

Month 1: September

Concepts taught this Month: Bowing skills, scales of D, G, and C in one octave, rhythmic review to include eighth notes and dotted quarter notes, finger pattern review to include study/review of whole steps and half steps, interval studies tonic drone, playing and singing of scales with and with out the tonic drone.

Week One: *The student will...*

- Demonstrate a smooth straight bow using whole notes and half notes, and quarter notes, on open strings
- Understand correct sub-division of long notes by playing sub-divisions against long notes up the quarter note.
- Review one octave scales of D, G and incorporate good bowing and sub-division skills while reviewing these scales.

Procedures:

It will be necessary to review bow holds for each instrument. When you are confident that each student is holding the bow correctly, have all students bow the open string D in a whole note. Circulate around the room making sure each student is drawing a full, straight, bow and make corrections as needed. Have students draw full bows on each string making sure that a full bow and proper bow angle is being used. This exercise is also to be done using two half notes on each string. Then have students use quarter notes, 4 to a string. This will lead directly into the sub-division aspect of these lessons. Have a group of students, violins for example, play whole notes while another section plays half notes and another section plays quarter notes. Students will count out loud and play at the same time. This will start to instill a solid rhythmic pulse. Before playing scales, please review the correct finger patterns for the given scales for each instrument. Scales are to be played in the “add-a note” style using 4 quarter notes on each degree of the scale. Do not go on to the next note until the entire class can play the given note in tune. This is especially important for 1st fingers. Once good pitch is established, use the above stated sub-division exercises to instill good pulse and review scales at the same time. The teacher should be circulating around the room and making spot corrections for the time the class is playing.

Week two: *The student will...*

- Demonstrate correct bowing skills
- Demonstrate knowledge of the D, G, and C Major scales, one octave.
- Play D, G, and C Major Scales with Tonic Drone.

Procedures:

Use the above stated whole note, half note and quarter note sub-division exercises to warm-up. These should be done on open strings with the students counting out loud while playing. Teacher will circulate around room

making spot corrections. Review D and G Major scales using the same sub-division exercises stated in Week One.

At this point, teacher will introduce the concept of Tonic Drones. Simply, have one section play one of the given scales while the other sections play the open string tonic. The open string tonic should use the sub-division exercises Each section will play the given scales with either one whole note, two half notes, or four quarter notes on each degree of the scale. This will ensure the student has ample time to play with correct intonation. The teacher may also elect to have an entire section play either of the sub-division patterns to enhance good rhythmic stability. All students will play given scales on each sub-division during the week.

Week three: The student will...

- Continue bow skills using sub-division exercises on open strings and major scales
- Demonstrate ability to play eighth note sub-divisions
- Continue playing scales using the Tonic Drone
- Play intervals using Tonic Drone.

Procedures :

Warm-up should include all previously learned skills. Emphasis should be placed on good left-hand position for good intonation and correct bow hold and stroke. Teach the eighth note sub-division off the instrument. Have one section count-clap quarter notes while another count-claps eighth notes. Use either "1+2+" or "1tay2tay" to intone eighth notes. Next split the class in half and have one half play a quarter note pulse on an open string while the other half plays eighth notes. Eighth notes should be played in the middle of the string. When rhythmic stability is achieved, have the class play all four note lengths at the same time on open strings. Make sure each section gets to play each sub-division. When this is stable, add the eighth note sub-division to the major scales. Students are expected to count and play. Lastly, using the Tonic Drone technique, have students play the intervals in the major scales. Starting with the Major second, have students sing the interval while playing the corresponding open string. This should be done through the octave. Once the students can sing the intervals, have them play the intervals. This can be best achieved by having one section play while the others drone. All students should sing the interval whether they are playing them or not. These intervals should be done with either two half notes or four quarter notes on each degree.

Week four: The student will...

- Demonstrate correct bow skills through eighth notes
- Sing and play 1 Octave Major Scales in D, G, and C Major
- Sing and play intervals up to the octave found in the Major Scales.
- Demonstrate stable sub-divisions through eighth notes
- Demonstrate knowledge and be able to play the dotted quarter eighth note figure.

Procedures:

Warm-up should include all previously learned skills. Great emphasis is to be placed on correct position and posture. Each section should play scales and interval studies in various sub-divisions everyday. Emphasis must be placed on singing and playing at the same time. Teach the dotted quarter eighth note concept off the instrument.

Show students how the figure works by writing it on the board and explaining the dot after the note. Have one section count-clap quarter notes while one count claps eighth notes. Have a designated section count-clap the figure. Teacher should lead this portion of the activity to ensure all students have a firm grasp of the concept.

Once one section has the concept learned, rotate to other sections. Once all sections can count-clap the pattern, do the procedure on open strings. Make sure students use enough bow on the eighth note to ensure that it is loud enough. Do not use a hooked bowing at this time. Once the class can play the figure on open strings, then incorporate the figure into your daily scale and interval routine.

General suggestions for this month:

Make sure your students have good position and posture, this will make all of these skills much easier to master. Students generally won't sing. THEY MUST. The road to excellent pitch is done by hearing the pitch first. This can only be accomplished by singing in tune. The sub-division exercises are critical. You must establish a firm rhythmic pulse from the beginning. This is crucial to the success of ANY ensemble. You can break up this heavy skill work by reading music, either sheet music or method book material, that corresponds to the skills you are working on. You may want to do skill work for 4 days and read on Fridays, do half skill work and half reading everyday, or alternate days of skill work and reading. Please circulate around the room and make sure EVERY student is playing correctly. It is suggested that in the first three months that students be placed in rows to better facilitate the teacher being able to get to each student with the minimum of disruption. Testing on any of these skills can take place at anytime. Only the teacher can make this fun. Sell it to your students as fun and they will react in kind.

Concepts taught this month: Slurs, scales D, G, C, F, Bb, and A one octave, Chromatic scale starting on C or D, Rhythmic sub-division studies to 16th notes, rudimentary shifting studies, Bow distribution. Review Cello extensions.

Week five: The student will...

