improvisation to classical string players, encouraging them to come out of their comfort zone.

share [my] creativity was a big motivation for me," Howes says. "As a teacher, I'm trying to model that for other people as well."

By putting his art out there for millions of people to see, Howes is hoping to debunk the myth that musicians — and artists at large — should be private about their work. "Classical musicians [tend to] hide it in a practice room, like it's private," Howes says. "No! Share music in the world. It's about community. Play music with your family; play on street corners; [play] at church."

TRANSCENDING GENRE


Since his high school rock band days, Howes has embodied the importance of breaking free from the confines of musical genre. "There were guys in the rock band who'd had one or two lessons," Howes says. "I'd had a thousand, but they seemed to know things about music that I was totally unfamiliar with. Thinking about the chord progression, learning a different rhythmic vocabulary ... I started thinking about improvising."

When he started college at The Ohio State University, he began to play bass in a jazz band and soon joined a blues band as well. He spent much of his early 20s playing gospel music in church services, which led to his appreciation for the influence of many

different cultures on music as a whole. "Whether you're talking about Appalachian music, Latin music, jazz, punk, gospel, blues, a lot of it had to do with the African-American influence on Americana music," Howes says. "It was playing in gospel church services every Sunday [that] had an impact on me."

Howes believes that for musicians to develop their own voice, they should first listen to as many genres and musical traditions as they can. "It's [about] having a more multicultural perspective," he says. "There are all these beautiful traditions out there, and we should go deeper to understand them."

In his high school and college days, Howes would experience a musical awakening whenever he saw live performances of different genres. "I was hungry to grow," he says. "When I'd have that encounter, it would make me realize [that] there's so much more I want to learn about this aspect of music or this vehicle of expression."

Howes feels that his experiences playing in a variety of styles and genres has made him the successful musician he is today. "I collected these different toolkits and perspectives," he says. "Earlier on, [I] was trying to fit into these traditions, from rock 'n' roll to Latin or jazz. But as I matured, I realized that the real goal is to find my own sound." 

INFUSE JOY IN ELEMENTARY MUSIC CLASSROOMS

CREATE A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT WITH YOUNG STUDENTS BY FOCUSING ON PLAY AND MOVEMENT.

What do the following people have in common: Condoleeza Rice, former U.S. Secretary of State; Jerry Gay, an engineer who helped build the Hubble telescope; Alan Greenspan, former Federal Reserve Chairman; Richard Carranza, chancellor of the New York City Public Schools; and Steven Spielberg, renowned American filmmaker? Their successful careers were shaped in part by their experiences as young music-makers.

In an article titled “Seeing the World through the Eyes of a Child,” Lisa Rosas, an entrepreneur and inventor, asks, “Have you ever noticed at a certain age we stop playing and become more attuned to responsibilities and to things that need to get done?”

Rosas then reflects upon how, when watching children in their natural settings, we observe “authenticity, vulnerability, laughter, tears and pure joy.”

As music educators, we need to bring that authenticity and sense of pure joy into our music classrooms starting in elementary school.

A NURTURING ENVIRONMENT

When new students venture into music classrooms for the first time, they are filled with excitement and fear — they are excited to try something new and fearful of not being successful. How do we capture their youthful enthusiasm and allay their fears?



By creating an environment that nurtures curiosity and creativity.

For example, when a “wrong” note is played, you need to figure out why it was played incorrectly and how you can help the student play the note as it was written. Do not put the student on the defensive by asking, “Why did or didn’t you do ...?”

Instead, be positive and nurturing and say, “Let’s try X to see if we can improve Y.”


For the most part, young children exist in the present, and their lives are about movement and play. Movement is a part of everyday life, and those of us who have children know that static activity does not lend itself to play. Music programs live in the present, and music-making is definitely not a static activity.

DON'T FORGET ABOUT YOURSELF

Whether you’ve been teaching for less than one year or more than 20 years, be sure

to nurture yourself as well. Life coach and best-selling author Lauren Mackler defines seven ways to be nurturing to yourself.

1. Send loving messages to yourself, which include giving yourself a pat on the back when deserved and being supportive of yourself as needed.
2. Take good care of yourself.
3. Do nice things for yourself.
4. Set healthy boundaries with others.
5. Become your own advocate.
6. Believe in yourself.
7. Be compassionate with yourself.

Music teachers know how influential and life-changing music can be. It helps us live more from the heart. We smile. We enjoy relationships. We are passionate and enlightened. We let go. We don’t suppress our emotions, and we express ourselves freely. In short, we view the world through the eyes of a child. And when we do that, we are already on the road to success. 



