

SPRING 2015

*National Association for Music Education*

# NAfME Newsletter

Florida Collegiate Chapter: University of Miami  
Frost School of Music



## A Note From Our President: Jasmin Vilca

*It is with great pride that I address this wonderful chapter of the University of Miami NAfME Organization. I was truly excited to find myself at the head of this amazing group this semester and am happy to report on some of our recent achievements. This past semester, we were successful in producing our very first Secondary Instrument Concert, which turned out to be an instant classic and great fun for all! We have also put together our first Collegiate Petting Zoo, also great fun! We were also able to help fund a deserving local music program by awarding the grant money raised from our first Benefit Concert last semester. The recipient was the music program at Mandarin Lakes K-8 Academy, who showed great need and potential.*

*I am proud to present the Spring 2015 NAfME newsletter to you. Inside this newsletter you will find articles on various topics that our chapter members have learned about during their musical journey this year. Whether it was through FMEA Conference sessions or interviews of professionals in the field, what our members have learned and chosen to share with you here reflects the dedication to growth and development that we share as a group.*

*I would like to thank our chapter members for all of their hard work this semester. I would especially like to thank the rest of the NAfME Executive Board: Sarah Bowman (advisor), Alex Colaizzi (President-Elect), Silvana Ferrarin (Secretary), and Brenda Gonzalez (Treasurer). Also, great thanks to the Frost Music Education faculty for all the support and guidance that you always extend to our chapter. So with that, I wish you all a good and productive summer and I look forward to the projects we have planned and success that will come in Fall 2015!*

*Go forth with pride, future music educators!*

*Your President, Jasmin Vilca*

Edited by Silvana Ferrarin

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### **Our Executive Board:**

Sarah Bowman - Advisor

Jasmin Vilca - President

Alex Colaizzi - President-Elect

Silvana Ferrarin - Secretary

Brenda Gonzalez - Treasurer

## NAfME Presentation Summary: Warm-Ups & Ensemble Development Exercises That Work

*Ellen Ogihara*

*Do you ever feel like there is never enough time in class rehearsals, or that student concentration is lacking? The leader of this NAFME conference session, Peter Boonshaft, believes that warm-ups are crucial in maintaining class attentiveness, high quality of sound produced, and effective as well as efficient rehearsals. Here are all of the topics he discussed in his presentation that I was fortunate enough to attend, followed by crucial points regarding each.*

To begin, Boonshaft outlines three principles teachers should be aware of. First, teachers should not assume that students know how to tune or warm up. Secondly, he recommends teaching concepts in exercises, not in pieces. Finally, he believes the most vital things to work on in warm-ups are posture, position, breathing, listening, and tone.

The beginning of each rehearsal should be dedicated to warm-ups and tuning. Warm-ups ready students' minds, warm up the body, help the instrument get ready to play, and call forth student concentration. Boonshaft recommends keeping multiple tuners around the room so students can tune individually upon entering the classroom. This saves time and can help students' ears even more if they elect to tune with their eyes closed. During the rehearsals, warm-ups can be used as a tool for classroom management, especially if the teacher feels that students are periodically unfocused. Train isolated concepts (merging concepts will overwhelm students) and work on things one at a time. This will be especially effective when it comes to differentiated instruction. Additionally, warm-ups will help students develop their aural memories and kinesthetic sides of music making. Here are some additional tips from Boonshaft.\*

<b>Breathing</b>	<b>Scale/Arpeggio</b>	<b>Pitch</b>
- Exhale for 3 beats, inhale for 1, then after a pause, exhale for 3 beats, inhale for 1, hiss for 3, inhale for 1 (going from 1 beat inhale to 3 beat hiss is very difficult)	- Do scales and arpeggio with a drone, note by note, signaling whether the class's pitch is correct, sharp or flat using hand signals (point up to tell class to raise pitch, vice versa to lower, etc.) - Pretend to have a microphone (for brass players, they can buzz). Have class sing the scale (solfege). Pull the "microphone" away for higher pitches, as the tendency is to be loud in higher pitch and soft in low pitch on instruments (especially band)	- Get students to play notes they are not used to playing - Split class into 3, have each section play/sing either Do, Mi, or Sol in any key. Tell students to go either up or down a half step and hold the chord (check pitch), then return to the original chord. Then go up/down a major 2 <sup>nd</sup> , minor 3 <sup>rd</sup> , major 3 <sup>rd</sup> , etc. - Each time when doing this exercise, make sure groups get to do a different note than the one they were given the last time (those who sang Do last time sing Mi or Sol).