- Learn bow distribution skills
- Learn rhythmic sub-division skills to the 16th note
- Review Cello extensions

Procedures:

Class will continue to warm-up on scales with all rhythmic sub-divisions learned to this point. Tonic drones will be used to enhance good intonation skills. Interval work will continue with tonic drones. Rhythmic sub-divisions will be continued. STUDENTS MUST CONTINUE TO SING AND PLAY. Scales are also to be played with correct bow distribution. On open strings have all students use the pattern WB UH UH, WB LH LH using the rhythm of a half note and two quarters on each bow distribution. When the student is comfortable on open strings have them apply the bow distribution to learned scales. Away from the instruments, have students work on the 16th note sub-division. You may use any counting system you choose. Have the student count clap the 16th note against the quarter and 8th note beat. When all students are comfortable with the counting have them transfer the skill to the instrument. Students should perform the 16th note sub-division in the middle to upper half of the bow. Make sure the student is using a relaxed wrist and encourage them not to use the entire arm to play the 16th notes. When students are competent with the 16th note patterns against the other sub-divisions on open strings, have them apply the knowledge to the Major scales. Review cello extensions. This works best if the balance of the orchestra plays a tonic drone in various rhythmic sub-divisions. Have the cellos play four D's and then four E's. Make sure that they are following the thumb as they slide up fore the E. Repeat the exercise adding then F#(DDDD EEEE F#F#F#F#) This should be played until the proper motion is obtained and the intonation is rock solid. Have them repeat the same patterns on the G string against the tonic drone D to ensure a smooth movement to the B and C#. Then have them play the D Major scale against the tonic drone D. Students should play 4 notes on each degree of the scale. As skill raises, then use only one note. Students must sing at all times.

Week six: The student will...

- Slur scales in quarter notes two notes to the bow.
- Review previously learned material.

Procedures:

Continue all scale and interval work learned to this point. All rhythmic sub divisions are to be used. Correct bow distribution will be demonstrated by all sections. Students will continue to sing while they play. Using the D Major scale, students will demonstrate good slurs. Slur between D and E using one bow for each repetition (Example: D-E quarter notes on a down bow followed by D-E on a down bow). This should be done until the student is using a whole bow to play the two notes. As skill increases, add the next two notes (Example D-E down bow, F#-G up bow, G-F# down bow, E-D up bow). Do the same on the A string. When the student can demonstrate solid skills on these patterns have them play the entire scale, slurring two. The best way facilitate the pattern coming back down is to repeat the top D(Example D-E F#-G A-B C#-D D-C# B-A G-F# E-D). When this skill is mastered, apply it to all scales used to this point. At some point you may wish to not repeat the top D. You must work the slur in the string crossing between A and G. This is best facilitated by isolating the two notes and practice crossing between the two. Make sure the student keeps the 3rd or 4th finger on the D string for the G. Basses will need to make the change between G and F#. When everyone is comfortable, play the scale ascending and descending without repeating the top note. Continue to ensure that the student is using a full bow. The use of rhythmic sub-divisions is critical in slurs to ensure that the fingers are moving in good time.

Week seven: The student will...

- Demonstrate knowledge of previously learned skills
- Learn a one octave chromatic scale starting on D
- Learn Scales in Bb and A

Procedures:

Students will demonstrate a sound working knowledge of all skills learned to this point. Warm-up should consist of intensive review of a scale using all rhythmic sub-divisions. Bow distribution is to be used as well as interval work using tonic drones. Slurring of scales, two to a bow is to be reviewed also. Students will continue to sing. Special attention must be given to cello extensions. Use of tonic drone is an absolute necessity. Teacher will continue moving around the room to ensure that correct playing position and LH/RH techniques is being used at all times. The Chromatic scale starting on D is introduced. Each student should first work between D and Eb. This can be done by rote. Cellos will use a backwards extension. Basses will use _

Position. Have the students move between the two notes until they can sing and play a good $\frac{1}{2}$ step. After this is accomplished move between D-Eb-E. Cellos move to a normal E while the basses slide up to first position. Please remind the students constantly, with the exception of the basses, that the fingers, NOT THE HAND, moves up in half steps. Continue to add half steps to the next string. Cellos will have to extend to the G#, so special care must be taken that the extension is smooth and in tune. At this point you may have the basses play against a tonic drone to help solidify the shift on the G string. Each section should also play the notes to A with a tonic drone. This will ensure that the teacher can help all student's. Please do not go on to the next note until the previous ones are in tune. Be very vigilant the fingers and not the hand move. When the notes on the D string are in tune, go on to the A string notes, with the exception of the basses. Singing is critical at this point. Make sure students can sing their $\frac{1}{2}$ steps. This whole process must be taken slowly to ensure good position and intonation. Have the students find Bb on their respective instruments. Review the finger patterns for the Bb Major scale. Work on the scale with each section, paying particular attention to a good position in the basses. A D tonic drone will work with this scale, but singing is of the utmost importance to ensuring good intonation. Do the same with the A major scale. Make sure cellos are making a smooth extension for the C# and G#. Violins will need extra time to get the 3rd finger C# in tune. This scale should be played against an a tonic drone.

Week eight: The student will...