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marcia Neel is senior director of education for the Yamaha Corporation of America Band and Orchestral Division. She is president of Music Education Consultants Inc., and serves as the education advisor to the Music Achievement Council. In this capacity, she presents sessions with practical success strategies for music educators at state music conferences, district in-service days and dealer workshops. To inquire about hosting or attending a session in your area, contact marcia@musiceducationconsultants.net.

The Yamaha Master Educator Program

A group of exceptional master educators has come together who can inspire teachers and students to realize their full potential.

Workshops offered by the Master Educators are designed for middle school through collegiate levels and include topics such as: Student Leadership, Habits of Successful Middle School Band Directors, Design Clinics for Marching Band, Conducting Pedagogy and Strategies for Connecting Movement Vocabulary and Musical Intention, Advocacy and Parent Involvement & Student Retention.



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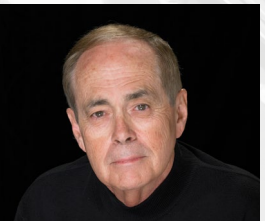
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Anthony Maiello
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George Mason University



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Clinician, Educator, Consultant
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Dr. Kevin Sedatole
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Michigan State University



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ROMA: SMALL & MIGHTY



A BAND PROGRAM IN A TEXAS BORDER TOWN PERFORMS — AND EXCELS — IN THE SAME LEAGUE AS LARGER COMPETITIVE ENSEMBLES ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

BY ELIZABETH GELI

In a sprawling state like Texas, it might be easy to overlook the small town of Roma that sits along the Rio Grande on the U.S.-Mexico border. But that would be a mistake because the Roma Independent

School District has cultivated a unique and successful music program thanks in large part to Dena Laurel, who came to Roma High School as an assistant band director in 1997 and then moved up to become

director of bands in 2008. Although the majority of Roma High School families struggle financially, the 220 students in the band thrive on hard work, organizational ingenuity and community support.

Under Laurel's leadership and tutelage, Roma High School has performed at several prestigious competitions. In 2017, the band played at Texas' University Interscholastic League (UIL) State Marching Band Contest at San Antonio's Alamodome, where it placed 11th in 5A competition. At the Bands of America (BOA) Super Regional, Roma High

School took home the Class AA championship in 2016.

In concert band, Roma has had even greater success. At the Texas Music Educators Association (TMEA) Honor Band competition, the high school band placed seventh in 2018, and Roma Middle School placed second in 2016.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF ROMA HIGH SCHOOL BAND

Defying the Odds: Though students at Roma High School face poverty and other hardships, they excel in band due in part to the structure set by director of bands Dena Laurel.

DAILY INSTRUCTION, LIFELONG MENTORSHIP

A focus on instrumental technique with more personalized instruction helps the Roma band program defy expectation. With the next closest city and colleges about an hour or more away, private lessons are simply not an option, even if the students could afford it. That's why Roma's band department turns its extremely rural location into its biggest asset.

Between the high school and two middle schools, Roma has a team of 12 band instructors, each specializing in one instrument. Though they each have a primary campus, they drive to all three schools every day to teach their specific students.

"When I was teaching French horn, it was almost [like] a college setting, like I was running a studio," Laurel says.

In middle school, students focus almost completely on working with their teachers by section, with the band as a whole coming together only when preparing for a competition or performance.

“ I THINK [THE ROMA BAND IS] ONE OF THE BEST PROGRAMS IN TEXAS BECAUSE IT PROVIDES A TEACHER FOR EACH INSTRUMENT, WHICH IS NOT VERY COMMON. ”

“I think it’s one of the best programs in Texas because it provides a teacher for each instrument, which is not very common,” says Orlando Medrano, a Roma alumnus who returned to the program as a tech and is now a professional musician. “The students gain more knowledge and become more competent in playing.”

Beyond the technical advantages, having the same teacher for six years results in lifelong mentorship. “We have a really special bond with the students, and we get to watch them grow,” says Corey Graves, Roma Middle School head director and district euphonium teacher.

Currently, nearly 50 percent of the incoming sixth graders join the band program each year. Laurel and her team focus on recruitment with high-energy classroom visits and band performances for fifth graders. “We have all the teachers leave some time in the schedule for recruitment,” Laurel says. “There are so many music programs here that if we didn’t, [all the students would] gravitate to the mariachi or Mexican Banda programs just because they’ve grown up in that culture. They don’t really know what a concert band is or [what it] does.”