Intonation	Subdivision	Dynamics/Phrasing
- Start by practicing perfect intervals (split class in two to play bottom/top note of interval). For octaves, lower octave plays louder than upper octave.	- Use clapping for warm-ups or band/orchestra music with tricky rhythms - Split class, half claps smallest subdivision, other half claps the exercise/excerpt. Switch parts.	- Student must play with good tone, and end phrases with a pause, not a loud breath - Have class sing a phrase first with the dynamics first (hand motions recommended) before playing

Boonshaft’s final thoughts included more general tips and tricks such as keeping a daily/weekly schedule on the board, adjusting the set-up of aisles occasionally, and playing a recording for 10 seconds max to help rest students when they get tired. This session primarily used warm-up exercises from *Sound Innovations for Concert Band* and was directed towards band directors/band programs. I believe, as a string player, that many aspects of this session were quite applicable to orchestra and choir rehearsals as well.

*\*To see more on this presentation, be sure to check out the FMEA website. It contains archives of every presentation from this year’s conference!*







## The Slide Life

*Monica Serrano*

Each instrument has its quirks and tendencies. These are the things that we as musicians and teachers have to be familiar with. As a trombone player, I feel that I've had a unique experience being a music student. Unless your teacher was a trombone player, you basically had to learn about the trombone the hard way due to limited knowledge of the instrument.

Trombones are completely different than any of the wind or brass instruments. Therefore, beginning trombone players have a hard time adapting to it. Unlike instruments that have keys or valves, trombones have one long tuning slide. I relate the trombone to the string family just as much as I relate it to the brass family because of the way that notes are changed without any relative indication of where they are. Tuning and intonation are basically relative to how much muscle control you have (at the beginning). Even at the professional level, each day brings a new set of slide positions that you have to learn depending on outside variables. Unlike the strings, where you can mark the fingerboard with tape, marking on the trombone would be a huge no-no. The only thing that would be okay to mark (with pencil) would be where the main tuning slide should be so that students have a general sense of where they are the most in tune.

Mentioned above are the musical challenges of the trombone, which alone could cause many beginners to defer to a different instrument. Unfortunately, some students choose instruments because they look cool (I would know from personal experience), and trombone is definitely an interesting-looking instrument to say the least. That being said, the trombone is an awkward instrument! It's heavy, it takes up a lot of space, it's behind you and in front of you at the same time, and it takes long arms to reach the farthest positions. It will take your beginners several weeks to get used to the left hand and right arm stretching more than what is comfortable or doable for them. Some will just have to wait until they grow some more before it starts to feel comfortable.

The trombone is the longest horizontal instrument when being played. As a music teacher, you **need** to plan how you are going to set up the trombone section chairs and stands. If the students are not sharing stands (which I don't recommend for beginner trombone players because it may hurt their posture), they go to the right side of the trombone. Ideally, if you have enough space in your classroom, make sure there is a large enough gap between the trombone player's chairs and the chairs in front of them. If this can't be done, then align the gaps between the chairs with where the trombone slide would go. This will save you lots of dings and dents on the bottom of the trombone slide from hitting whatever is in front of it. All in all, if these tips and realizations don't give you insight into "The Slide Life", then I encourage you to talk to a trombone player...you won't be disappointed!



## How Do We Work With the Low Brass?

*Colton Freitas*

It is pretty well known throughout the musical community that typically, low brass players are notorious (along with percussionists) for getting into trouble because of talking during rehearsals and a myriad of other assorted shenanigans. Whether it is due to sparse, repetitive, or just simplistic writing, it is extremely easy for these students to become disengaged during the course of a rehearsal. I feel that too often, teachers simply punish these students for misbehaving without considering why said misbehavior occurred in the first place. That being said, how can we as teachers work with these students if they simply do not have enough to do in terms of playing their part?