- Demonstrate knowledge of previously learned skills
- Learn rudimentary shifting skills

Procedures:

Warm-up will include intensive work with all previously learned skills with special emphasis on the continuing work on the chromatic scale. DO NOT forget to work one of the major scales in intervals with a tonic drone. More emphasis should be placed on the Bb, F, and A Major scales to ensure the students thorough knowledge of these scales. Bow distribution should be used also. Shifting should be taught as a rote exercise first. Violins will learn rudimentary shifting on D Major, cello's and viola's on the G major scale. Over a tonic drone of D, have the violins play 4 A's, 4 B's, 4 C#'s, and 4 D's. On the 3rd and 4th D's have the violins replace the 3rd finger D with the 1st finger. They should immediately double-stop with their open D to ensure good pitch. This should be played until the shifting motion is smooth and in tune. Remind the students that the hand follows the thumb. When the shifting is smooth, reduce the number of repetitions on a single to 3 then 2 then 1. When this is accomplished, violins can then start playing 3rd position D to E. Students should be made aware of the closer finger position in 3rd position and should, on their own, figure out the correct finger pattern for the 2nd octave of the D

Major Scale. Do not go beyond any note that is out of tune. You can then repeat this same pattern for the violas. The rest of the group will play a tonic G while the violas work in the same way up their 3rd position G on the D string. All information for the violin pertains to the viola. Cellos then will play the same, except they will be shifting to 4th position. The same routine should follow for the cellos. If you prefer to have the cellos shift on the A string, do so. After these skills are solid, use a standard method book to apply the shifting to music. *Intermediate Essential Technique for Strings* by Mike Allen is a great resource for shifting. Students should apply this knowledge as soon as possible to music. Daily reinforcement by the use of rote exercises is also extremely important. Always remind the students to use the open string to check the pitch of the 1st finger in third position.

General Suggestions for this month:

It is very important that you stress the basics everyday. Singing, counting, and diligent scale and interval work are of the utmost importance to creating a good orchestra. Do not feel that once they have got something that students will remember. Practice the basics everyday. I have purposely avoided talking about shifting for the basses because the upper register is not used as much. I prefer to leave the bass shifting to later in the year. A good method book is a real need at this point. Students must start applying their newly learned skills to music. There are many great books out there. It is left to the discretion of the individual teacher as to which one to use. Do not rush any of these skills. Err on the side of caution and don't get so far ahead as to leave slower students behind. Teachers should be looking at literature for the upcoming holiday concert. It is very important that you choose literature that corresponds directly with your student's skill level. While we want to challenge the students, we must also be aware that a good performance, even of easier music, is a great motivator and esteem builder. Everyone wants to sound good. Again, enough stress cannot be put on the practice of basics. Make sure your students can play everything in tune. Do not go on until this can be done. The same holds true for rhythmic stability. Insist that your students play the sub-division exercises perfectly.

Month 3, November

Concepts taught this month: 2 Octave G, D, and C Major scales, dotted eighth sixteenth note rhythm, martele bow stroke, Sight reading concert music.

Week nine: The student will...

- Learn 2 octave G and C Major Scales
- Sight read Concert Music

Procedures: Continue to use all previous skills in a warm-up/skills session. Make sure that students are reviewing the basic shifting patterns everyday. Intensive study of a Major scale and its intervals is suggested everyday with

special emphasis on continuing rhythmic sub-division study. Teacher should also find difficult passages in the music to be read and introduce them by rote in the class. If the difficulty lies in the rhythms, time should be taken to perform those rhythms on open strings until mastered. If possible, the rhythm should be applied to the major scale practice. If the difficulty lies in melodic content, i.e.: hard intervals, chromatic movement in the melody, the teacher should break down the problems and isolate them. Play the new melodic material out of time and with simple rhythms to ensure that student hears the patterns before they see them. The G and C Major scales should be played in 5th's. Violins will play the 2 Octave G Major scale while the cellos and violas play the 2 octave C major scale. Prior to playing them together, use tonic drones to help ensure good intonation and to correct any problems that may incur. Review the 1/2 step whole step relationship in the scales. Vary the rhythmic sub-division patterns and if applicable, use rhythmic patterns from the music. Review with students what to look for in a new piece of music. (Example: check key signature, identify time signature, endings, odd rhythmic patterns, accidentals, etc.) Off the instrument, have students count-clap the work. After this is completed, students should sight read the entire piece. If total collapse happens, go back and identify the problem areas, correct them, and continue on. Encourage students not to stop if they are having difficulties. If they can't play the melodic content, play the rhythm on an open string. Try to play the entire piece through after students have had a chance to read it.

Week ten: The student will...

- Perform the 2 octave G and C Major scales
- Learn the 2 octave G and D Major Scales
- Learn a good Martele bow stroke
- Continue sight reading concert music

Procedures:

Continue warm up with emphasis on 2 octave scales mentioned. Continue the use of tonic drone, singing, and slurring. Continue use of varied rhythmic sub-division patterns. Two octave scales should be done with 2 quarter notes on each degree of the scale. Do these scales with tonic drone to ensure good intonation. Spend the bulk of the time ensuring that the shifting on each instrument is smooth and in tune. At this point basses will drop to the low E string after the initial D in D Major to correctly perform this scale. On G Major, the basses can play the 1 octave scale twice without repeating the top note to ensure that the scale lines up with the other instruments. The 2 octave G and D major scales should be played together to maximize on task learning and to get the students used to hearing music in 5ths. Review extensions with the cellos to ensure good intonation. Vary the use of rhythmic sub-divisions. It is prudent to spend a good amount of time on these scales to ensure good shifting and good intonation. The use of the tonic drone is indispensable to reach these goals.

Introduce the Martele bow stroke on open strings. Make sure the students are using a crisp bow stroke and all are stopping immediately after the attack. This skill should be done on open strings until students are comfortable with the process then added to all scale and interval work. Continue sight reading concert music using the same procedures outlined above. Choose music that reflects the skills and concepts mastered up to this point.

Week eleven: The student will...

- Demonstrate knowledge of previously learned skills
- Learn the dotted 8th 16th note rhythm
- Rehearse selected concert music

Procedures:

Continue warm up/skill work with all previously learned skills. Special attention will be given to the slurs and martele bow strokes. Continued work on shifting is to be done through the use of the 2 octave major scales. All rhythmic sub-divisions are to be used everyday as well as singing. Interval studies should be reserved for the 1 octave scales. The dotted 8th 16th note rhythm is to be taught off the instrument. Write the pattern on the board and explain its relationship to the 16th note sub-division. With half of the class clapping the 16th notes, the other half will clap the new rhythm. Switch halves when proficiency is gained. Next move to the instrument and practice the rhythm on open strings. Teachers may choose to play this rhythm with a hooked bow or as it goes. If using the hooked bow, make sure students are using the bulk of the bow on the 16th note to ensure a balanced sound. When playing, have sections of the group play the sub-division against the rhythm. When proficiency is gained apply the new rhythm to 1 octave scales. Don't hesitate to play both bowing styles. Rehearsal of selected music now starts taking place. The teacher should identify hard sections to rehearse. To keep the whole class on task, have the students not involved in hard sections play a tonic drone to keep a pitch center. The teacher may choose to write exercises that address hard passages in the music. Taking hard melodic passages out of context and playing them in simple rhythms will help the student get the passage in their ears. When proficiency is attained using this method, then you go back and play the music in context. It is very important to have an underlying harmonic and rhythmic framework while doing this type of work to ensure a sense of pitch center, rhythmic stability, and most importantly, keeping the students on task.

