

KEY CHANGES: REFRESHING YOUR MUSIC PROGRAM

Summer Is Coming

Make a Musical Splash

As the weather begins to warm, thoughts of the summer fill our minds. The joy of awakening when the sun rises, not when our alarms chime, is closer. The ability to experience a relaxing lunch that lasts more than 30 minutes is soon upon us. And, we can enjoy a week day—or more—with family and friends, without worrying about preparing substitute plans.

The summer provides educators an opportunity to refresh our minds, recharge our bodies, and regain a sense of balance. It often provides enrichment or entertainment time that isn't often available during the academic year. It can allow for time to reflect on the past academic year's achievements and challenges and to prepare for another musical year to be even more positive and productive than the last. We may spend time during the summer choosing repertoire, repairing instruments, enhancing a course handbook, creating documents, scheduling events, or updating our websites. Many of us will work at a summer camp, conduct an ensemble, teach private lessons, or dare I say, disconnect entirely from the musical world for a brief moment. Others will register for courses to maintain teaching certificates or to earn an additional certification, advanced degree, or salary enhancement. Whatever we plan to do, the summer can be an opportunity to improve ourselves and/or others, and to refresh our music programs.

As the school year begins to wind down, encourage your students to engage in some form of musical training over the summer break. This may eliminate regression of musical knowledge, allow for improvement, and retain students who may be on the fence about continuing in a music program. Create and distribute a list of local music camps and private

instructors for students and families to view. Provide a variety of camps that include different formats, dates, locations, instructors, and prices. Allow your students and their families a chance to choose which opportunities fit their summer schedules. If there isn't an offering that you feel serves the needs of your community, create one. Start small and local. Consider creating a summer music workshop for a specific instrument or voice part. Set up a camp where advanced musicians serve as counselors and train the less experienced musicians. Create a music ensemble

“Continuous improvement is better than delayed perfection.”

—MARK TWAIN

that rehearses once a week throughout the summer or intensely for several hours for one full week. Discover possible indoor and outdoor venues where the ensemble can perform. Consider the school auditorium, a church, an amphitheater, a local restaurant, poolside at the



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community swim club, at a Fourth of July event, and so forth. Parents are more likely to register their children for a summer program when they trust the staff and instructors to keep their children safe, active, and educated.

Do you want to expand your instructional, musical, pedagogical, and/or technological skills? Attempt

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to find a summer program that will interest you, develop your musicianship, and/or inspire you to become an even more effective educator. Search within your school system or local institutions for opportunities for professional development. There are plenty of online options, too. Such educational courses provide convenience but often lack face-to-face interaction. If you are willing to travel and lodge, consider collegiate institutions that offer summer-only

sessions. A quick online search of summer continuing music studies provides sessions all over the United States, from The University of the Arts in/around Philadelphia to VanderCook College of Music in Chicago or the American Band College in Ashland, Ore. Some national ensembles offer summer sessions, too, where you learn side by side with the ensemble's musicians and its conductor. Even New York City's Carnegie Hall offers a Music Educator Summer

Workshop at a ridiculously low cost with financial aid options. Decide what type of professional development best fits your schedule, finances, aspirations, and will best inspire you. If you are willing to explore, you are destined to find a course, workshop, or program that fits your musical interest.

If you aren't planning to enroll in formal professional development, then locate a mentor or two. Pick the brains of those colleagues you admire and hope to emulate. Talk shop. Ask questions, opinions, suggestions, and recommendations regarding these advisers' programs, recruitment and retainment tactics, schedules, performances, or teaching styles. Ask them to share their teaching experiences and thoughts about the current and future state of music education. Or, offer to mentor a novice teacher and offer the same learning experience to him/her.

Have you been maintaining your musicianship? (See my column from January 2018.) If you are doing very little, the summer may provide more time to practice. If you are doing nothing at all with your instrument, then find it, dust it off, get it repaired if necessary, and use it. Once you feel confident practicing your musical skills again, consider ways to engage with other musicians or discover opportunities for performance. Volunteer at church to sing or play your instrument. Practice duets with a colleague. Organize a chamber ensemble, such as a trio, quartet, or quintet. Join a community ensemble. Perform in a musical as a cast member, ensemble member, or as a member in the pit orchestra. Return to making music again, not just conducting or teaching it.

If you enjoy composing, you may find additional time to write your own music or to design marching band drill. Attend a concert that you don't have to plan, conduct, perform, or adjudicate. You may be able to actually enjoy listening to music without the stress of organization. Imagine that!

Regardless of your summer plans, be sure to refresh yourself and your music program. Make a musical splash! **T**



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