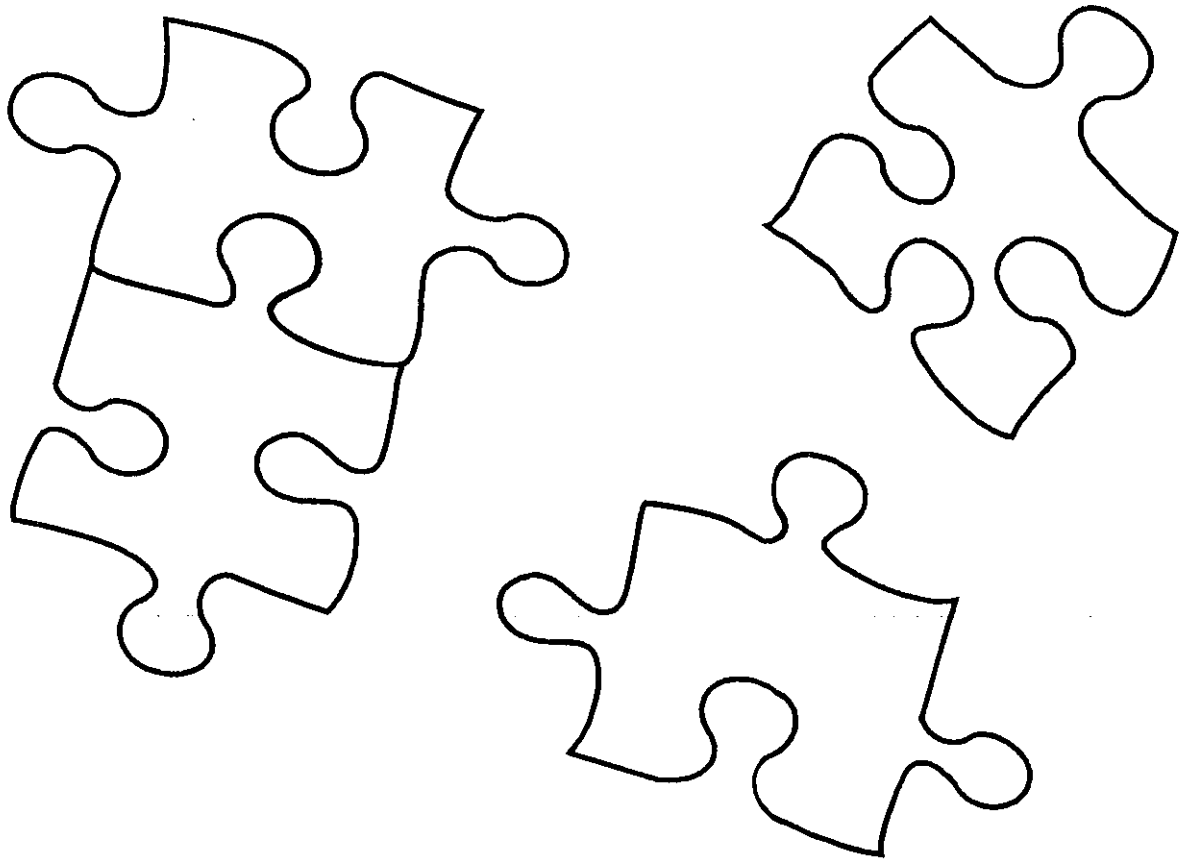


Puzzle Pieces - PPP

Preparation, Practice, Performance



presented by
JoAnna Cochenet

on

April 6, 2013

for the musicians at and nearby the
Mukwonago String Academy
Mukwonago, WI

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JoAnna Cochenet, *Presenter*

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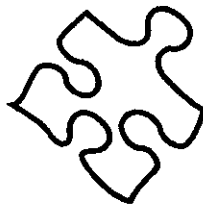
Mukwonago, WI

Puzzle Pieces – PPP: Preparation, Practice, Performance

Abstract

Puzzle Pieces – PPP: Preparation, Practice, Performance is intended to encourage musicians take a step-by-step approach to practicing better (read: more efficiently, with fewer mistakes and frustrations). Upon leaving this presentation, the musicians will have a better understanding of how to break things down before putting them together again, as if working on a puzzle. Finding the structure and outline of a piece and then the smaller concepts within a piece of music will help to establish and solidify the foundation for the whole unit of music. Through thorough technical practice and efficient preparation, more beautiful and confident musical performances can be obtained. Ultimately the best results are achieved. By approaching the piece as if it were a *puzzle* rather than *homework*, the elements of 'fun' and 'discovery' will surface, as small goals are constantly and encouragingly met every step of the way.

This presentation and demonstration can be applied to most instrumentalists, though it will be particularly helpful for and aimed at string players. It is generally for the intermediate or advancing player.



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Creating Goals

- I. What do you want to achieve:
 - a. In the long term?
 - b. In the short term?
 - c. In this practice session?
- II. **Puzzle Pieces:** Can you break down the larger goals into smaller bits?
 - a. A less daunting task is more manageable and realistic
 - b. Achieving smaller goals builds confidence, increases motivation, solidifies longer-lasting technical foundations, and quickens overall progress
- III. **PPP:**
 - a. Stage one: Prepare small bits
 - b. Stage two: Practice larger portions
 - c. Stage three: Perform it

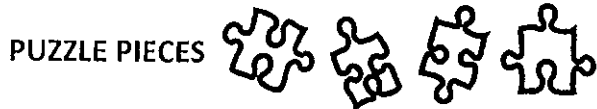
Basic rules

- I. *Practice does not make perfect. Practice makes permanent.* Any habit, good or bad, when repeated, will stick unless countless efforts have been made to counteract the habit.
- II. *Quality over quantity.* Specifically referring to practice time. It is better to have a fully concentrated 20 minute practice session than an hour or more of sloppy, inattentive, or frustrated and unplanned practice.
- III. *Stay focused.* By using the ideas to be presented in this session, many times you will end up becoming so focused you do not even realize the time that has passed during a practice session.

