

Lesson Plan – Monday, April 20th, 2020

Howdy SMP musicians! For those of you who have been checking our website's updates, you've noticed a few new links under "Music Basics." At the very bottom, you'll see three useful links to help tune your violin/viola/cello. Of course, if you don't take a few minutes to tune string instruments, all your exercises and songs and work will sound wonky and wrong...even if you're playing perfectly!

Beginning Band:

#78, Minuteman March. This piece should be fairly solid by now, right? We've penciled in some note reminders, focused on our *articulation*, and learned to play with the written *dynamics*. That's a lot over just a few weeks! Heck, the clarinets even dabbled with their alternate fingering for B natural! One last tidbit – and one of the toughest for some – is to adhere to the *breath marks* (percussionists don't have to worry about this!). If played accurately, you'll all play the first two bars IN ONE BREATH. Have someone watch you to see if you're successful! After the next two bars, the rests allow us to breathe so there's no need for a mark. Bars 5-6 are to be played in ONE BREATH and the final two measures don't require a mark because you're done with the piece.

#81, Frere Jacques. Hopefully, this piece is coming together nicely and you've been increasing the tempo (SMP offers a metronome on our website!). Similar to #78, it's time to add the final ingredient: *breath marks*. Notice that since there are no rests, we need to have breath marks to tell us exactly when to breath. If you're doing this correctly, you'll be playing two bar chunks of music with one breath. If so, GREAT! If not, inhale deeply/quickly to extend your exhalation. Flutes may have trouble with this but it'll get better as you practice!

New Orleans Strut. Last week, we zeroed in on the articulation in this piece. We noted that the first 25 measures are all tongued but slurs and ties start appearing after that. Since we've been emphasizing breath marks this week, let's look at this piece....there are none! Does that mean you need to play the entire piece in one breath?? This is a situation you'll see when the composer puts that responsibility on you, the musician, and the band director. It's still important because we need to take breaths together as we play a piece. The easiest way to do this while we're apart is to go ahead and add a breath mark every FOUR bars. We might change that but this piece is built in 4-bar "phrases." Once you've marked your piece, try to play those phrases. Again, flute players may find this difficult at first but look at all the rests that Mark Williams put in your part to help you!

Advanced Band:

Procession for a New Day. Now that our notes and rhythms are coming along, it's time to increase the tempo a bit (if you're ready). By this time in the school year, some of you advanced players may already be playing this at 120! If not, no worries – we'll get there. Another thing we need to look at is the breath marks...there are none! Since you're in Advanced Band, this will be fairly easy but read carefully. This piece is written in 4-bar phrases but almost all the phrases end with a dotted half note or a quarter rest on count 4. A perfect example of this is

the first four measures: The fl/clar/sax/trpt all have a dotted half note. The trombones have a quarter rest on count 4. The breath mark should be placed BETWEEN count 3 and 4. If you keep going through the piece, you'll see this pattern throughout. Bars 16, 32, 48 are a bit different for the trombones – for those measures, put the breath mark between 2 and 3. To play 4-bar phrases in one breath is a true challenge. Inhale quickly and deeply. Always use more for a full sound but not louder.

Page 21, Montego Bay. Now that you've circled any accidentals in this piece, we should be hitting 90% of the notes correctly now (with a few boo boos, perhaps). Clarinets and saxes – it'd be cool to consistently use your alternate fingerings for any starred notes. This is a good time to start working on the BOTTOM of any divisi section you may have. It's an odd thing to look at divisi notes and choose the bottom one but it's important (especially for flute players who have LOTS of divisi parts in middle school). This week's homework is to improve on the bottom parts. Once that's ready, record yourself playing one of the parts while you play along on the other!

Beginning Strings:

#116, Song for Maria. You've been super patient as you learn to slur correctly (2 notes with one bowing direction). That skill will take more work but for this week, let's address tempo. This piece only gives us the word "Andante" at the beginning. If you use SMP's online metronome (it's on our website under Practice Tools), you'll see the same word in the middle of the metronome's dial. It shows that tempo range between 76-108. Our goal is to play this at 100 – maybe by the end of this week! Yes, the slurs will slow you down but feel free to start at around 80 and move the metronome up a notch each day.

#125, Jingli Nona. One last reminder that you'll need to play C naturals in 9,11,13,15. Notice the tempo marking, "Allegro." Our SMP metronome shows us that Allegro can be anywhere from 120-168. Because of the C naturals, we'll want to start slowly this week and increase the tempo when you're ready until you reach 138. That's pretty darned fast (more than two beats every second!) so be patient. Next year in SMP's Advanced Orchestra (or middle school for some of you!), you'll get more music that asks for faster tempos so it's important to begin that process now.

March of the Metro Gnome. One aspect of playing a string instrument that makes all of us band members kind of jealous is that you don't need to use breath marks! That means you can play long notes for their FULL VALUE whereas band people have to chop them off a bit so we can inhale. This means that you can actually play 8-bar phrases – for instance, from any rehearsal letter to the next letter without any pauses or breaks in the smooth sound. As you practice this week (with a metronome) check to see if there are any gaps in the sound. There shouldn't be any other than written rests!

Advanced Orchestra:

#192, Simple Gifts. Now that we've all been exploring the "other" part, maybe some of you have actually been playing a duet with a recording on one part and YOU playing live on the other part! If you have the technology to put those together and send the finished duet to me

(ward@seattlemusicpartners.org), it'd be so FUN to see and hear! It may be handy to use a metronome that features a blinking light but with the sound off while you record.

Dragon Hunter. This is the toughest piece of literature that we handed out this year. Please be patient with yourself if things aren't coming along super fast. It's also the perfect piece to prepare you for middle school orchestra so stick with it! By this time in the school year and if we were all practicing together, I think we'd be taking *Dragon Hunter* at around 85 beats per minute (use SMP's online metronome!). If you're still below that, it's ok. Now that you all have a metronome, simply find the number that you CAN play it at and increase it by two beats every day or two. Keep in mind that we were going to perform this at the end of May so you're still on course and doing fine! For this week, I'd like you to search for identical measures throughout the piece. This type of scavenger hunt usually helps musicians see that they don't have to learn "new" stuff from beginning to end. Here's your homework...fill out this little chart below and send me the answers at ward@seattlemusicpartners.org by next Sunday. Yes, you should practice the piece, too!

Example: Measure 4 is exactly the same as measure(s) 8 , 29 , 33 , etc

Measure is exactly the same as measure(s) , , , etc

Measure is exactly the same as measure(s) , , , etc

Measure is exactly the same as measure(s) , , , etc

Any others?