



## **Beyond Measure 7: Lessons That Linger**

**CLINICIAN:**

**Larry Livingston - TBA Featured Clinician**

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# Beyond Measure 7: Lessons that Linger

## Clinic Outline

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- 1) Conceptual teaching from the podium (see “Conceptual Teaching and Rehearsing” handout)
  - When you stop, have a reason. Make constructive but conceptual, rather than merely circumstantial commentary. Not just, “Clarinets you are too loud in measure 7,” but explain why the clarinets are too loud, what concept or larger problem is causing them to be wrong. Do they not have the theme? Are they playing in the high register? Do they have a less interesting part? Are they making too bright a timbre? Not just, “Trombones, you are late,” but more to the point, what is the reason for being late? Are they entering after a long rest? Do they have an upbeat? Is their part written in an unfriendly register? Are they not listening? Not, “Band let’s do it again and do it better?” What needs to be better and what behavioral changes are needed to make it better? How about, “Clarinets, you have long note values in measure 7. That means you are not likely to be important. Write this in blood. Whenever your part is inactive, long notes for example, regardless of the dynamic in your music, you must listen for other more important musical information. To do that you have to get out of the way. Long notes mean play softer!” Conceptual teaching always focuses on the big picture. It always seeks broad application and the ultimate goal is to turn over the decision making process to the student(s). The conceptual approach is about building independence, about providing the student a lexicon of fixes for as many musical situations as possible.
  - There are only 2 basic forms of specific commentary. The first is to focus on the technical/physical process which creates the sound. “Blow faster air, try this alternate fingering, open your throat, increase your vibrato speed, use a different mallet, etc.” This commentary presumes that if the player(s) follow(s) the technical instruction, it will produce the desired result. Conversely, the other commentary describes the desired result and leaves it to the player(s) to make the appropriate technical/physical changes to produce that result. In this mode, the use of image, metaphor, and simile are very important. “Make a darker sound, it needs to be more delightful, sweeter, innocent, carefree, tragic, tender, rougher, etc.” We need both forms of instruction, and must develop increasing technical understanding of the instruments, as well as a growing catalog of metaphors and images.
  - Structural/harmonic analysis and historical research – impact on interpretation.
- 2) The eye – memorizing scores. If the performers are asked to look at us, we need to look at them.
  - Methods: score marking, color coding, structural analysis, playing at the piano, rote, note by note, listening to recordings (has risks)
  - Work from memory in rehearsal, as well as in concert. To be free, to really listen to the ensemble, to send a message to the players about preparation and commitment. Remember, it is actually much easier to conduct than to play
  - If we want the students to look at us, we must look at them.
  - We, ourselves, must know best the parts of the music that the players will find the most difficult: transitions, tempo changes, sudden dynamic shifts, new and/or complex rhythms.

- 3) The ear – essence. It is all about listening. Breaking out of the cocoon.
  - Teach your ensemble to sing, speak, clap, CONDUCT
  - Mouthpieces only (especially for brass)
  - Try random seating (experiment)
  - Look for ways to vary the auditory experience
- 4) The body – get off the podium. Animate the rehearsal environment. Band is a class. Do whatever it takes to obviate the debilitating sameness of each day being like the last.
- 5) Videotape/DVD your rehearsals. Find areas for growth. Avoidance of repetitive comments and “old saws”. How do you look? How would you respond to that image on the screen if you were a member of the ensemble? Pain = Gain. It will be excruciating at first. Ultimately, it will make a huge difference.
- 6) Attitude is everything. Glass half full!
  - Conviction
  - Tenacity: it is always too soon to quit!
  - Aiming at the A+ in each student
  - The difference between being commanding and demanding
  - Avoiding the “me” vs “them” syndrome.
  - Looking for the ascent of spirit and the light in the eyes, as opposed to the “fish eye” or “dead eye”
  - Reminding them by your very manner of the magic that drew them to music in the first place
  - Importance of humor
- 7) Helping them find meaning beyond the music.
  - Always looking for new possibilities
  - Being a contribution vs the success/failure paradigm
  - Fred Rogers was right
  - Releasing them to be
  - Seeking Samadhi, autotelesis
  - Work = play = work
- 8) The importance of a rehearsal lesson plan
  - Specific goals for each rehearsal
  - “Groupings” rehearsal technique
- 9) Books worth reading:
  - Music Matters by David Elliott, Oxford University Press
  - Free Play by Stephen Nachmanovitch, Penguin Group
  - This Is Your Brain on Music by Daniel J. Levitin, Penguin Group

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## Philosophical Premise

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For whom are we doing this?

- We are doing it for our students.

