



Chamber Music - The Secret Ingredient
to Better Large Ensemble Skills and Better Students

PRESENTERS

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SECTION 1: Using Chamber Music to Develop LARGE ENSEMBLE SKILLS

1. Developing Individual and Ensemble Sound, Blend, Intonation, and Listening Skills

- a) The importance of listening to well established professional musicians.
- b) Invite Guest Artists.
- c) Organize small chamber groups into like-instrument ensembles.
- d) Emphasize the **CRING-FACTOR** (*difference between sharp and flat*).
- e) Understanding tuning tendencies on each instrument.
- f) Small ensembles warm-up using scales in octaves and 5ths.
- g) Use chorales as daily warm-ups.
- h) Use the **SOUND PYRAMID** to reinforce blend and balance.

2. Rhythm & Pulse: *Emphasis on Precision Regarding Developing Internal Pulse and Rhythm*

- a) Rehearsing as a small ensemble will:
 - i. Reinforce consistency in developing internal rhythm and pulse.*
 - ii. Develop rhythmic precision through VERY SLOW rehearsal.*

- b) Some strategies that can help develop consistency in *developing internal rhythm and pulse*:
 - i. Perform using a metronome.*
 - ii. Practice scales at different speeds.*
 - iii. Practicing at different beat levels – different note values receiving the beat.*
 - iv. Have students submit assignments performing with a metronome.*
 - v. Rhythm Games*

3. Articulation: Attacks and Releases

- a) Rehearsing in smaller groups can help focus on the consistency of attacks, and releases by:
 - i. Working in smaller groups help students to match articulation styles.*
 - ii. Reinforcing style through very slow rehearsal.*
 - iii. Using a variety of articulation patterns and rhythms during rehearsal helps reinforce technical concepts.*
 - iv. Having like-instrument small ensembles tackle similar technical challenges pertaining to articulation.*

4. Non-Verbal Communication: *Developing Skills Through Eye Contact, Gestures, and Cueing*

- a) Non-verbal communication within the ensemble include:
 - i. Movement within the chamber ensemble to help musicians to maintain an internal pulse - emphasize the importance of “feeling” the beat together.*
 - ii. Movement within the chamber ensemble help musicians to solidify phrasing and musical contrast.*
 - iii. Cueing by using a “breath” and breathing together helps chamber ensembles play more cohesively in regard to matching tempo, style, dynamics, and phrasing.*
 - iv. Using “eye contact” to solidify attacks and releases.*

5. Benefits of Chamber Music

- a) Chamber Music is a small-scale version for large ensembles.
- b) Strengthen Section Playing.
- c) Allows students to focus and work more precisely on each element of performance.
- d) Help alleviate the challenges many music programs currently face with the reduction of rehearsal times.
- e) Developing efficient ways to instill fundamental skills.

SECTION 2: Using Chamber Music to Develop INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

1. Student Interaction & Collaboration

- a) Student-Led Rehearsals – *students learn from other students to:*
 - i. *Relate easier to each other.*
 - ii. *Become more independent by observing others.*
 - iii. *Consistently provide critical feedback on their performance.*
 - iv. *Act as MENTORS.*
 - v. *Becoming self-guided and is long-lasting.*
 - vi. *Encouraging students to become self-learners.*

2. Empowering Students

- a) Students take ownership of musical ideas.
- b) Share ideas, thoughts, and opinions.
- c) Build self-image, self-esteem, and self-efficacy.
- d) Promote critical musical thinking skills.
- e) Talking in front of fewer peers can build self-esteem.
- f) By having one player per part, students take on more responsibility and develop confidence.
- g) Increase student pride in their own playing and the playing of those around them.
- h) Encourage involvement of ALL group members by having them take on specific roles within each Chamber Ensemble.

3. Musical Interpretation

- a) Chamber music promotes discussions around musical interpretations.
- b) Easier to facilitate conversations with fewer students.
- c) Shorter and smaller pieces/movements are easier to analyze:
 - i. Form*
 - ii. Phrasing*
 - iii. Style (articulation)*
 - iv. Tempo*
 - v. Texture*

4. Exercises

- a) Have chamber groups perform in front of their peers.
- b) Have students provide brief introductions focusing on historical and stylistic features of their selected repertoire.
- c) Have them explain why they picked that excerpt.

5. Chamber Music Activities

- a) Have the students establish names for their chamber groups.
- b) Consider a POINT SYSTEM for number of Chamber Music Performances given by each group.
- c) Create a SMALL ENSMEBLES FESTIVAL within your class that will allow groups to perform for one another.
- d) Encourage Chamber Groups to participate in extracurricular performance opportunities such as:
 - i. Festivals*
 - ii. Competitions*
 - iii. Community Centers*
 - iv. Retirement Centers*

SECTION 3: Practical Strategies for Developing Large Ensemble Skills Through Chamber Music in a VIRTUAL SETTING

1. Creating an Action Plan

GREAT ARTICLE - "TEACHING AND MUSIC: *Reflections of a Daily Practitioner*" by Brian Wis

- a) Create new delivery vehicle for teaching band.
- b) Find creative ways to teach students about music through the internet.
- c) Our students need music now more than ever.
- d) Focus on things **WE CAN** change, not things **WE CAN'T**.
- e) *"What type of musical learnings can best be supported through the internet?"*
- f) **GET CREATIVE:** Find another delivery vehicle!
- g) We **don't teach *band***, we **teach *students***. We ***teach students about music***.

2. Musical Problem Solving

- a) Let us use our problem-solving skills.
- b) Critically examine the situation.
- c) Identify the **GIVEN** within the situation.
- d) Find the **EQUATION** that will help us teach students about music.
- e) **Large Ensemble Skills** using another delivery vehicle.

3. Selecting Small Ensembles

- a) Divide large ensemble into sections consisting of **Instrument Families**.
- b) Create small ensembles based on the **PYRAMID OF BALANCE**.
- c) Encourage small **Duos, Trios, Quartets, and Quintets**.

4. Virtual Chamber Music

- a) Select Small Ensemble Groups
 - i. Divide large ensemble into sections consisting of Instrument Families.*
 - ii. Create small ensembles based on the sound pyramid.*
 - iii. Encourage small Duos, Trios, Quartets, and Quintets*
 - iv. Have students pull names out of a hat to select group.*
 - v. Simply have them select their own ensembles.*

- b) Select Repertoire
 - i. Chamber Music Repertoire*
 - ii. Flex-Band Repertoire*
 - iii. Online Resources*
 - iv. SmartMusic*
 - v. Have Students Create Own Arrangements (Theory Component)*
 - vi. Create Arrangements for Student*

- c) Notation Programs
 - i. flat.io (FREE) – Compatible with Google Classroom*
 - ii. Note Flight (FREE)*
 - iii. Musescore (FREE)*
 - iv. Finale (Academic Version)*
 - v. Sibelius*

- d) Teach Students How to Use Selected Video and Audio Recording Apps
 - i. Soundtrap*
 - ii. Bandlab*
 - iii. Audacity*
 - iv. Da Vinci Resolve (FREE)*
 - v. Video Editor – Microsoft 10 (FREE)*
 - vi. Movie Maker – Mac (FREE)*
 - vii. Lightworks (FREE)*

- e) Use Educational Platforms that Allow Breakout Rooms

- f) Set up Group Coaching Sessions

Thank You for Listening to Our Presentation!