

# SBO

SCHOOL BAND AND ORCHESTRA

sbomagazine.com

JULY 2022



All National Music and the

Triumphant Robert W. Smith Music Festival

## Inside

■ Unleash the Power of Inclusive Student Leadership

■ Great Music Review: *Regal Fanfare* by Richard Saucedo

■ Bubbett's Bookshelf: *Music Education and Social Emotional Learning - The Heart of Music Education*





**By Dr. Charles T. Menghini and Marcia Neel**

Attendees at the January 2022 IMEC (Illinois Music Education Conference) experienced a unique performance. The Music Achievement Council (MAC), an action-oriented nonprofit organization, sponsored by the National Association of School Music Dealers (NASMD) and the National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM), invited the Brooks Middle School Beginning Band, under the direction of Brian and Jennifer Finn, to demonstrate how the First Performance National Day of Celebration materials have not only boosted the playing skills of these novice musicians, but also the level of enthusiasm shown by the students, parents, and administration for participating in the band program.

First Performance has been around for many years, but for some reason, directors don't know about it. So, MAC and the beginning band students from Brooks Middle School prepared and presented how they originally executed the First Performance National Day of Celebration last fall in front of this IMEC audience made up of directors and 110 parents who came to see their students. When asked about the performance, director Jennifer Finn said, "This program has made a huge impact on our connection with the parents who, for the first time, see how the sausage is made and how important their support is to achieving student success in these early years."

As the directors prepared their students, they used the provided script as a guide but expanded upon it by featuring the various instrument groups in demonstrating their daily warm-ups. Each

section received a hearty applause and the look of elation on the part of the students was truly heart-warming.

Director Brian Finn, who has been teaching for numerous years said this event changed his approach to the beginning band. "The attitude and enthusiasm were different from previous years because of the increased focus placed on them knowing their first performance would be within six or seven weeks from the very first day that they picked up their instrument. They just wanted to show off how much they had learned in front of everyone!"

The First Performance National Day of Celebration is just as the title implies. It is a demonstration concert for beginning band students that incorporates the first five notes they learn. The entire toolkit is available to download at no charge at [www.nammfoundation.org/fpndoc](http://www.nammfoundation.org/fpndoc). It comes with a script; modifiable letters to parents and administration; modifiable certificates of advancement (from beginning player to member of the band/orchestra, etc.); ideas for enhancing the experience by involving the high school band program; and even a modifiable certificate of music education leadership for any high school music students who might want to participate as ushers or helpers—mainly to serve as role models for continued participation. All you need to do is add your beginning students.

The first sound performed at the 25-minute concert is a replication of the first sounds students play on their instruments. The key is to show how unpleasant those first sounds were when they began. Milking this is key as it gives the parents a comparison baseline for every sound that followed.

Customizing the script is key. To the delight of the IMEC audience, Brooks Middle School Principal Wood elaborated repeatedly that his very favorite song of all time was "Hot Crossed Buns." Thus, the directors featured him playing several triangle solos on this very tune which made him one of the stars of the show. Talk about relationship-building with your administration!

The performance received a standing ovation from those in attendance. Students beamed with pride as did their parents. Using a live online polling program, parents were invited to help create a word cloud of their reactions as they listened and watched their children perform.

At the Q&A with participants immediately following, parents were asked, "As a result of seeing this program, will you encourage your student to stay in band?" The response was 100% YES!!!

When we think about presenting music concerts, our experiences lead us to want to play at a high artistic level. But it is important to remember art can be messy! For students in beginning band, their first sounds are a perfect representation of them displaying their artistic abilities at their highest level.

Music teachers will be well-served when they steal a bit of the mentality of our coaching friends. Young children who play soccer or little league don't spend months learning fundamentals prior to taking the field. They are given a basic set of directions and are allowed to learn as they play games. In essence, they are learning to play the sport as they perform it, not rehearse it. In the music world, we recruit students to "play" in band and orchestra, only to hold them hostage in classrooms until their big performance several months or more into the school year.

Giving them a manageable, meaningful goal like a First Performance National Day of Celebration concert honors their achievements and encourages them to prepare. It allows parents to see and hear the most important people in their lives, their children, perform. Let's be honest. Parents do not attend your concerts to listen to the music. They are there to hear their children play. The proof is the fact that as soon as their child is no longer in your program, they stop attending your concerts.

You may not receive an invitation to perform your first concert at your state's music education conference, but that doesn't matter. What matters is setting a goal and arranging for your students to "play" in band. The First Performance National Day of Celebration concert is the perfect vehicle for doing so.

Directors throughout America are encouraged to join this movement. The third Thursday of November has been designated as the First Performance National Day of Celebration. Join the

fun and take advantage of this day to showcase your beginning students in performance. Invite the entire community and don't forget the press (a modifiable press release is also included in the toolkit). This is a great way to show some authentic advocacy for you and your program.

Book your First Performance National Day of Celebration concert now and plan it within the first 6-7 weeks of this next school year then consider applying to do a demonstration session on how the program works at your state music education conference! Remember, the material you perform can come right from your chosen method book. You can also obtain a copy of the *First Performance for Band or Orchestra* from your local school music dealer or directly from the Music Achievement Council website at: [www.nammfoundation.org/resources-educators](http://www.nammfoundation.org/resources-educators) where you will find these and many other resources to help you in recruiting and retaining students in your program.



#### ...about the directors

Brian Finn received his Bachelor of Arts degree in music education from Northern Illinois University in 1986. He received his Master of Music Education degree from VanderCook College of Music in 2003 and currently serves as director of bands at Brooks Middle School in Bolingbrook, Illinois.

Jennifer Finn received her Baccalaureate degree in music education from Western

Illinois University in 2004. In 2012, she received her Master of Music Education degree from VanderCook College of Music. She has been teaching general music and band at Brooks Middle School since it opened in 2004.

#### ...about the authors

Dr. Charles T. Menghini is president emeritus of VanderCook College of Music in Chicago. Menghini served as director of bands at VanderCook for 23 years in addition served as president his final 13 years there. Today, in addition to providing support work for VanderCook, Menghini serves as a guest conductor and presents clinics and workshops nationally. He is an educational member of the Music Achievement Council, co-author of the Essential Elements band method, published by Hal Leonard and is an educational consultant and clinician for the Conn-Selmer musical instrument company.

Marcia Neel is president of Music Education Consultants, Inc., and serves as education advisor to the Music Achievement Council, a non-profit organization whose sole purpose is to assist directors in recruiting and retaining students in instrumental music programs through effective professional development programs and gratis materials. Neel serves as senior director of education for Yamaha Corporation of America and sits on the board of directors of the Percussive Arts Society.