Getting started

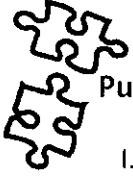
- I. *Listen.* Sometimes just listening to the piece of music a few times (with various performers and interpretations) helps to establish in your head and ears how the music 'is supposed to go.'
- II. *Warm up.* Just like many activities, starting with a good warm up allows the comfort of being able to practice longer or better.
 - a. Practice warm-ups with a drone and/or a metronome (scales, pitch, rhythm, bow work, etudes).
 - b. Any opportunity that you can specifically work on and develop good intonation and rhythm, you should.

- III. *Overall understanding.* Try to get a feel for the music: play as much as you can from beginning to end to see what sections you may need to spend the most time on and to which to give the most attention. This is best done well under tempo.



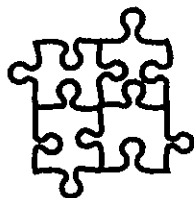
- I. *Choose wisely.* Pick a manageable task and tackle it completely (if needed, come back later to double check the passage or try again). *Do not choose solely to learn or memorize an entire page of music in one sitting.* Instead, choose smaller bits, like a specific hard-to-reach shift or scale passage in two measures that might repeat itself or be applicable later in the piece.
- II. *Immediate application.* You know that your basics need to be established (scales, bow work, finger patterns, and so on). Not because the teacher “says so” but because all of the basics are eventually found within the music. By finding these spots, suddenly the routines become less boring and immediately more applicable. Think about it like a “Puzzle.”
 - a. Sample puzzle pieces to discover and work on:
 - i. Arpeggios and Scales
 - ii. Pitch and Rhythm
 - iii. String Crossings
 - iv. Bowings and Bow styles
 - v. Other finger or bow patterns
 - vi. Musical patterns
- III. *Get started.* Diving into the aforementioned tasks (see sample with handout)*
 - a. Musical form and overall structure (use colored pencils)
 - b. Musical patterns (encourages development of making it ‘more musical’)
 - c. Arpeggios
 - d. Scales
 - e. Finger patterns
 - f. Pitches (locking in checkpoints)
 - g. Intervals, Fingerings, and Harmonies
 - h. Rhythms
 - i. String Crossings
 - j. Shifting
 - k. Bowing
 - l. Bow styles
 - m. Variations on practicing
 - n. A word on tempo (slow, increasing, going beyond)
- IV. *Young Children.* Create games or other cues allowing them to keep track and take ownership of practicing. Visible and growing results are encouraging and these can instill appreciation of intrinsic rather than extrinsic rewards.

- a. Practice chain (individual or collective)
- b. Practice charts (of any variety): for minutes or days; for specific tasks; coloring in pictures for each practice session; target/goal practice; etc.
- c. Creating different 'levels' of graduation, similar to 'Leveling Up' in video games or accumulating points in card or board games, etc.



Putting it Together

- I. Take it to the next level
 - a. Once you have established well-prepared smaller units of music, start piecing larger sections together. You will be surprised at how much more easily the passages will fall into your fingers with little to no fumbling.
 - b. Generally speaking, one should practice to a point where the least chance of mistakes occur. However, that being said, mistakes happen, and it is all a part of the learning and execution process. We all survive.
- II. Take it to yet another level
 - a. After piecing smaller units together to form bigger ones, try to go from beginning to end of the piece or sections.
 - b. Practice this several times so the entire work feels comfortable.
 - c. Throughout this entire puzzle-practice-process, the process of memorizing has probably already occurred, mentally, aurally, and under the fingers (muscle memory) due to the nature of this kind of practice. Were you trying to memorize it? Probably not. You were working too hard on efficient practicing. Congratulations!
- III. Conclusion: Performance and Results
 - a. Performing is like reaching the top level in a game. It is the reward for hard work.
 - b. Remember that an artist's work is never done. Apply these steps to other works you are learning. Each time you do it, the mental process will become much faster, and with some exceptions, the difficult passages will seem much less so because you will have a system with which to tackle them.
 - c. Final results will be much more solid and confident, allowing you as the performer to focus much more on musicality.
 - d. Sight-reading and general music-reading skills are developed and strengthened.
 - e. Just one of many benefits: You start to become your own teacher.
 - f. Added bonus: You can do anything you put your mind to.



Additional Materials Used

Suzuki Book 3

P. Martini - Gavotte

Suzuki Book 4

A. Vivaldi - Concerto in A (D) minor, Op. 3 No. 6, – I. Allegro

**For the purpose of reaching a variety of students, solo music used during this presentation was chosen based on the fact that it is available in formats for both violin and viola players. Copies of both versions are given to aid in the presentation.*

JoAnna Cochenet is an Artist Faculty at the Omaha Conservatory of Music as a conductor and viola/violin teacher, and is a freelance conductor, clinician, and guest artist. She holds a M. M. in Orchestral Conducting and Viola Performance from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and a B. M. in Instrumental Music Education and Viola Performance Certificate from Coe College. In addition to her recent participation in conducting workshops with conductors, teachers, and authors Diane Wittry and Markand Thakar, JoAnna's formal conducting studies were with Margery Deutsch, Dr. William Carson, the late Richard Hoffman, and Dr. Marc Falk. Her formal viola studies were with Lewis Rosove and Dr. Michael Kimber. She also performs with the Omaha Symphony and is a co-founder and violist of the Kronberg Ensemble, 501(c)3.

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