Week twelve: The student will...

- Show proficiency in all learned skills
- 2 octave C Major scale with emphasis on the violins
- Show proficiency in concert music

Procedures:

Continued use of all previously learned skills as a warm up/skill session. Ensure that you mix this up enough through all scales, including chromatic, to keep the learning fresh. Do a heavy review everyday of the dotted 8th 16th note patterns, slurs, and martele bow strokes. In keeping with the 3rd position studies already done, it may be wise to teach the 2 octave C major scale to the violins entirely in 3rd position. To ensure a good 3rd position start on the G string have the cellos, violas and basses drone C's while the violins do a scale preparation to the C (Example: GGGG AAAA BBBB CCC4). Review the finger pattern for the 2 octave C Major scale in 3rd position with the violins before playing. NOTE: I prefer playing the C major scale in 3rd position so the students get a feel for working across the entire finger board in position. Teachers may choose to do this skill differently. The scale can be done with tonic drone or as a unisonal study. Basses will play the 1 octave C Major scale twice to participate in the 2 octave drill work. Concert music is now being rehearsed in larger sections. If problems arise, go back to tonic drones and separate and isolate hard sections. Emphasis should be on playing through of large sections of music for flow. All music should be chosen for your holiday concert and students should be familiar with all of it.

General suggestions for this month:

All the basic skills for a successful concert have been learned. Students will have a good inner pulse and solid intonation. It is very important to emphasize to the students that they should be doing the same thing in their practice as they do in the class. Encourage the use of a metronome at all times when playing at home. Proper practice procedures are reinforced everyday in class. If the student practices as the class is taught, they should have no problem mastering the skills and music presented to them. It is very important that the teacher study the scores to music closely. By identifying problems, isolating them, writing exercises to ensure mastery, and looking at the big picture, the music should sound great. It puts more work on the teacher to prepare like this, but the product will be so much better. This is also a good time to catch up on playing tests. Scales or sections of music can be tested daily so as to ensure student learning and to help the teacher identify problems not obvious before. It also puts the burden on the student to produce or be left behind. Private study should be encouraged at every turn.

Month 4: December

Concepts to be taught this month: Proficiency in all skills learned, introduction to vibrato motion, proficiency in concert music, review concert etiquette. NOTE: December is a short month. This plan should be modified according to your concert date.

Week thirteen: *The student will...*

- Demonstrate proficiency in all learned skills
- Learn basic vibrato motion
- Demonstrate proficiency in all concert music

Procedures:

Warm up and skill work will continue with special emphasis on tonality relationships of the music (Example: warm up/skill work should be centered around the specific key or keys of the music you are playing). All aspects of playing learned to this point again emphasizing any specific skills needed to ensure a solid performance of the selected concert music. A time limit has not been suggested to this point concerning the warm up/skill session. It would be wise to allow more time for the music at this point. Basic vibrato motions may be taught now. The “waving at yourself” motion for the violins and violas and “shaking a can of Coke” motion for the cellos and basses can be used. It is up to the discretion of the teacher as what method best suits them. Once a satisfactory motion is achieved, all students can apply this technique to 1st fingers on the D, G, and A strings. It is very important that vibrato is done with an exact rhythmic pulse. Start with a slow vibrato in notes to ensure the proper motion and gradually speed the sub-division up. It is very important to remember that vibrato should only be played by those students who have superior left-hand position. It is suggested that vibrato only be used in your concert music if the intonation is almost flawless. When the basic vibrato motion is learned, have students identify sections of music that would benefit from its use. At this point, it would be best if vibrato was left to longer notes or slow music. It should never compromise the intonation or flow of the music. Concert music needs to be played in large sections now to ensure flow. All problems with pitch and rhythm need to be fixed at this point. It would be good to play through entire pieces now so the student gets the idea of the whole piece. Isolating problems continues. Students are encouraged to practice diligently and SLOWLY to master the music for performance.

Week fourteen: *The student will...*

- Demonstrate proficiency in all basic skills
- Demonstrate basic understanding of vibrato motion
- Demonstrate mastery of Concert Music

Procedures:

Continued warm up/skill session with emphasis on the tonality of music to be performed. Any rhythmic problems inherent in the music will be addressed. Vibrato motion will be practiced on slow 1 octave scales. Always check the left-hand position. If a student has poor left-hand position, fix that first before the vibrato motion is used. At this point your concert music should be performance ready. Special emphasis should be placed on all phrasing and expressive marks. Make sure to work any transitions to ensure a smooth flow of music. The concert should be performed in order everyday to get the students used to playing it. Any glaring problems can be addressed as needed, but the main emphasis is on getting a flow to the music. Testing on the music should end this week allowing the students to play it and have fun. It is important that you play the music as much as possible in the actual concert setting to let the students get use to the acoustics of the venue. It would be wise to turn up all lights on a stage to get students used to them. Practice of movement on and off stage should also take place. Ensure that all students have their music. Fine-tuning takes place now. Have your colleagues listen to your rehearsals and offer constructive criticism.

Week fifteen: The student will...

