

Clinic: The 500 Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins or in other words... The String Teacher on the Podium and in the Studio

presented by Jane Linde Capistran
reported by Sarah Chelgren

"...the conductor is far more than someone waving his arms correctly. He is a musician, musical coach, confidant, administrator, taskmaster, planner, psychologist, promoter, stage director, politician, traveler, speechmaker, dictator, comedian, dramatist, friend, teacher – and a lot more!" – Anonymous



Jane Linde Capistran

This quote from the top of the session handout from Jane Linde Capistran nicely summarizes the importance of her clinic topic. As music teachers, we wear many different “hats” everyday and, as Capistran explained, it can be overwhelming at times. When you take off one hat, another one pops up just like it does in the story of Bartholomew Cubbins. Our students are often overwhelmed with all of the hats they wear, too. The purpose of her session was to help break down the many jobs of music teachers into manageable pieces.

One of the joys of the job of a music teacher is that we have the freedom to select our curriculum (our repertoire) every year. This is also one of the most challenging parts of the job. “The music we select is of great importance to how and what we teach from the podium and in the studio.” There are three types of learning outcomes: skill, knowledge, and affective or aesthetic. Music teachers should ask themselves a few questions about the repertoire they are selecting to make sure it is appropriate and is meeting the needs of all three learning outcomes:

- What do your students need?
- What does the composition teach?
- Are you comfortable with teaching the composition?
- Does the composition challenge?
- Is the level of difficulty balanced with rehearsal time?
- Is the student mature enough?
- How will their knowledge be transferred?
- Does the composition have an enrichment value? Aesthetic value?
- Is your curriculum like a balanced diet? Is it planned like a menu? (Keep a checklist of your curriculum/ repertoire)
- Have you thought about the students? Audience? Yourself?

Capistran also discussed the National Standards as a way to label criteria we are likely already teaching. It is a good way to make sure teachers are maintaining the “balanced diet” of curriculum. The National Standards, according to the Music Educators National Conference website www.menc.org, are as follows:

1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
2. Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
3. Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments.
4. Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines.
5. Reading and notating music.
6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.
7. Evaluating music and music performances.
8. Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.
9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

Assessment is another large part of the job of a music teacher. Capistran recommends taking a varied approach to assessment, including the following: verbal, written, checklists, rating scales, rubrics, journals, video/DVD, audiotapes, and student portfolios.

Capistran mentioned the Comprehensive Musicianship Through Performance (CMP) approach as one way to cover a lot of curriculum areas during a rehearsal process. This includes incorporating history, theory, and aesthetic education into the daily work of learning a piece of music. More information on CMP can be found at www.wmea.com/CMP/ and in the book *Shap-*

ing Sound Musicians by P. O’Toole, Chicago: GIA Publications, 2003.

Capistran included a detailed diagram of the *500 Hats of the String Teacher* in her session handout. The main “hats” she includes are: podium presence, rehearsal pace, performance, curriculum, musical elements, technique, musicianship, individualism, ensemble, listening, interdisciplinary studies, and atmosphere. Her diagram highlights the complexity of the job and the importance of paying attention to all areas. Again, Capistran underscored the importance of a “balanced diet.”

The session concluded with a “mini-rehearsal” of a piece Capistran chose for the clinic. She rehearsed the ensemble using the approaches of the *500 Hats*. Theory, history, and musical elements were all discussed. This was an excellent example of how any music teacher should approach a piece of repertoire with a student.

Capistran’s session explored the ways that a music teacher can successfully wear 500 different hats. The overarching theme of maintaining a “balanced diet” in all areas, from the selection of repertoire to assessment to rehearsal techniques, is a valuable one and hopefully something that can help any music teacher maintain balance, perspective, and focus on the “final hat” — communication through music.

Sarah Chelgren directs orchestras at Robbinsdale Cooper HS and the District 281 Honors Orchestra. She also conducts the Greater Twin Cities Youth Symphonies Sinfonia orchestra. Sarah maintains a small studio of private cello students and freelances regularly in the Twin Cities. She is the assistant principal cellist of the Bloomington Symphony. ♪