MOTIVATED, NOT DEFLATED

The lack of funds can sometimes be discouraging, but Laurel and her team constantly reinforce a “never-give-up” outlook that brings the community together. Whether with chocolate bars, catalogs or football game concessions, the students and parents constantly fundraise because band fees would be impossible to collect.

“I have parents and band moms who



Marching Forth: The Roma High School Band excels in both Texas University Interscholastic League and Bands of America regional competitions.

come in after school and make tons of spaghetti because they know that after practice, there’s not going to be any food at home for the kids,” Laurel says. “Though all the families are poor, those that have a little more money give as much as they can.”

When competing in UIL or BOA, Roma comes into contact with bands of very

different sizes and situations, some with electronics, props or new instruments. “The amount of money on the field [at these competitions] is extremely intimidating, but I always tell everyone it doesn’t matter — it’s about playing better and marching cleaner,” Laurel says.

As a student, Medrano says that he

and his bandmates viewed the exposure to other programs as motivation. “It’s something that we looked forward to seeing every time we went to a competition because although we couldn’t afford all those things, we worked just as hard as them,” Medrano says. “We matched their level of musicianship and did the best we could on the marching field even though we didn’t have what they could provide. A lot of times those bands would have higher scores than us, but it never phased us, and we just worked even harder.”

ENGAGING EXPERTS

According to Medrano and Graves, Laurel’s willingness to delegate and ask for help is one of her greatest strengths. “She is an outstanding leader; she has a big program that requires a high level of commitment and organization,” Graves says. “She delegates responsibilities to those who are really great at what they do, and that’s what helps the program.”

Laurel’s dedication is noted and appreciated by more than those associated with the band program. In 2018, she was recognized as the district’s Secondary Teacher of the Year.

Roma often brings in clinicians or outside help to work with the band. “[Laurel] brought a lot of people who were experts in the field of marching band or music-making and was never afraid to let other people teach her band,” Medrano says. “She ... understands when something needs to be done that she can’t do. That’s something that I learned from her.”

Because Laurel studied music performance and not education in college, she says that asking for help and guidance was a saving grace in her early years as a band director, and she continues to consult others. “Don’t be afraid to reach out,” she says. “The worst thing that can happen is that they say, ‘no.’ [But] they’re usually excited to help and excited for your program to do well because that’s another great program that they’re affiliated with.”

SUPER SCHEDULING

Dena Laurel, head director of the Roma (Texas) High School band, employs a very precise scheduling and pacing strategy to maximize instructional time with her students. Here is a glimpse of her planning technique.



Individualized Instruction: Dena Laurel is director of bands for Roma High School. The district’s team of 12 band instructors specialize in different instruments; Laurel is the French horn instructor.

1. Start at the End: Figure out where you want the program to be at the end of the season and work backward, using a calendar and lesson plans. “Work smarter, not harder,” Laurel says.

2. Plan for Setbacks: To allow for weather, emergencies or other challenges, choose a date to have your show (or concert pieces) completed at least one to two weeks earlier than the end of your season. “You can always cancel practice, but you can’t add more,” Laurel says.

3. Make Every Second Count: Laurel likes to plan every second of rehearsal, so that there’s not a moment of down time. “Right now, I could tell you exactly what part we’re going to learn on a particular weekend in August,” she says. “I can tell you exactly when I’m going to have my show finished. I can tell you which weeks we’re going to work on which parts of the show.”

4. Set Realistic Expectations: When scheduling, think about the realities, capabilities and history of your band. “Figure out how to pace it,” Laurel says. “How much time does it take your band to take in that amount of information?”

5. Communicate: A plan won’t work unless everyone knows what’s expected of them. Laurel shares the schedule with students and parents electronically. Each student knows exactly what they need to learn and by when.

6. Stay on Target: Deviate from your plan as little as possible and don’t second-guess the pacing you set. “Have faith that the plan that you make will get you exactly where you want to be,” Laurel says. “Trust your relationship with the kids and their playing as well.”

SOUND ADVICE

ADDING SOUND REINFORCEMENT IN A STRATEGIC WAY CAN GIVE BANDS A COMPETITIVE EDGE AND RESULT IN A MORE UNIQUE EXPERIENCE FOR THE AUDIENCE.

BY MCKENZIE MOORE

In its 2017 show titled “Resurgence,” the Arcadia (California) High School Apache Marching Band used electronic sound design including amplification of soloists to create a unique aesthetic for its program.

Like Arcadia, many ensembles now incorporate sound reinforcement — microphones, amplifiers, signal processors and other electronic elements — to enhance the band’s volume, to project soloists or sections, or to add voiceovers and synthesizers to the music.