- Demonstrate proficiency in all concert music
- Learn proper concert etiquette

Procedures:

A brief warm up/skill session will be used to ensure that basic tonalities exhibited in the music are secure. Concert music should be played through once and left alone for the day. If any glaring problems arise, they can be addressed, but the flow of the concert is most important. Students will be made aware of the teacher's requirements for the concert. Dress, behavior, call times, and consequences for not meeting these criteria will be discussed. Playing on stage is very important as is the practicing of getting on and off stage in a smooth, neat manner. Any make-up testing can take place at this point, but is not encouraged. The emphasis should be on a confident and solid performance. It is supposed to be fun, not a lesson in terror.

General suggestions for this month:

Get your students involved in the music. The bulk of the time in the first 4 months has been spent on review and learning of basics. It is now time to concentrate on the music. It is very important that you have chosen music that best reflects your students skill levels. You will have a better year if your students feel good about their performance. If the music is easier than you envisioned, so be it, the students learning and self-confidence far overshadows our dreams of being the next Toscanini. Make sure students pay a great deal of attention to detail, not only in the physical aspects of pitch and rhythm, but also in musical nuance. We are training the complete musician. Everything they do is important, nothing can be ignored.

Month 5: January

Concepts *taught this month*: Review of concepts from first 4 months (pre-Winter Break), reinforce positions studies, begin to prepare students for festival in March, continue to work on tone development and introduce (or reinforce) bass shifting and cello extensions.

Week sixteen: *The student will...*

- Review various bowing skills
- Review one octave D, G, C, F, Bb and A major scales and begin to learn second octave
- Sightread music in preparation for festival

Procedures:

Use warm-up time to review major scales. Use various bowings when playing the scales.

When introducing the two octave D Major scale, if the bass players have not shifted to the third position “D” on the G string, this will be the time to have your bassists do that. When this skill is developed you may choose to have your most advanced bass students learn the complete two octave D major scale using thumb position. If not, they can play up to the harmonic “G” (on the G-string) and then back to the “A” in first position up to the “D” in third position. This will provide good shifting practice for all the bassists as well as being able to simulate a two octave scale. Use this idea for the “C”, “Bb” and “A” major two octave scales when the bass student has not developed thumb position. Your bass students will not have to go into thumb position for F major. A suggestion would be to begin second octave major scales with “F”, “G” and “D”. The two octave scales that go beyond first position on violin and viola should be taught along with third and fifth positions.

For tone development make sure each and every student is drawing their bow parallel to the bridge at a point half way between the bridge and the fingerboard. If this skill is mastered by all the students they will demonstrate control of the bow. Begin to show the students that the bow will actually need to be drawn closer to the bridge to produce a louder sound and closer to the fingerboard when producing a quieter sound. An excellent way to achieve this concept is to draw the bow very slowly from frog to point and back, making a crescendo and diminuendo in the course of each stroke. At the peak of the crescendo, which occurs in the middle of the bow, the bow should be closer to the bridge. At the beginning and end of the stroke the bow should be toward the fingerboard. This should be practice first on open strings and then apply to

scales and appropriate etudes. Remember to do this slowly (in counts of four or eight).

Find music that you would like for your students to possibly play at festival. Make sure it is not too difficult or too easy. Scan the score for things that will challenge the students as well as things that will reinforce previous concepts. Have the students sightread every day, if possible. You can use this time to find music for festival and help the students develop their sightreading skills. Remember that there may be some mistakes but if the students can read through the piece with minimum amount “train wrecks” then the piece is probably suitable for your group. Try to find pieces that will cover various concepts and styles.

Week seventeen: The student will...

- Continue learning D, G, C, F, Bb and A major two octave scales
- Third position for violin and viola
- Review extensions on cello and shifting on the bass
- Continue to sightread with your students
- Continue work on tone development

Procedures:

When learning the second octave of the major scales some students will have no problems while some may need to go note by note. If you have students who can play the scale correctly have them write them out on staff paper while you work slowly with those students needing the extra help. If all of your students are having success then you should either go on to more scales or introduce thirds or arpeggios.

At this point violin and viola students should have already played some notes in third position but may have not been formally introduced. The third position extends the upper range by a third (a fourth if you consider the extension to the harmonic). The viola students will have to work on half position and may need to learn treble clef for the upper notes in third position.

Review and expand upon the extensions introduced in week five. Extensions are necessary because of the length of the strings and because the fingers need to be approximately two inches apart or more to produce a whole step in the first four positions (and not much less in fifth and sixth positions). Extensions are used to increase the number of notes available in a position.

By now, you should have sightread at least a few pieces. If you found a piece that you think is appropriate for your group have them read through it again sometime this week. During this reading, have the score studied and begin to create exercises to help them begin to learn the piece. Even if you have all of your festival music figured out you should continue the sightreading process.

Continue to work with the students on tone development. Use ideas presented in week sixteen and be creative and create your own exercises.

Week Eighteen: The student will...

- Continue learning D, G, C, F, Bb and A major two octave scales
- Continue to learn third position for violin and viola (include half position on viola)
- Continue to use extensions on the cello and shifting on bass
- Begin to work on festival music and continue sightreading

Procedures:

When the students have a two octave major scale learned begin to test them. All of the students should also begin to write music, so have them write on staff paper as well. If your group is having success then teach them the arpeggio and the thirds for each scale. Remember that correct fingering does not always mean correct pitch. Keep reinforcing the half and whole step relationships between notes. Use passages from concert music to demonstrate the importance of scales. At this point, some students may not understand why they need to play them. But *Concepts taught this month:* Review of concepts from first 4 months (pre-Winter Break), reinforce positions studies, begin to prepare students for festival in March, continue to work on tone development and introduce (or reinforce) bass shifting and cello extensions.

Week sixteen: The student will...

- Review various bowing skills
- Review one octave D, G, C, F, Bb and A major scales and begin to learn second octave
- Sightread music in preparation for festival

Procedures:

Use warm-up time to review major scales. Use various bowings when playing the scales.

