

participation increased significantly after the orchestra program began. Strings can reach a different population that deserves the experience of music too.

- Stringed instruments will become more isolated and elitist if not allowed their rightful place in the mainstream of public school music.

- There's a ton of wonderful literature for strings to which kids naturally respond, that needs to be played and heard. The heritage of string/orchestra literature as well as the instruments themselves is vast and rich. Furthermore, there is a rich grass-roots folk and popular music tradition which is also unique to strings.

- The orchestra and its literature is held up in our culture as a pinnacle of achievement in Western civilization yet it is constantly short-changed in public school music priorities.

- Dive right in. If you think about it too long you might never do it, like standing on the high dive. It's not nearly as scary as it looks.

- Bring in string players to demonstrate the things you cannot do yourself, or ask some of the stronger students to do it. There's no shame in asking for assistance. This can also be a wonderful opportunity for outstanding students to get a taste of the joys of teaching.

- Recruit and involve local private teachers to assist you with sectionals, master classes, and in-school lessons. If you show your sincerity and interest, enlightened string teachers will

respond to your needs. After all, it is in their best interest to do so.

- Join and support such organizations as the American String Teachers Association and the National School Orchestra Association. They care and are ready and willing to help with information, materials, and support.

- There are lots of good materials available to help you understand string techniques, rehearsal techniques, and bowing. All you have to do is read it and start talking to string players.

- Permit yourself to make mistakes and learn with the kids. They will respect you if you are up front and show that you care.

- Diagnosing and fixing problems in young string players can be easier than winds because it's all visual. You can see the direct correlation between position and musical results.

- It is actually easier for strings to play in tune than winds – if intonation is stressed and taught properly. There aren't as many physical and mechanical barriers to overcome.

- The non-string player has the edge over the string player when it comes to working with full orchestra, as far as the winds and percussion are concerned.

- The wind and percussion players in the orchestra receive an enriched experience that is not the same as playing in the band. They must be soloist and chamber musicians in their approach to their parts.

- An opportunity to play in an orches-

tra can be a reward and a motivation for your better wind players to stay in your program, especially if they might be a little bored waiting for the rest of the band to learn parts they learned in the first reading. When they are working with the orchestra, you will have more time to devote to those who really need it and you will still have the stronger kids when you really need them for concerts. It also gives the second and third chair players a chance to play first parts in the band.

The future of school string programs may very well be in the hands of non-string players. One of the best experiences of all is learning and expanding one's horizons – a great preventive of burn-out. It just might be the ticket you're looking for. Kids are kids and music is music. Strings are simply another medium for bringing the two together.



Dr. Kjelland is assistant professor of music education and director of string development at the University of Southern California; and director of orchestras at the R. D. Colburn School of Performing Arts in Los Angeles.

INSTRUMENTAL EXECUTIVE SKILLS

by Richard F. Grunow

While there is no correct age in years for an individual to begin the study of a music instrument, there is an appropriate musical age for meaningful instruction to begin. When a student can sing in tune and move his or her body in a consistent tempo, he or she is ready to begin the study of a music instrument. When a student can sing

in tune and move in a consistent tempo but cannot perform expressively on an instrument with good intonation or rhythm, the student lacks instrumental executive skills.

Instrumental executive skills pertain to embouchure, articulation, posture, hand position, and finger dexterity. When these are neglected or taught out of sequence, students often perform

in an unmusical manner regardless of their tonal and rhythm skills. Such performances are characterized by unmusical and erratic tempos, inappropriate phrasing, and uncharacteristic tone quality and articulation. The purpose of this article is to suggest techniques for teaching instrumental executive skills to beginning wind instrumentalists.

POSTURE

Good posture for seated performance can be established by asking the

continued on page 6

THE BAND DIRECTOR AS ORCHESTRA DIRECTOR/ STRING TEACHER

by James Kjelland

In my experience doing workshops across the country, a very large share of public school string teaching is being done by non-string players. The reasons for this are several and may or may not seem obvious.

When string positions are cut from the budget, the person with the larger number of students - invariably the band director - inherits the orchestra/string class.

Many string majors in colleges are discouraged from careers in music education. There simply are not enough young string players going into music education.

Some band directors are seeking refuge from the relentless performance pressure at the high school level and moving to positions in elementary and middle schools. These schools often have string programs where the high schools might not.

The results are as varied as the reasons for entering the arena in the first place. On the negative side, these include:

- The director lets the string program die a slow death through "benign neglect" - paying only token attention because of a lack of commitment to string education.

- The director refuses to seek, or accept, help.

I hear many use the excuse: "What do you expect? I'm not a string player!" The fact is, they may not be percussionists, woodwind players, or brass players either, but they have taken the responsibility to learn the techniques and pedagogy of those instruments and make sure the students for whom they are responsible get the help they need. It is exactly the same situation with strings. I have seen enough strong string players taught by non-string players to realize that it is the enthusiasm, teaching skill, and commitment of the teachers that ultimately makes or breaks a program, regardless of what their major applied area is, how affluent the community is, or how many private teachers there are in the area. Yet an alarming number of colleges no longer require string techniques of their "instrumental" majors.

Colleges and universities bear equal responsibility with K-12 school systems for a lack of commitment to string education. When string technique classes are offered or required, they often teach how to play tunes rather than string pedagogy and group methods. Furthermore, these courses are often taught by unqualified faculty who have

no experience with or knowledge of the school string education situation.

On the positive side, however, there are more and more music educators being prepared in programs which take an affirmative stand for educating non-string students in string performance techniques and materials, and also in how to effectively teach strings in a group setting.

There are no mysteries to teaching strings effectively. The "mystique" is all too often promoted by string players themselves, and many band directors get turned off by their elitist attitudes.

The minute one picks up a string instrument and starts exploring what makes it "work," one becomes a string player - and a potentially effective teacher.

Last March, there was a panel discussion at the California Music Educators Conference in San Diego on the topic of band directors working with strings either in an orchestral or string class setting. Panel members described their background and training in instrumental music, their experiences in making the transition, where they turned for help, what was the most essential information needed to be effective, and what were their present concerns.

The following is a brief summary of important points made by these non-string-player-teachers and audience participants:

- Teaching strings can give you a whole new outlook on your profession and infuse new energy into all of your teaching.

- Once you start developing that good string sound you'll get hooked on it - guaranteed!

- The bottom line is musicianship and commitment. Go to one of the many excellent workshops designed for teachers in your situation.

- Instrumental music educators must take at least an equal responsibility for the string players in their programs.

- There is no reason to feel threatened by a string program. It takes good communication and cooperation on behalf of the kids to make a balanced program grow and flourish. Overall