What do we want for them?

- We want to make each of our students independent of us and independent of the ensemble, in order to make possible for them a lifelong love affair/involvement with music.
- We want to enlighten and enable each of them to seek musical nourishment as a doer, maker, and listener, and to become a carrier of the magic into the world.
- We want to make a contribution to their lives which will leave them better adults, better able to cope, and inspired to pass on to their children the irreducible miracle of music.
- Ultimately, we want to help them forge their own legacies of goodness across the land.

How can we do this?

- We need to create experiences which are so compelling that the students will be able to harvest them forever.

What objectives best serve that goal?

- Through conceptual teaching, to illuminate/show/demonstrate how music works, how musicians acquire skill, interpret notation, interact in a musical environment, and develop sophisticated auditory cognition.
- To link music to the larger mysteries of the universe.
- To lay the groundwork for ongoing participation in doing or making music.
- To grow enlightened and motivated listeners/consumers of music.
- To demonstrate by our behavior the possible congruence of doing well and doing good

How do we realize these objectives? We must develop pedagogies which:

- Focus on concepts rather than on specific circumstances
- Free students from the need for a teacher
- Engage the mind on a musically holistic level
- Find truths, ideas, and/or premises in music which are also relevant to other disciplines or pursuits (e.g., the Fibonacci series, golden mean, phi, Newton's laws of motion)
- Establish music-making configurations which are individually- or small group-based
- Make composition a core part of the program
- Make improvisation a core part of the program
- Encourage multiple instrument study
- Take an eclectic approach to repertoire
- Ask everyone in the ensemble to be a "conductor" as an integral part of rehearsals
- Include analytical and historical information as core in the daily lesson plan
- Merge performance-based rehearsing/teaching with analysis
- Teach students to read a musical score
- Embrace the reality that teaching music is a subset of the larger phenomenon, teaching life
- Make a priority out of helping each student become the best version of his or her unique self

Remember, it is about them.

# **Beyond Measure 7: Lessons that Linger**

## **Conceptual Teaching and Rehearsing**

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### **1. Tuning**

- The tuning of equal temperament intervals must be adjusted. Essentially, these adjustments or accommodations are related to the ear's preference for intonation derived from the natural or just intonation system. Therefore, there are many versions of every pitch. To be "in tune" depends on context (see "Chords of Just Intonation").

Some typical adjustments:

Octave and 5ths are tuned as though beatless.

In major chords, the 3<sup>rd</sup> must be kept low.

In minor chords, the 3<sup>rd</sup> must be kept high.

- All instruments are out of tune. Only players can be in tune.
- Tune from the bottom up. This is important because the lowest sounding voice provides the listener the largest set of audible overtones as a reference for locating the higher pitches in the sonority.

### **2. Balance**

- Build the sound from the lowest pitch in the sonority.
- Think of a pyramid.
- High frequency pitches are perceived by the ear to be louder than low frequency pitches. Therefore, dynamic adjustments or alterations to the printed markings may have to be made by the players in order to properly balance all of the voices in a given texture. For example, those players with the most soprano line may have to play softer than the dynamic indicated in the parts in order not to stand out. Similarly, to be heard, the players who have the lower voices may have to increase the written dynamic. In a descending melodic passage, it may be necessary to use an acoustical or compensatory crescendo to preserve the audibility of the line.

### **3. Interpretation/Rhythm**

- If you have a long note, get out of the way. The oft-repeated comment, "Never sit on a long note" is neither trustworthy nor even commonly applicable as an interpretive guide. In general, long note values should be played at a restrained dynamic level in order that more important musical information be audible.

- If your part is important, make it heard. There are a variety of musical circumstances which may require the player to project his or her part into the foreground. These include when the player has:
  - a) a melodic line or theme
  - b) a rhythmically active or moving line
  - c) a chromatic line
  - d) new material
  - e) a dissonant moment
  - f) a solo passage
  - g) a syncopated moment
  
- To show phrase direction, make clear the function of every note in the system. Every note in a musical line has a function: on the way to a goal, as a goal itself, or exiting a goal.
  
- In slow-tempo music, use the active passages to provide expressive shaping. All rhythms have an intellectual component (duration) and a feeling component. The intellectual component is simply about counting. The feeling component is richer in implication and has to do with shape, direction, and intent. In music which moves at a slow tempo, it is usually the moving line(s) or active passages which provide the opportunity for revealing musical direction. In this environment, trying to arbitrarily “gush” on long notes wrongly directs the listener’s attention to background musical material and, in the bargain, can mask or obscure important musical ideas which need to be heard.
  