When introducing the two octave D Major scale, if the bass players have not shifted to the third position "D" on the G string, this will be the time to have your bassists do that. When this skill is developed you may choose to have your most advanced bass students learn the complete two octave D major scale using thumb position. If not, they can play up to the harmonic "G" (on the G-string) and then back to the "A" in first position up to the "D" in third position. This will provide good shifting practice for all the bassists as well as being able to simulate a two octave scale. Use this idea for the "C", "Bb" and "A" major two octave scales when the bass student has not developed thumb position. Your bass students will not have to go into thumb position for F major. A suggestion would be to begin second octave major scales with "F", "G" and "D". The two

octave scales that go beyond first position on violin and viola should be taught along with third and fifth positions.

For tone development make sure each and every student is drawing their bow parallel to the bridge at a point half way between the bridge and the fingerboard.

If this skill is mastered by all the students they will demonstrate control of the bow. Begin to show the students that the bow will actually need to be drawn closer to the bridge to produce a louder sound and closer to the fingerboard when producing a quieter sound. An excellent way to achieve this concept is to draw the bow very slowly from frog to point and back, making a crescendo and diminuendo in the course of each stroke. At the peak of the crescendo, which occurs in the middle of the bow, the bow should be closer to the bridge. At the beginning and end of the stroke the bow should be toward the fingerboard. This should be practice first on open strings and then apply to scales and appropriate etudes. Remember to do this slowly (in counts of four or eight).

Find music that you would like for your students to possibly play at festival. Make sure it is not too difficult or too easy. Scan the score for things that will challenge the students as well as things that will reinforce previous concepts. Have the students sightread every day, if possible. You can use this time to find music for festival and help the students develop their sightreading skills. Remember that there may be some mistakes but if the students can read through the piece with minimum amount "train wrecks" then the piece is probably suitable for your group. Try to find pieces that will cover various concepts and styles.

Week seventeen: The student will...

- Continue learning D, G, C, F, Bb and A major two octave scales
- Third position for violin and viola
- Review extensions on cello and shifting on the bass
- Continue to sightread with your students
- Continue work on tone development

Procedures:

When learning the second octave of the major scales some students will have no problems while some may need to go note by note. If you have students who can play the scale correctly have them write them out on staff paper while you work slowly with those students needing the extra help. If all of your students are having success then you should either go on to more scales or introduce thirds or arpeggios.

At this point violin and viola students should have already played some notes in third position but may have not been formally introduced. The third position extends the upper range by a third (a fourth if you consider the extension to the

harmonic). The viola students will have to work on half position and may need to learn treble clef for the upper notes in third position.

Review and expand upon the extensions introduced in week five. Extensions are necessary because of the length of the strings and because the fingers need to be approximately two inches apart or more to produce a whole step in the first four positions (and not much less in fifth and sixth positions). Extensions are used to increase the number of notes available in a position. By now, you should have sightread at least a few pieces. If you found a piece that you think is appropriate for your group have them read through it again sometime this week. During this reading, have the score studied and begin to create exercises to help them begin to learn the piece. Even if you have all of your festival music figured out you should continue the sightreading process.

Continue to work with the students on tone development. Use ideas presented in week sixteen and be creative and create your own exercises.

Week Eighteen: The student will...

- Continue learning D, G, C, F, Bb and A major two octave scales
- Continue to learn third position for violin and viola (include half position on viola)
- Continue to use extensions on the cello and shifting on bass
- Begin to work on festival music and continue sightreading

Procedures:

When the students have a two octave major scale learned begin to test them. All of the students should also begin to write music, so have them write on staff paper as well. If your group is having success then teach them the arpeggio and the thirds for each scale. Remember that correct fingering does not always mean correct pitch. Keep reinforcing the half and whole step relationships between notes. Use passages from concert music to demonstrate the importance of scales. At this point, some students may not understand why they need to play them. But if you use the music that they will perform, it will help the students understand. You may need to introduce other scales than what has been suggested depending on the music you have selected.

Find passages where the use of third position will be necessary for the violin and viola students. Have the students practice shifting in and out of third position by using the music that comes before and after the passage(s). If needed, have the students ignore the rhythm at first and work note to note and then add in the rhythm to complete the process. Use this same idea for the bass shifting and cello extensions. If your concert selections do not include these techniques then be creative or find music that includes them.

Continue to sightread and find music for your students to perform. If you have run out of music to sightread borrow some from another school if possible.

Week Nineteen: The student will...

- Be tested on some two octave major scales and continue to learn others
- Prepare music for festival
- Continue working on techniques and writing music on staff paper

Procedure:

Test your students on whatever you feel they should have accomplished. Do not set low standards for those possible students who have not done their work. On the other hand, if your students have finished learning the suggested two octave major scales then introduce the relative minor for each major learned. Remember to keep reinforcing intonation as well as the fingerings.

Begin to set goals in preparation for festival. It is not recommended that you have the students learn only by playing through the pieces. Take the time to have them learn the music thoroughly.

Since many students do not experience learning the language of music by writing it out create assignments for students to write (not necessarily compose) music. It can be something as easy as just copying a passage or scale.

General suggestions for the month:

Remember that intonation is extremely important. If the students learn a scale without understanding what it should sound like and how it relates to the performance you will not find the results you would hope for.

In preparation for festival it might be a good idea to set some goals for each week. Write them on the board so the students can chart their progress. It might even motivate some students to work ahead. Be careful that those students who want to work ahead are prepared on the previous material.

Keep in mind that many students never write out music. Since we are training musicians not just violin, viola, cello and bass students, make time to include writing. Composing music is a great way to do this but even just copying or writing scales works. Try having a test where the students write out the scales in addition to playing them.

Use all of the playing ideas above to also work on tone. Bow control is essential along with intonation.

Month 6: February

Concepts taught this month: Further development of scales, tone production, shifting and extensions. Preparation for festival performance and solo & ensemble.

Week twenty: *The student will...*

- Continue to work on scales, shifting, extensions (cello) and tone production
- Use excerpts from selected music to begin festival preparation
- Encourage students participating in Solo & Ensemble Festival to play for you.

Procedures:

At this point with scale study, you will want to check all of your students if you have not done so already. Easy and quick playing tests can be done by going down the row asking each student to play a chosen scale. While some students resist to play in front of their peers, it is important for the students to hear each other. Continue to work on two octave major scales and don't forget to include those found within your selected music and relative minors. Use of extensions (cello), shifting and tone production can also be reinforced with the scales.