I believe that the best way to make these students interested in coming to rehearsals is to **KEEP THEM PLAYING AND LISTENING!** One possibility is as follows: if you're rehearsing a section with sparse low brass, or if they just have pads and you're really trying to work a woodwind or high brass run, have them try to actively listen to how their part enhances what the rest of the ensemble is playing. You could also have them play first, and keep adding different layers of instrument sections so that they are a constant part of the music-making process.

Another solution is to create student leadership roles among the band, such as section leaders. If, as the teacher, you know there is going to be a large chunk of the rehearsal dedicated to a portion that has little to no use for the low brass, have the section leaders of the low brass go elsewhere for a certain allotted time to rehearse a brief sectional. This allows students to practice important leadership skills, develop musicianship at a much higher rate than if they were just sitting in a rehearsal when their part does not have them playing often, and gives them the opportunity to really take ownership of the music as well as their place in the ensemble. Granted, you have to make sure as the teacher that the students you place as section leaders know how to run effective sectionals. I would suggest leading a couple at first to model for them how you would like the rehearsals to operate, then sit in on a few in order to provide feedback to the student leaders as well as the ensemble, and finally allow them to be autonomous with random sit ins. This will create a much more musically inclined section that will ultimately play better and become more engaged in the rehearsal despite the large number of rests that they have too often in their part.

## Thumb Position: What You Need to Know to Survive Teaching String Bass

*Jesse Ojanen*



Thumb position on the string bass can be heavy load for a young player and even for a teacher. It practically becomes a different instrument, compared to traditional 'orchestral' bass position - by 'orchestral' position, I mean anywhere on the fingerboard below the octave harmonic, which is positioned right below where the body of the bass begins. Thumb position typically begins above the octave harmonic, and is almost exclusively played on the 'D' and 'G' strings, the two highest strings. This position is often used in intermediate to advanced string playing in orchestral settings. This means that at some point your students will be asking you how to play in this position if they do not already have a private lesson teacher.

Thumb position, surprisingly, uses the thumb as a way of pressing down the string. Comparatively, in orchestral position the player uses the index finger, middle finger, and pinky (assisted by the ring finger). Interestingly enough, bass players do not use their ring finger exclusively except in thumb position. In orchestral position the ring finger assists the pinkie in pressing down the string. In thumb position the ring finger takes the place of the pinkie.

Learning this new technique can be difficult for players. After learning all of the techniques in in the orchestral position, switching up to thumb position can be very uncomfortable. The player has to learn new finger spacing and hand positioning. I want to delineate some common pitfalls for players and a few tips on how to teach the basics of thumb position. This new technique can also apply your cello players, depending on the level of your repertoire.

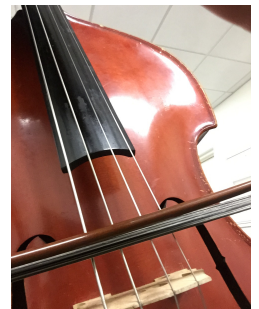
When playing in thumb position one should remember to keep one's hand relaxed. Tension is the enemy in playing any instrument. If it hurts, it's not right. Playing in thumb position requires a lot of hand strength. The player should use their upper arm to push down the string and not rely solely on the muscles in their hand. That will cause tension. A helpful exercise is having the student repeatedly place their hand on the 'G' string and watch for any tension that may be present. If the wrist collapses to

compensate for the thumb, then that tension needs to be alleviated by using weight from the forearm.