- In fast-tempo music, use the long notes as anchors. Here, active rhythms are organized around longer note values, sometimes referred to as Agogic accents (stress based on the notes of longest duration). Intelligible phrasing and interpretation now depend on a dynamic profile whereby the “big” notes provide landing pads for the more florid rhythms which surround them. Even in this situation, however, it is rarely necessary to do more than “lean” on the long note, as opposed to artificially inflating it so as to seem more musical. Finally, when a fast-note passage *follows* a long note, it is often helpful to slightly shorten the long note, thereby creating a space before launching the passage.
  
- Beware the metric accent trap. Arsis and Thesis (literally “lifting” and “lowering,” terms derived from Greek poetry) is a concept of phrasing designed to counter what is sometimes referred to as the “tyranny of the bar line,” or the tendency to organize musical interpretation based on the patterns of stress suggested by the meter. In a piece written in common time (4/4), the normal accents would fall on beats 1 and 3. In that context, beats 2 and 4 are seen as afterthoughts, or weak beats. Following that line of reasoning, there is a danger of applying excessive weight to the strong beats, while the weak beats are neglected. This overt adherence to metric stress can result in a kind of ponderous and labored interpretation which lacks flow and continuity.

In the arsis/thesis concept, the normal focus of attention is reversed, so that weak beats are seen not as endings, but as beginnings which then lead to subsequent strong beats. Thus, beat 1 is felt as an ending, beat 2 leads to beat 3, and beat 4 is directed at the following downbeat. On a more micro level, the same concept can help reshape thinking in a rhythmic situation involving many notes per beat. In a passage comprised of 16<sup>th</sup> notes, instead of thinking, “1 ee and uh, 2 ee and uh, 3 ee and uh, 4 ee and uh”, etc., in which each “ee and uh” is treated as falling away from the beat, imagine feeling it as “1, ee and uh 2, ee and uh 3, ee and uh 4, ee and uh 1, ” etc., where each mini-phrase starts with “ee” and lifts to the next beat.

Of course, arsis/thesis can be applied in any meter and in music of virtually any tempo. Executed with care and control, it can liberate not only the bar line, but, as well, all musical situations in which the grouping of rhythmic values can become enslaved by metric overemphasis.

- Newton’s laws of motion apply to music. There are many reasons for rhythmic imprecision in an ensemble. Some of these are due to sheer technical issues while others are more conceptual in nature. In fast tempo music, it is generally the case that the players with the more active rhythms will tend to rush, and conversely, those who have slower-moving rhythms will tend to lag. This is largely because Newton’s laws of motion apply to music. If one is resting or playing relatively inactive stuff, inertia sets in. (Bodies at rest want to remain so.) Meanwhile, the folks with the quicker rhythms too easily pick up a head of steam, and in so doing want to move ahead. (Bodies which are in motion can easily get out of control.)

#### 4. **Articulation**

- In staccato passages where all of the players have the same rhythms, those who have repeated pitches will have to play extra short to match those who have changing pitches. This is because the ear tends to connect repeated notes unless there is a well-defined gap between them.
- In staccato, there must be a space *before*, as well as *after* the note. In sostenuto, the player must have an inaudible but unmistakable feeling of crescendo inside each note and, also from each note to the next.
- An accent is achieved not only by applying stress to a given note, but also by taking weight off the notes around it.

#### 5. **Dynamics**

Dynamics are about context. Whereas it is possible to have perfect pitch, it is not possible to have perfect dynamics. Therefore, the conductor can greatly enhance the audibility of changes in dynamic by careful management of the context. As an example, it is not possible to create a crescendo unless there is room for dynamic growth. Thus, one could say that “crescendo” means “play soft,” or at least, “play softer.” Similarly, “diminuendo” could mean “play loud.” “Subito forte” could mean “stay soft,” etc.

## 6. Energy in Music

Music may be seen as a process of creating and releasing energy over time. Some ways of describing this phenomenon are:

Inhalation	Exhalation
Tension	Relaxation
Compression	Expansion
Moving forward	Holding back
Gathering (energy)	Dispersing (energy)
Building (energy)	Releasing (energy)
Pushing	Pulling

There are many ways to gather and release these fields of energy. The following are some of the devices or mechanisms for doing so:

### **Increasing or Building Energy Comes From:**

- Rising pitch content, melodies, or themes
- Getting louder
- Rhythmic acceleration
- Increased rhythmic complexity
- Syncopation
- Dissonance
- Contrary motion
- Chromaticism
- Expanding the overall range or ambitus of pitches in the texture (soprano line and bass line reach extremes of register)
- Enlarging the orchestration

