

The Clinic Tradition – An Opportunity for Sharing

James F. Keene, 2015 TBA Featured Clinician

Forty years ago, I attended my very first TBA “session”—on the golf course! As the newly appointed Director of Bands at East Texas State University (now called Texas A&M-Commerce), I had begun my duties with the annual Summer Music Camp, which was staffed with several successful teachers, many of whom were East Texas alumni. They convinced me that it was an ABSOLUTE MUST to attend the TBA convention in San Antonio, where the highlights included a golf tournament, tennis tournament and a big Bar-B-Que at the Lone Star Brewery! This sounded like great fun and I looked at this as an opportunity to meet several directors and begin “networking”. I was accompanied by Neill Humfeld, the distinguished trombone teacher and former band director, who had many friends in TBA.

The annual TBA golf tournament was held at the Pecan Valley Golf Course. Although it no longer exists, Pecan Valley was an iconic venue that had hosted several major championships, and promised to be a most enjoyable beginning to the convention. At some point during the round, a golfer from an adjacent golf hole walked over to the fairway where we were playing. Initially I assumed that he was going after a stray shot until I noticed that he

was not carrying his club. As he approached, I recognized that it was Dick Floyd, whom I had met at a conference the previous year. He had spotted me and had come over to welcome me to Texas, with an admonishment to “be sure to contact him if he could be of assistance in any way.” Anyone who knows Dick knows that his greeting was completely sincere. In the next few days, I was to make several more new acquaintances who were also to become mentors, colleagues and allies in the mission of music education.

Cut ahead ten years to 1985; I was now Director of Bands at The University of Arizona. A promising senior music education major asked for a meeting regarding advice on career opportunities and I encouraged him to pursue a position in Texas. He landed a band job in El Paso. When he happily shared the news, my next piece of advice was to seek out and make friends with master teachers such as Rick Lambrecht, Dan Black and others, and to learn from their knowledge and expertise. First

things first, however, “YOU MUST ATTEND TBA!” The student that I refer to in this rather serendipitous set of events was Bruce Beach, our current TBA President—and the rest is history, as they say. I am honored that Bruce has invited me to serve as this year’s Featured Clinician.

First of all, I am not ashamed to admit that I have contributed very few, if any, original or innovative ideas into my teaching techniques. Any success that I have achieved has come from learning from others through listening and observing: most often in clinics, sometimes in conversation, sometimes just sitting across a dining table. The TBA convention provides a venue where one can take advantage of several of these opportunities. The first session I will teach at this summer’s convention is entitled *Some Things I’ve Learned at TBA in the Past 40 Years* and is an homage of sorts to many of the wonderful clinics and iconic clinicians that I have been privileged to learn from over the years.

James F. Keene is serving as the 2015 TBA Featured Clinician at the Convention/Clinic this summer. He is presenting three clinics—make sure to attend.

See the convention schedule on pages 16-27 for dates and times of Professor Keene’s sessions.

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The second session *Elements of Disrespect!—Dots, Ties, Rests, Fermatas and other “stuff”* is communicated from the perspectives of a clinician and contest adjudicator and deals with the elements of musical style that are most often ignored, abused or simply lacking in our quest for a “squeaky clean” performance. Not only do these musical indiscretions make phrasing, shaping and other interpretive elements impossible, but they actually create a different, additional set of technical and execution problems.

Session III *The Musicality “All Inclusive” Rehearsal* is intended to encourage a rehearsal routine that is inclusive of all elements of the generally accepted “Ten Teaching

Points” of the Instrumental Music Program. These axioms, of course, consist of:

- 1) Attitude (leadership, learning environment)
- 2) Tone Production
- 3) Intonation
- 4) Rhythm
- 5) Technique
- 6) Theory
- 7) Interpretation
- 8) Repertoire
- 9) Routine (and “physical” environment)
- 10) Musicianship

Obviously, these are not listed in order of importance and although the emphasis shifts in the daily lesson plan, the focus is always about the music and the final goal is always musicality. Nowhere have I observed the “Ten Teaching Points” more consistently achieved than in the rehearsals of the great Texas programs.

I am honored to have the opportunity to share what I have learned from others. I look forward to continuing to join you each July as we grow together through the “TBA EXPERIENCE”.

James F. Keene retired from the University of Illinois in 2008, where he held the titles of Director of Bands and Brownfield Distinguished Professor of Music. Appointed in 1985, he was only the fourth to hold the Director of Bands position since 1905. During his 23-year tenure at Illinois, the Symphonic Band and Wind Symphony, under his direction, were selected to perform for every major music conference in the U.S., toured throughout the U.S. and Europe, and performed in several of America’s most prestigious concert halls including several appearances at historic Orchestra Hall in Chicago, as well as Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center in New York. Previous to his appointment at The University of Illinois, Professor Keene taught at all levels, including building nationally recognized programs at East Texas State University (now Texas A&M - Commerce) and at The University of Arizona. He continues to be in constant demand as conductor, clinician, and adjudicator.

A more detailed biography of Professor Keene can be found on the TBA website, included with the convention schedule.