When selecting excerpts from the repertoire it is not always important to start at the beginning of the piece. There are many times where one passage may be played by a section and then the same passage will be repeated later by another. Look for these types of things to work on. You will also find places that are only played by one section and not another. Don't avoid these just because you do not want other students to be off task. However you choose your excerpts, be prepared with score study to answer questions and teach the students. Don't forget to write the week's or month's goals on the board for the students to see what will be expected of them. If possible, you may want to schedule sectionals outside of class-time to work with an individual section. Use the teachers at your feeder schools to help you with sectionals or extra rehearsals and in return, help them.

Week twenty-one: *The student will...*

- Continue to work on scales, shifting, extensions (cello) and tone production
- Continue with excerpts from repertoire
- Teach bowing skills using the various bowings found in the repertoire

Procedures:

Now that the students have been working on the two octave scales for six weeks, use warm-up time to teach bowings that are found in the music. Try taking the bowings and playing them with two octave scales. After the students feel comfortable with the bowing patterns use the excerpt from the music

instead of the scale. It may take some students longer to get the coordination of some bowing patterns so be prepared to have different ways of going through them. This same idea works for shifting and tone production.

Encourage you students to play their solo & ensemble pieces for you this week. If possible, use one day as a recital so the students can play for each other during class. Another option is to have a recital outside of class time. Whatever you can do to help your students prepare is helpful. Even if your students have private teachers have them play for you.

Weeks twenty-two and twenty-three: *The student will...*

- Prepare for Orchestra Festival
- Continue to work on intonation, tone production, shifting and extensions by using scales and excerpts

Procedures:

Your pre-festival concert should be fast approaching at this point. If you have not already, it is highly recommended that you invite your feeder schools to perform on this concert. The benefits are obvious in having your future students perform on the same concert as the high school groups. You should also invite other directors to come to the concert and adjudicate. Their comments of the performance should be valuable to you. Make time to hear other groups if possible, even volunteer to adjudicate a pre-festival concert from another school. Hearing other schools perform is not only courteous but should be very educational regardless of the level of the school.

Take the time to hear each and every student individually as much as possible even without testing them for a grade. When working out various passages it does not take much time to call on a student and ask them to demonstrate. Avoid asking the same students each time, or only the ones who you feel have it down.

General suggestions for the month:

It is so easy to feel overwhelmed at this time of the year. If you stay focused and organized it will be much easier. Try keeping a journal or note pad handy to jot down any ideas that you have during class. Many times you will have an idea but wait until after class to write it down and by then you may have forgotten. If you keep something up by the podium to write things down it will help you remember. Also, try recording (video and/or audio) your rehearsals. Sometimes you may hear things differently when you listen back. It will also help prepare for then next day.

Keep working on intonation and tone production. If you are consistent with your students they will know what to expect. With all of the things it takes to have a really fine sounding orchestra nothing is really more important than the other. Just make time by being organized so nothing is left out.

Month 7: March

Concepts taught this month: During March many activities take place including pre-festival concert, festival, all-state and spring break. It is very important to stay organized at this time of the year. Know your students schedules if they are in the All-State Orchestra.

Weeks twenty-four, twenty-five and twenty-six: *The student will...*

- Continue to prepare for performances; pre-festival concert and orchestra festival
- Continue to work on intonation, tone production, shifting and extensions by using scales and excerpts

Procedures:

Schedule sectionals with each section if you have not done so already. Making time for each section separately will allow each student to get the help needed to continue learning the music.

During class keep reinforcing all of the material you have covered. Also, try playing the piece all the way through without stopping if you have not done so already. After a run through discuss briefly with your students about the positive things that they did. Find something positive to talk about. Next, explain what still needs improvement. This may be a good way to begin to wrap up each class. Give the students exact measures to work on at home and explain what you want to hear the next day. Many students don't practice because they don't know what to practice. If they are provided with specific measures and passages it will help them organize their practice time.

If needed, don't hesitate to check single notes. When a line or chord sounds wrong or out of tune have each student individually play on that spot. Go down the row and see who has it and who doesn't. After the pitch is corrected individually have the entire group play one beat at a time. The process will eventually lead to the phrase being played in time and in tune.

Check to see that each student is moving their bow the same speed and in the same direction if you have not already. Don't settle for any students to play with the wrong bowings or on the wrong part of the bow.

If there are still corrections that need to be made in shifting or extensions use the same concept as when checking intonation. Have each student play the two notes where the shift occurs. If an alternate fingering can be applied to avoid a shift or make it easier, then have a suggestion ready.

Keep playing scales and sightreading each day.

Week twenty-seven: The student will...

- Perform at orchestra festival (Monday or Tuesday March 24-25)
- Use audio or video tapes of festival to write and discuss performance

Procedures:

On the day of your festival performance use class time (if available) to play through the pieces. Try to avoid too many corrections unless needed. Students may feel more nervous if they were given many more new things to think about. Make time to play through all of the scales that are required for festival and sightread. When you are at the festival site (Artemus Ham Hall) try to remember to have fun. If you feel overwhelmed or stressed try to let your students see it as they will be looking to you to help those feelings they may have.

Listen to the recordings made of the performance with your students. Have each student write down their thoughts as the music plays. If there are multiple recordings they should do this with each one. If there is time remaining encourage a positive class discussion, if not do this the next day. Require students to use musical terms when describing the performance. Also, have them discuss the preparation as well as the actual performance since this is just as, or more important. For the last assignment before spring break, have the students take their notes home and write a short paper describing their personal preparation (good, could have been better, etc...) and how it could be improved.

Weeks twenty-eight and twenty-nine: The student will...

- Reinforce the various objectives discussed throughout the year
- Incorporate composition or improvisation into plans

Procedures:

Use the next two weeks to keep reinforcing intonation, tone production, shifting and extensions. Revisit some older material to demonstrate the improvement the students have made. Try the suggestions the students have made in their papers on improvement, if possible. If your students will be performing on a spring trip then keep preparing. If the music is the same as they performed at festival, then keep working towards improvement. Try putting the music away every other day and work on new material if the students are prepared.