Arcadia percussion instructors Kevin Shah and Tony Nuñez emphasize the importance of making sound design part of the show rather than as its own separate element.

“Have the sound element be integrated and part of the soundtrack

rather than just sitting on top of it,” says Shah, who is also the creative director and percussion composer and arranger for the Blue Knights Drum and Bugle Corps, based in Denver, Colorado. “When it’s done really well, it’s part of the fabric of the production. It’s not overbearing but not underproduced.”

Nuñez, a sound design specialist as well as art director for the Riverside (California) City College Indoor Percussion, suggests focusing on the show theme and musical development rather than putting too much emphasis on technology. “People get stuck on the tools instead of focusing on the musical message or student experience,” he says. “Use limited tools to create maximum effect.”

SEEK EXPERT HELP

To get started, music educators should use resources offered through marching organizations to learn more about sound design. For example, The Arcadia Music and Arts Symposium offers master classes, workshops, roundtable discussions, performances and other activities for both students and directors. In addition, WGI Sport of the Arts has a series of educational downloads at shop.wgi.org that provide information about sampling, synthesizers and amplification for indoor drumlines.

“When you start to invest in equipment, it can get overwhelming,” Shah says. “There are a ton of resources out there. Try to connect with people who already have experience and soak in the information.”

INVEST FOR NOW AND THE FUTURE

With a large variety of equipment and technology available, Nuñez says sound design equipment should be specific to the program’s needs rather than generic. “It’s about what the music needs to do, the budget, and what the show needs to accomplish,” he says.

Shah advises educators to invest in equipment that will help carry their programs forward. For example, buy a mixer with the ability to purchase expanders when the need for more channels arises.

“Always [keep] learning, updating gear [and] maximizing what you have,” he says. “When you get to a point where the band needs to grow, have the ability to do so.”

CONSIDER BALANCE AND BLEND

Once an ensemble has the appropriate equipment, let designers experiment with the technology, Nuñez suggests. “Empower the designers to think about it as a design tool,” he says. “Experiment for a time, then say, ‘What can we do?’ If you’re all on the same page, you can start with an idea, experiment, then find your way.”

Using sound reinforcement to bring out certain elements of a marching show requires careful blending of timbre and volume. For example, Shah suggests focusing sound reinforcement on front



PHOTO COURTESY OF TONY NUÑEZ

Tony Nuñez

ensemble musicians as the instruments are intended for an indoor setting. With amplification, musicians can play the instruments correctly without making adjustments for volume.


In addition, many ensembles use sound design and reinforcement to enhance individual elements, including soloists and voiceovers. In Arcadia’s “Resurgence” show, amplified synthesizer effects in the beginning of the program allowed the ensemble to build up to its first impact. Shah says that using electronics effectively helps the entire ensemble rather than just a select few.

“It gives more character to the sound, and depending on the type of show, it’s going to give it more of a rich texture,” Shah says. “It’s an opportunity to enhance the sound of your group.”

TEACH TECHNOLOGY TO STUDENTS

Both Shah and Nuñez emphasize that while directors need to understand the equipment themselves, they must pass along that wisdom to their students. “Take the time to work it out, ask questions, do trial and error, and really help them fully understand,” Nuñez says.

Shah says that students should fully understand how to operate the technology. “I try to make sure every student [involved] is taught how everything works and what to do when something goes wrong,” he says. “With any sort of equipment, there will be failures, and being able to troubleshoot effectively is another huge component to training your students.”

In the end, sound design gives directors an opportunity to make their shows stand out, especially in competitive settings where ensembles have similar instrumentation. “For modern ensembles, [sound design] is a way to enhance the acoustic ensemble and use it as a storytelling device,” Shah says. 

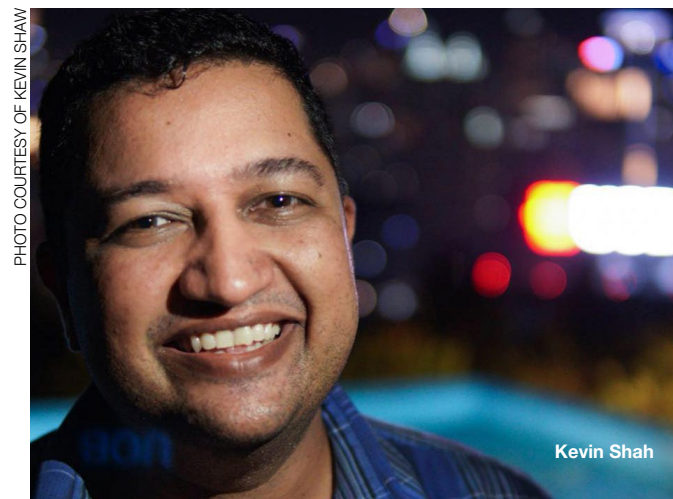


PHOTO COURTESY OF KEVIN SHAW

Kevin Shah

Artist Events

Would you like a chance to be inspired, to motivate your students, to expand your musical horizons? Yamaha Artists conduct clinics all over the United States. Here’s a partial list of who’s going to be in your area in the near future.