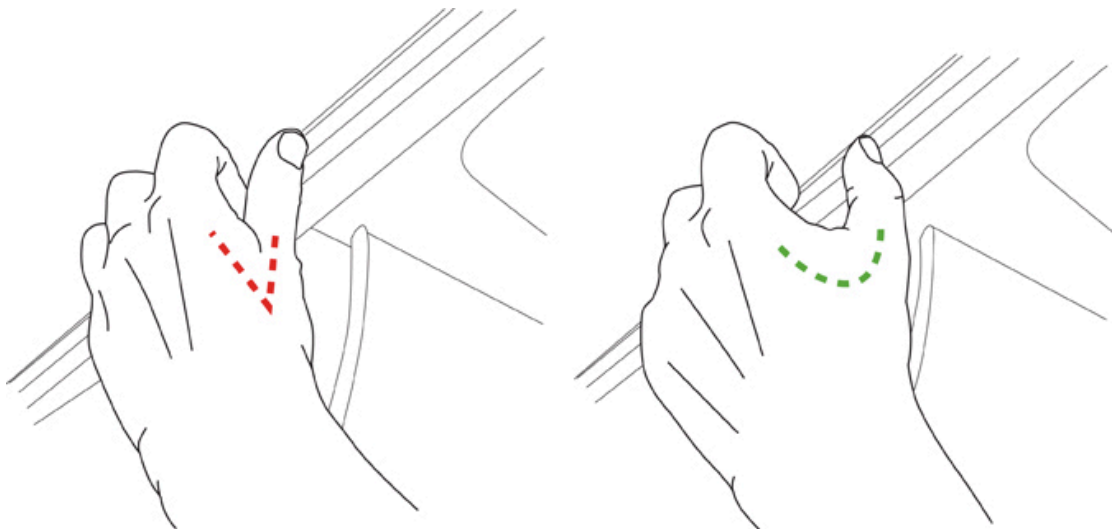
Another important consideration to remember is that the fingers should be curved. This provides more support throughout the hand and allows for the player to press down the string more easily. A common mistake for a player is to straighten their fingers, which makes it harder to maneuver on the fingerboard and can eventually lead to tension. It may be hard for the player to keep their fingers curved in the beginning as it requires significant amount of hand strength, but should be worked into gradually. Do not be afraid to dedicate time in your rehearsals to go over finger exercises, which can benefit all of your string players, not just the string basses.



Bowing technique also has to change in thumb position. The bow placement should be lower on the bass as to compensate for the now shorter string length--it should be placed closer towards the bridge. Less weight with the bow is also necessary, since the tension on the string is greater so less pressure is required to move the string. Typically, increased bow speed is also required when playing higher up on the bass.



Scales are a great way of learning anything new on an instrument and can be very helpful for getting acquainted with the thumb position. It's the easiest way to learn the hand spacing and can help with gaining hand strength. One way to challenge your more advanced string bass players would be to have them practice scales using the thumb. Remember that everything should stay relaxed and your bass students will better be able to adjust to this new thumb position.





## Interview: 35 Years of Teaching & Miami Choral Academy

*Brenda Gonzalez*



Suzanne Floyd always knew she would become a teacher. She knew she loved music in elementary school, but it was in a middle school band with an amazing director where she knew she had found out what she wanted to do for the rest of her life...and that her life would never be the same.

After joining the army and getting married, Floyd moved to Homestead, Florida where she and her husband were stationed at the time. There she would join the Army Band as solo clarinetist. She traveled to Europe, free-lanced as a clarinetist, and even had the chance to play for the Munich Opera. Thoughts of becoming a teacher were in the back of her mind, but with a family to raise in the forefront. However, as Floyd's daughter was getting older, the urge to get into the classroom was growing stronger. She applied to Miami-Dade and was able to acquire a scholarship for a year where she planned to prepare for her audition for none-other than the University of Miami. She would make it in with almost a full scholarship!

She went on to receive a Masters in Music Education, and taught in many schools, in Florida, including one university. Then Floyd started teaching at an elementary school in Florida City and was chosen to start the Magnet program for the Southwood Middle feeder schools. She was offered positions to teach at other middle schools, but declined knowing that she was still needed where she was...but not knowing that her life was about to change once more.

Her friend was then hired at Toussaint L'ouverture Elementary in Little Haiti as a Math Curriculum specialist, and the principal told her that they needed a music teacher. The school at the time already had a full-time music teacher, but they were looking for another one because the school was so overcrowded. Floyd accepted the job offer and said that the first time she stepped into that school that "I knew it was going to be different than anything I have ever done", and she was right. With behavioral issues and overcrowded classes, she said she had to be tough and know how to deal with those issues selectively, understanding that as much as you want to, you can't help everyone, but have to make decisions that will make the biggest impact. She also said that she would go on to tell her students to teach inner city, saying, "the jobs that you want at these wonderful schools that are A rated are hard to find...if you are looking for a job you are going to find them in the inner city, and that's where they need the best teachers. Other schools have parents that put in the time and money towards their child's education... the inner city just doesn't have that."