Students should attempt to compose a melody. Have them try write a one or two measure melody line that is within one octave and all of the notes should be part of one scale. Next, the students will pass out their melody to someone in their section to perform it. This idea can be expanded so be creative. If possible, have the students compose a melody on the spot be improvising.

Provide some helpful guidelines such as key/scale, rhythm or anything else. Once again, try and be creative.

General Suggestions for this month:

You have now made it through the most demanding portion of the school year. If you are taking your students on a trip during Spring Break make sure you have every detail figured out. It is easy to “coast” into spring break but this is such a crucial time to learn from the festival experience. Don’t allow students to have a “free day” after festival. Revisit some pieces that they have performed or sightread and try them again. Find similar musical problems in various pieces and work on them. Use composition and improvisation to further develop musicianship.

Month 8: April

Concepts taught this month: Two octave scales up to four sharps and four flats, syncopation, listening study, method book study using 9 two octave scales, sight reading spring concert selections.

Week thirty: *The student will...*

- Perform the following two octave scales: C Major, G Major, D Major, A Major, E Major.
- Sight read Spring Concert Selections
- Listen and analyze some classical music selections.

Procedures:

Have the students “spell” the C Major scale for you as you write the note names on the board. Discuss half and whole steps, and appropriate fingerings for each instrument. When the students are ready to perform the C scale, consider using a tonic pitch in the lower strings first as the upper strings play the scale on long tones. (No vibrato should be used when working on good intonation and scales.) Switch parts to keep everyone engaged. When this scale is proficient, continue with the G Major scale following the same procedure, which will include discussing the scale and using the tonic pitch when performing the scale. Add the D Major and A Major two octave scales continuing the long tones with no vibrato. (Please note: The students should play these scales with strong tone, full bow, and nice, “even” bow speeds) When introducing the E Major scale, break down the concept for them, and begin with ascending scale only.

Spend sufficient time on scales, and then begin sight reading a spring concert piece. Remember to read a piece in a sharp key to coincide with the above studied scales. Discuss the key before playing the piece.

In the last eight minutes of class, play a piece of classical music, and have a discussion. (Choose a different selection for each day of the week) Shut off one of the light switches in the room to create an atmosphere of listening and calm.

Week thirty-one: *The student will...*

- Perform the following two octave scales: F Major, B-flat Major, E-flat Major, and A-flat Major
- Play 2-3 syncopated rhythms using the above scales.
- Sight read Spring Concert Selections
- Listen and analyze some classical music selections (in flat keys.)

Procedures:

Repeat the lesson taught last week using the flat keys for this week. Once again, long tones and forte dynamic are recommended.

Have two or three syncopated rhythms on the board for the students. Use a practical application when teaching a new rhythm. Here is an example of how to break down a rhythm so that it will “stick” in the minds of your students.

1. Discuss the “math” behind the new rhythm
2. “Sight-say” or verbalize the syncopated rhythm several times.
3. Pizzicato the rhythm on an open D while speaking the rhythm.
4. Bow the rhythm on an open D or A.
5. Apply to all of the two octave scales being studied this week.

Use repetition for each of these steps until the students become proficient.

The next step would be to find a piece suitable for the spring concert, using flat keys with syncopation included. Have your listening examples reflect the keys being studied this week. Continue with seven or eight minutes of listening at the end of each period.

Week thirty-two: The student will...

- Perform two octave Major scales up to four sharps and four flats
- Perform the above two octave scales using syncopated rhythms
- Begin detailed work on chosen spring concert repertoire.

Procedures:

By this stage, the students are proficient in all 9 keys, two octaves. (Please note: Some keys, such as D Major, require the bass players to shift extremely high up their fingerboards. Try to simplify the scale, having them do only one octave when appropriate) Use a creative application this week to keep the scales interesting. Consider adding slurs, performing scales in rounds, having three different rhythms going in three different sections, or adding dynamic levels.

Re-teach the sequence in the syncopation lesson (from last week) as if it had not been taught before. Feel free to add one or two more rhythms, or change the time signature to expand this lesson. Another idea would be for a student to either choose the scale or make up a rhythm for the class to perform on that particular day. Continue to “tie-in” these scales with the pieces that you have chosen to perform this spring. Continue rehearsing music each day for part of each period.

Week thirty-three-thirty four: The student will...

- Become proficient performing two octave scales in 9 keys
- Perform out of the method book in 9 different keys
- Continue work on spring concert repertoire.

Procedures:

Continue the reinforcement of the two octave scales each day. Locate exercises out of the method book or other supplementary materials that include the previously taught scales. Apply a concentrated study of these materials, working diligently for 15-20 minutes each day. The next step would be to include thirds and arpeggios out of the method book to further challenge and develop skills for the students. To evaluate the class, consider a performance test on Friday (In preparation for a final exam including the nine scales and various lines from the method book of your choosing. Heavy emphasis should be put on knowledge of the scale, intonation and tone. In the second half of the period, continue rehearsing pieces for the end of the year concert.

General Suggestions:

Set a distinct goal for the intermediate orchestra to become proficient in the nine different key signatures at this time of the year. Do not proceed to a new scale, until the previous one is mastered. Always try to make scales creative and interesting, and make sure to connect them with the pieces you are working on.

As string educators, we are so fortunate to have a great wealth of quality music to select from for our spring concerts. According to Bennett Reimer in his book "A Philosophy of Music Education", 1970 he offers the following general guidelines towards selecting appropriate repertoire for your orchestra.

" There should be some pieces that present few if any technical or musical problems, some which are very challenging technically and musically, and most which can be performed and understood adequately but which contain enough challenge to warrant periodic study over a long period of time." (Page 134)

Listen to good music daily while understanding about the texture and style is beneficial for students. After district festivals are over is a wonderful time to focus some attention on music listening knowledge. These lessons should focus primarily on the music itself, rather than on events in composers lives.