DATE	CITY, STATE	INSTRUMENT	ARTIST(S)	WEBSITE	EVENT TYPE	EVENT NAME
8/25	Edwardsville, IL	Percussion	Bret Kuhn, Clif Walker	www.siu.edu/artsandsciences/music	Clinics	4th Annual SIUE Marching Percussion Festival
9/7	Denton, TX	Percussion	Jason Baker	www.music.unt.edu/percussion	Clinics	UNT Percussion Clinic
9/8	Edmond, OK	Percussion	Bret Kuhn, Clif Walker	www.palenmusic.com/ppp	Clinics	Palen Percussion Preview
9/11	Newberry, SC	Trumpet	Peyden Shelton	www.newberry.edu/events/calendar	Masterclass, Recital	Guest Artist Masterclass and Recital at Newberry College
9/15	Nixa, MO	Percussion	Bret Kuhn, Michael McIntosh, Ray Ulibarri	www.palenmusic.com/ppp	Clinics	Palen Percussion Preview
9/15	Orem, UT	Percussion	Alan Keown	ohs.alpineschools.org/calendar/	Clinics	Orem Marching Band Showcase
9/18 - 9/23	Montesilvano, Italy	Percussion	Naoko Takada	italypas.it/index.php/italy-percussion-competition-marimba-competition-2018/marimba-jury-2018/	Masterclass, Concert	Percussive Arts Society Italy Percussion Competition 2018
9/28	Blacksburg, VA	Trumpet	Allen Vizzutti	www.performingarts.vt.edu/index.php/events/view/vt-jazz-ensembles-with-allen-vizzutti	Masterclass, Recital	Virginia Tech Trumpet Festival



DATE	CITY, STATE	INSTRUMENT	ARTIST(S)	WEBSITE	EVENT TYPE	EVENT NAME
10/1 - 10/2	Wyandotte, MI	Percussion	Aaron Hines	www.innovativepercussion.com/events/wyandotte_percussion_clinic_3	Clinics	Wyandotte Percussion Clinic
10/4	Portland, OR	Flute	Suzanne Teng	www.mysticjourney.net/gig, https://www.pdx.edu/the-arts/events	Clinic, Concert	Guest Lecture Presentation and Concert at Portland State University
10/15 - 10/16	Evansville, IN	Trumpet	Allen Vizzutti	www.vizzutti.com/schedule.html, https://www.evansville.edu/majors/music/	Masterclass, Concert	University of Evansville Concert with Wind Ensemble and Jazz Ensemble
10/18	Boise, ID	Master Educator	Marguerite Wilder	www.boiseschools.org/parents/music/music_calendars/	Rehearsals and Concert	Boise Schools Junior High Fall Honor Band
10/18 - 10/20	Eau Claire, WI	Trumpet	Wayne Bergeron	www.chippewajazz.org	Clinics, Performance	Wayne Bergeron with the Chippewa Valley Jazz Orchestra
10/19 - 10/27	Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, Australia	Trumpet	Rex Richardson	https://rexrichardson.net/tour-schedule	Clinics, Performances	Australia Residency
10/20	Sparks, NV	Percussion	Aaron Hines	www.reedraiderband.com	Clinic	Reed High School Percussion Clinic
10/21	Fullerton, CA	Saxophone	Stephen Page	www.fullerton.edu/arts/music/events/	Masterclass, Recital	CSUF Saxophone Day
10/22 - 10/26	Sao Paulo, Brazil	Trumpet	Randy Brecker	jazztrumpetfestival.com.br/	Clinics, Performances	2018 Brazilian Jazz Trumpet Festival
10/25 - 10/28	Kirkville, MO	Saxophone	James Bunte	www.americansinglereedsummit.com	Masterclass, Recital	American Single Reed Summit
10/28	Tacoma, WA	Trumpet	Allen Vizzutti	www.plu.edu/music/high-school-brass-workshop/	Clinic, Masterclass, Concert	High School Brass Workshop at Pacific Lutheran University



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