**Michael Trowbridge – Retired Orchestra Director**

**VMEA 2019**

**Co-author of Measures of Success for String Orchestra and Everybody’s Electric bass method**

**Once you start ‘em how do you keep ‘em? Starting and retaining beginning bass players**

**VMEA 2019**

* + Bass humor …They want to DO something other then A E A E A E A E … or when they are advanced F C F C F C F C or when they are really advanced Db Ab Db Ab etc.

**Bassic Bass playing position**

* The right Height ..Arm out straight and or bridge at the knuckles… some times end pins are not long enough

Rock stops should be used … also Crutch tips can be used.

* “Corner in the belly” - because it is only touched in one place the bass can resonate and sound as good as a school bass can sound!
* Touch your nose –with left hand while in proper playing position. Ear is close enough to put next to neck and hear if orchestra is very loud.
* “Hug” the bass – remember the bass is not in charge the player is in charge.
* Slow dancing again - remember the bass is not in charge the player is in charge.

**Pizzicato**

* **Thumb on the side of the finger board** – just like the rest of the instruments.
* **Side of the index finger** – if they use the tip of the finger … They will be sure to have blisters
* **“In addition to regular pizzicato, students can  
  learn a “rest stroke” (classical guitar term) or jazz pizzicato. Use the side of the finger and then have the finger rest on the adjacent lower string after playing the note. The sound will be much louder and there will be fewer blisters on the finger.” From MOS for strings**

**Remember if you have 8 basses in your orchestra they do not need to use a rest stroke. However if you have only 1 or 2 they will be heard when using a rest stroke. The rest stroke could be the difference in hearing or not hearing your basses during a pizz section.**

**Left hand position**

* **Thumb opposite 2nd finger – like the letter C**
* **Fingers curved, not collapsed – Strength in number. All fingers help out the 4th finger.**
* **Throwing a football – also like holding a water bottle or a soda can.**
* **Straight wrist**
* **Elbow up – you should be able to touch your nose with the fingers of the left hand.**

**Example of left hand from MOS**

**Holding the bow**

* Over hand - French: Like someone is handing you a book … your hand should be the same as is you were walking …. Fingers not jammed together or spread out but natural.
  + Thumb curved
  + Relaxed right hand
  + Flexible fingers
* Under hand - German: oh we ran out of French bows … here is a german bow.
  + Three fingers meet at one point
  + Pinky rests on bottom of ferule
  + Flexible fingers

**More on bow holds**

For both styles of bow holds:

* + Start with a pencil – just like all the other string instruments. And it give students something to do the first day of class when most kids do not have instruments yet.
  + Left hand helps – Hold end of bow (tip) with LH to help when doing bow only exercises.
  + Practice bow hold without the bass – The bow should never be held by only the right hand with out the instrument unless it is pointed up.
  + Instrument helps – Weight of the bow held by the bass.

**Description of French how hold from MOS**

**Description of German bow hold from MOS**

**Rosin**

* Pops –softer rosin very sticky stuff … be careful for colder weather – a little bit goes a lot way. Have students wipe down the top of the bass every day after class.
* Nyman med hard rosin for all weather.
* Carlsson Swedish bass rosin - Hard rosin for all weather
* Do not leave any of these out in the sun. keep it in the plastic case.
* Lemurmusic.com Great info about rosin on the Lemur website
* Getting rosin on the bow

Hold bow in right hand and draw across the rosin in a downbow direction … only one way … Never rosin a bass bow with in up bow - you will pull out the bow hair.

* Too much rosin! Use a cloth to wipe of excess rosin.
* Keep the instrument clean! – wipe down bass after class … which every type of rosin your students use.

**Bassic bowing**

* **Right angle – with the string to make the best sound.**
* **Arm weight – to make a great sound.**
* **String vibrating … no vibration … not much sound and tone.**
* **Big instrument – needs a slower bow.**
* **High = faster … just like the rest of the string instruments.**
* **Low = slower … again just like the rest of the string instruments.**
* **Length of the string … the math/physics of it all … if you divide the string in half then the distance the bow from the bridge has to divide in half. The full potential of sound.**

**Tell the basses to ignore you when you are telling the upper strings to “use the whole bow”**

**Shifting? There will be shifting**

* **Thumb moves with hand – no hitchhiking!**
* **Relaxed – movement .**
* **Keep in touch … fingers - keep them lightly in touch with strings as you shift.**
* **No hopping – keep fingers on the string. Better chance of getting it right.**
* **Muscle memory – correct practice …. Girls fixing their hair.**
* **More than the D scale. If they can do the D scale they can do a ton of stuff. Like the A or E scale using the same finger patterns but using A and D strings for A scale and E and A strings for the E scale**
* **Get out of 1st position … play the same stuff in different positions – note: concerts are not a time for experiments! The teacher may like to have some nice intune open strings to “help” the group.**

**Better musicianship only a ½ step away**

* **Between 1st and 3rd** is II and II ½
* **F# to G –** also C# to D and G# to A
* **Cross over ….** 1st position 1st finger A and E can be III position A and E with 4th finger on D and A
* **Yes… Get out of 1st** position but make sure you have a good foundation in 1st

**Example of II position on D string from MOS**

**Replace the 4th finger F# with 2nd finger and the G is played with the 4th finger.**

**Example of III position on D string from MOS**

**Where to put those things?**

* **Not in the back of the room!** Behavior - the music is easy.

Smart kids have the part in no time.

What can a bass player do after learning that “easy” music? Mess around!

* **Front and center!**

**20 violins in a class – who is going to need your attention. If the violins do not sound good it does not matter what your Bass or Basses sound like …. But…. In a typical class there will only be 1 or 2 bass players – Keep them close.**

* **Special attention –** you know you have that A and E in 1st position really well. Here are the same notes on the D and A string in III position.

**Within arms’ reach** Bass should be never fall behind the class

If they are in the front just reach over and adjust that left hand or elbow.

* **Have faith in the basses ….** 
  + Did you ever wonder why bass players stop playing after one year? They want to do something.
  + Ever wonder why your older bass players are always playing some type of rock tune instead of “warming up? They want to do something more then I V I
  + Bass humor …They want to DO something other then A E A E A E A E … or when they are advanced F C F C F C F C or when they are really advanced Db Ab Db Ab etc.
  + Push them you never know.
  + If they have the D scale down pretty well they could do the following: if they have done the D octave harmonic … they could play a D scale on one string. 0 1 – 2 4 – 1 4 – 2 3 (harmonic) There are also another.
  + When they have that regular fingering for D mastered then there are other ways to play that D scale … the students will find other ways the play that scale … a nice challenge assuming that the student has the bassics.

Contact info

Down load Power point and notes from mtrowmusic.com

Email address mtrowbridgemusic@gmail.com