While teaching in the inner city, she was also the Adjunct Professor for General Elementary Methods at Barry University. She said the first couple of years were fine; it was towards the end when lack of funding found her without a classroom. She went on, to the disagreement of the other professors, to teach her class in the hallway, meaning that the recorder ensembles and nursery rhyme songs were for everyone to hear. However, she did manage to get her point across to the administration.

After 35 years teaching public schools, she finally retired but found she still had to do something. As she put it, "daytime television was annoying". As fate would have it, she found her way to Miami Choral Academy as an administrator, helping inner city youth, and she remains to this day.

### More about Miami Choral Academy



Miami Choral Academy is supported by Seraphic Fire and The Children's Trust. It is a tuition-free, non-profit after school program for third graders to eighth graders. It selects students from several inner city schools on a needs basis through an audition process. In this program students are encouraged to participate in a choir and learn music theory, performance, and music appreciation, while being provided an outlet to express themselves in a healthy and safe way.

The program helps about 80 children now but has ranged in size from 40 to 100 students. A staff of four, and a few volunteers, are always on hand to help with discipline, safety, and mini private lessons for soloists.

Miami Choral Academy provides the opportunity to try something new and creative to children who otherwise might not have one, and gives them hope and dreams for the future.



# Announcements

## *FALL 2015 EVENTS*

*First Day of Classes – August 24<sup>th</sup>*

*Shadow Day – September 30<sup>th</sup> (TENTATIVE)*

*Benefit Concert – November (TBD)*

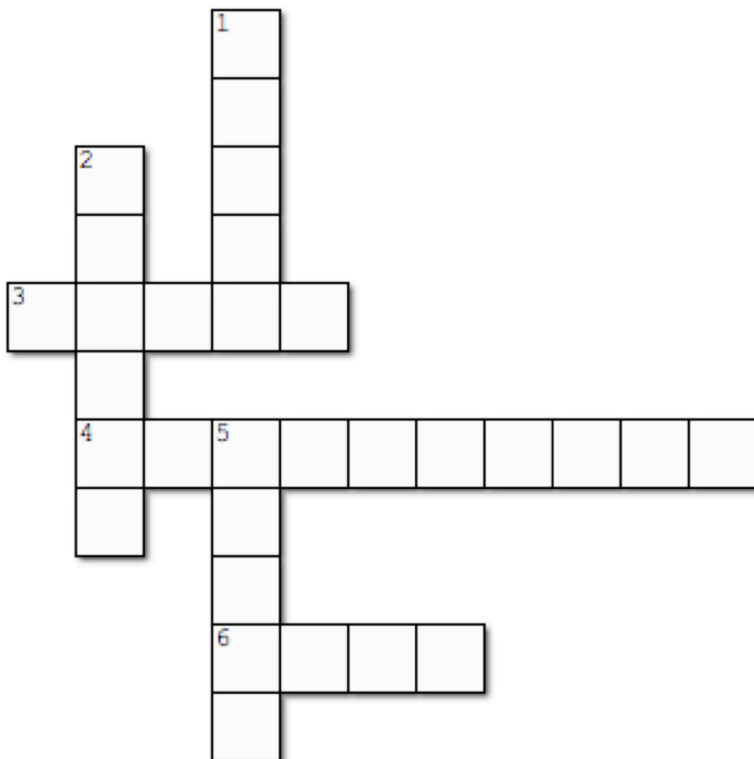
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### Across

3. Woodwind instrument that doesn't use a reed
4. What the lips form to prepare sound production on woodwinds/brass
6. Clef that viola players read

### Down

1. # of Cs on a standard 88-key piano
2. What trumpet players push down to change pitches
5. Part of the bassoon that the reed attaches to

ANSWERS:  
1. eight 2. valves  
3. flute 4. embouchure 5. bore 6. alto