### **Releasing or Letting Go of Energy Comes From:**

- Falling pitch content, melodies, or themes
- Getting softer
- Rhythmic deceleration
- Rhythmic simplification
- Consonance
- Parallel motion
- Diatonicism
- Contracting the overall range (ambitus) of pitches in the texture (soprano line and bass line converge on the middle register).
- Decreasing the orchestration

The composer employs these devices to provide a sense of direction, purpose, and drama in a piece of music. The conductor (interpreter), too, manipulates these devices in order to make even clearer the composer's intentions. These devices may work in tandem or even in opposition. Climaxes are typically staged by getting louder, increasing dissonance, expanding the orchestra, and, as well, rhythmic acceleration. Yet, at a penultimate moment (in a piece, phrase, section, movement, etc.), it is often helpful to pull back on or stretch the tempo and, in effect, slow down not only the pace but the underlying rhythmic momentum in order to allow sufficient time for a final crescendo to create a truly fulfilling climax. In this case, then, the conductor chooses to exploit the epic power of dynamics to increase energy while holding in check the locomotive value of rhythmic acceleration and complexity.



## 7. **Tempo and Character**

One of the greatest challenges for conductors has to do with choosing tempi. Beyond any marked tempo indications, there seems to be some elusive but organic feeling about how fast a piece should go. When a piece “feels” out of kilter, the tendency is to assume that the problem is tempo. The piece (movement, section, etc.) can feel too fast, even frantic. Or, conversely, it can feel lumbering, even somewhat inert. While tempo is a critical issue unto itself, when the tempo is right, one usually does not notice it. When one’s attention is drawn to the tempo, there is a problem, but maybe not with the tempo. The cause of noticing tempo has as much to do with character as it does with speed. For example, much fast-paced music is linked to basic dance impulse. If the piece “dances,” it can go at a variety of tempi. If it does not “dance,” the temptation is to try to fix it by adjusting the speed of the beat, commonly to go faster. Actually, the core solution may require a revision of articulation, rhythmic interpretation, and/or overall style of execution. On the other hand, slower-paced music, which derives its essence from vocal traditions, may appear to drag. This may not be so much because the tempo is too deliberate, but rather, because the music is being expressed in a prosaic manner: it does not “sing.” Again, trying to rectify the problem through tempo alone can lead to an endless set of misestimates about pacing, none of which is really satisfying. The answer might better be found through phrasal shaping, dynamic refinements, and/or changes in timbre more likely to produce a lyrical character.

## 8. **Shape and Line**

Music which is built primarily on sustained thematic gestures requires careful handling in order not to interrupt the feeling of flow. The propagation of line is critically dependent on creating expansive musical arcs which do not contain inappropriate accents. Said more simply, to create a long line, one must not “sit down” or make stress points along the way. In wind playing, because of the natural tendency for breath and fingers to punctuate the sound, creating a long line is especially difficult. To overcome this problem, it is important to understand two core concepts:

- a. To make a sustained line, each note must grow into the next. That is to say, there must be a subtle crescendo from note 1 to note 2, from note 2 to note 3, from note 3 to note 4, etc. Otherwise, the phrase will sag in transit.
- b. Second, but just as important, there must be a subtle quieting of dynamic at the precise point of shift from one note to the next, in order to cushion the impact. Otherwise, an unintended accent will occur at the attack point of the new note, because of the immediately preceding crescendo.

# Bach Fantasia in G BWV 572

## Tonal Structure

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Phrase Number	Measure Numbers	Key		Number of Chromatic Moments	Accidentals <i>(new accidentals italicized)</i>
1	1-13	1-10 11-13	G D	1	C#
2	13-21		D	0	C#
3	21-31	21-22 23-31	D B mi	8	C#, A#
4	31-40		G	1	C#
5	40-48	40-45 46-48	G A mi	5	F, C#, G#
6	48-59	48 49-56 57-59	A mi G E mi	3	F, D#
7	59-71	59-61 62-63 64-70 70-71	E mi Chromatic E mi G	6	D#, G#, C#
8	71-77	71 72-77	G C	3	F, B flat
9	77-90	77-80 81-84 85-87 88-90	C A mi Chromatic A mi	13	F, F#, C#, G#
10	90-103	90-97 98-103	A mi D mi	17	F, G#, B flat, E flat, C# (first phrase in which all twelve pitches are present)
11	103-114	103 104 105-111 112-114	D mi G mi unstable D mi	18	B flat, E flat, F, C#
12	114-130	114-115 116-117 118-123 124-130	D mi G C G	9	B flat, C#
13	130-148		G	3	F
14	148-158		G (D pedal)	0	None