

## **Clinic Ideas for Your Ensembles or Organization**

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Having guests come to work with your ensemble or different sections can leave a great impact on you and your students. Whether it be improving their playing or technique, adding variety to the lesson, building camaraderie or changing their mindset, so many things are possible. It can help prepare them for big events or concerts, inspire and motivate them, encourage and elevate them, give you new ideas or reaffirm what you are doing with the students to them, to you, or to your administration. Here are some creative ideas that might help you plan your next guest visit into your program.

### **Classroom Master Class**

In this setting, students work (in advance) to prepare solos or small group material to play in a master class setting in front of the entire class or ensemble. The guest works with each performing soloist or group like a private lesson or coaching in front of all students, who will also benefit from the entire experience even if they are not participating as a performer. This would also be an opportunity for the rest of the audience to take notes.

### **Warm-Up Techniques**

Working on literature with a guest is a great use of time, but learning warm-ups with someone other than the students' main teacher may be more appealing than usual for them; this can be especially helpful for those who are not taking private lessons. With this, many concepts can be introduced or strengthened in a specific technique-style class. This topic could be tailored for the whole ensemble or for sectional/specific instrument coaching work, and could be of either the hosting or the guest teacher's advice and discretion. Examples could be: shifting, vibrato, scales, intonation, rhythm and using a metronome, finding warm-up and practice ideas in the literature, dynamics and articulations, bow styles, fingering exercises. Asking a guest to come and work on something specific with the students helps them to better support your teaching, and the guest is more confident in knowing precisely what they are to execute to help students improve.

### **Topic-Specific Lectures and Demonstrations**

Guests are great people to utilize when important (or fun) topics arise. Topics that could be explored with a guest coming to speak could include: instrument care and maintenance; basic music comprehension review; music history or theory; world music and/or different fiddle styles; performance practice; preparing repertoire and practicing; healthy practice; instrument-specific performing techniques or warm-ups; tuning; yoga and other health-related topics for musicians; career and college advice; audition and jury preparations; finding and attending live performances and becoming a part of the live-listening experience as an audience member, as well as listening to and supporting ongoing public radio programs and other broadcasts; music technology; composition; performance anxiety; creating ensembles and activities independently; creating programs and writing program notes; learning how to conduct, be a music librarian or sound engineer, or be on stage crew; ownership, leadership, and

community relations and goals by being a part of an artistic team. The list continues, but the difficult topics can be less threatening and more stimulating with a fresh face and energy in the room.

### **Active Clinics**

Including interpretive dance or doing body-movement rhythms taught from other experts could be just the thing to get rhythm and coordination inside the students and to get the wiggles out of them, streamlining their energy into more productive musical tasks. These would be excellent times to study dance music such as Minuets or Giges, or even to understand jazz rhythms. Making a big deal out of whole-person interactive experiences in music will stay with students for a much longer time than just talking about or demonstrating it.

### **Special Guest Sit-In**

Inviting up to several guests to come sit in and play with your ensemble next to your students is a vibrant experience for everyone. This is similar to a side-by-side, but requires fewer professionals' time, and with an average of one-per-section, all students can set eyes and ears on the same leader (even if the guests are sitting in the back of the section for support) to learn. Some section coaching can be involved, yet much of the work is done right in your rehearsal. Professional guests will show how to behave in an ensemble setting, and will be excellent playing examples for students to follow and live up to. This would be a great chance to connect with a local college music department or symphony.

### **Performance-Op**

Have a guest come to perform for (or with) your ensemble! It is a special treat brought right to them and does not require a field trip. Adding a master class to the end of it can be wonderful too, but keeping it star-quality can be awe-inspiring for the students. Allow time to have a reception and have the guest(s) mingle with the students to answer questions and sign autographs. This is another less-threatening way for the students to learn from the pros.

### **Assistants**

Bring in a college student or professional to assist you during your rehearsals. They can walk around quietly helping fix posture, bow holds, students who are lost in the music, bow lengths, tuning, and a myriad of other things that would be useful for everyone without taking time disrupting your rehearsal.

### **Locating and Funding Artists**

Finding clinicians and artists should be fairly straightforward, though can take time. Excellent working artists are in or near practically every community, and they are likely looking for or would welcome opportunities as you may be seeking them out. If you are searching locally, try contacting the education department in the local symphony, or the youth symphony, college music department, conservatory or private teaching staff in the area, and chamber music players. Scan rosters and biographies of local musicians and teachers to find out more about them and who you might like to have visit. If you are open to artists from further away for reputation or different experiences, you can do many of the same

things, and some may have representatives who would arrange for the artist and answer questions. Finding literature relative to these artists would prove especially helpful in searching (major magazines or journals or those from the area which you are seeking an artist, major concerts or special appearances, even networking with colleagues at conferences).

If you know far enough in advance of the clinic, look into education or arts grants that could fund a school or nonprofit with an especially big project. Linking with another department or ensemble would boost significance of the event and perhaps cut costs. For some organizations, seeking private donations or fundraising toward a goal is an option. If you have a budget to work with, try to make room for visiting artists. Make sure the value and product of the clinic are clear to all of your sources. Lastly, if you do not ask, certainly you do not receive. Some artists are willing and able to negotiate their visit, either in an adjusted rate, pro bono, or other in-kind services given back to them for their time and expertise. If it is just not possible to provide the going rate but you still want to give your students the opportunity, check with the artists to see if they would be willing to make another arrangement.

### **Wrapping Up**

Regular clinic sessions with guests coming to work only on repertoire with an ensemble or to do sectionals is still highly effective. These are just some other ideas and solutions to add variety to visiting guest structures. Offering various kinds of sessions allows you to utilize more local or exceptional artists in unique and valuable ways. Be sure to provide the details or parameters for your guest's work so they can better serve you and everyone finishes with a great and positive experience.