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**Chamber Music: The Why and the
How**

CLINICIANS:

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Demonstration Group: Reagan HS Ensembles

**TEXAS BANDMASTERS
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CHAMBER MUSIC: THE WHY AND THE HOW

**Dan Morrison, Greg White, Mason Daffinee
Ronald Reagan High School**

WHY CHAMBER MUSIC?

Chamber Music maximizes student growth through:

- Quality Literature
- High Level Student Accountability and Ownership
- Positive Peer Reinforcement

The goal is for students to feel accountable to each other and the music. Not ONLY to the teacher



"But there are only 24 hours in a day. HOW can I teach chamber AND band?" -Every Band Director Ever

The answer: Student led rehearsals.

- Set students up to be successful (GIVE THEM A PLAN)
- Arrange **meaningful** performance opportunities
- Give students quality reference recordings
- Spark their interest (YouTube, Instagram, Guest Artists)

The reality is that you can't coach every one of your students in a chamber ensemble, nor **should** you. However, by empowering students to lead ensembles and by providing meaningful performance opportunities, musical growth will be immediate and powerful.

THE TAKEAWAY

Provide students an opportunity to be musical and personal leaders in every aspect of the ensemble. Encourage students to research and help select music and design lesson plans along with you. Allow the groups to be **owned by the students**. When the groups are owned by the students, self-motivation abounds.

Your job is to find the "right" students. Ones who will work for you and each other. Too often we take the "best" students and force them into a group in which they have no interest. Choose the kids who will work hard and select appropriate literature that will stretch them. You will find the positive results of these groups will ripple out and spark interest in other students as time goes on.



QUALITY LITERATURE

Whether standard repertoire, or constantly growing new music, students have an opportunity to play music that is written specifically to showcase their instruments. No more afterbeats for French Horns, or I-V Tuba parts. Envision a brass quintet where all instruments play "good" parts.

STUDENTS ARE ACCOUNTABLE TO EACH OTHER

Chamber ensembles provide a solo line for every player therefore, every student must play accurately in order for the music to be achieved. This means student accountability is inherently very high.

Due to the student led/communal nature of chamber music, the accountability comes from the other members of the group rather than the director. Student centered accountability leads to higher achievement as students are less likely to disappoint their peers.

"We're all in this together." REINFORCING POSITIVE PEER PRESSURE

A student's success in chamber music is closely associated with positive peer relationships. By using encouraging comments in your coaching, and by empowering all of the students in the group to have an interpretive voice in rehearsals you can maximize a positive peer environment that allows students to take ownership of their own musical growth.

CONSIDER THE "HANG"

When placing students in chamber ensembles, make sure you consider the interpersonal skill sets they bring to the table. We are trying to empower student led rehearsals, so we need to make sure we place people together that will get along!

BUT.... HOW?!

Set your students up to be successful in chamber music with the following steps:

- Place them with peers of roughly equal ability and motivation
- Select appropriate music
- Provide a plan
- Encourage student leadership
- Regularly check-in with guidance and coaching

After selecting a group and giving them appropriate literature, give your students the tools necessary to be successful. This may be something as simple as a reference recording, or as in-depth as a written out lesson plan. Then trust them to lead rehearsals. Check in at regular intervals (weekly/bi-monthly) to ensure they are on the right path.

"Trust, but Verify"
-Russian proverb

MEANINGFUL Performances

Give students a concrete performance date to work towards as an end goal.

"Meaningful" performances should be a performance that carries significance for the performer AND audience. Try to move away from the "traditional" solo and ensemble model or a classroom venue with a single judge as the audience.

Consider performing at a retirement community or as outreach at a local elementary school.



CHAMBER MUSIC & SOCIAL MEDIA

With the proliferation of YouTube and social media, students can be more connected than ever to their favorite artists or peers from around the globe.

Encourage students to research recordings and artists that showcase the chamber ensembles that students are presently playing in.

Connecting to musicians they look up to and seeing what is possible from their peers is incredibly motivating to student performers.

Consider encouraging your students to share their work by creating channels and account on YouTube and Instagram. This will deepen the students' ownership of the ensemble and might inspire another group either in your program or in another part of the world!

ANYONE CAN

Start a Chamber Program

With more resources than ever available online and with music available in standard and flexible instrumentation, it's now easy to get your chamber program off the ground.

With endless musical and personal benefits, playing in chamber ensembles will help your students naturally grow as players; they will also learn to love their art at the highest level.

PERFORMANCE

Opportunity Ideas

- Retirement Community
- Elementary School Outreach/Recruiting
- During transitions at Concerts
- "Dinner Music" at school and community events
- Chamber Competitions

MUSIC SELECTION

Ideas

- State Solo and Ensemble Lists
- Fischhoff Competition Programs
- YouTube
- Akropolis Collection
- Commissions!





DANIEL MORRISON

Ronald Reagan HS

San Antonio, TX

Daniel Morrison is currently the Director of Bands at Ronald Reagan High School in San Antonio, TX where he conducts the Wind Ensemble and manages and teaches the Marching Band. In his time at Reagan, the band program has grown to include four full concert bands, a marching band of over 350 student performers, a Varsity and Junior Varsity Winterguard, Jazz Ensemble, and an active chamber music program. Under the supervision of Mr. Morrison, the Reagan Wind Ensemble was selected to perform at the 2018 Midwest Clinic and has been named a TMEA State Honor Band Finalist as well as a two-time Mark of Excellence National Winner. Under Mr. Morrison's direction, the Marching Band is a multiple time BOA Regional Champion, has been a two-time UIL Texas State Marching Contest Finalist, a BOA Grand National Championship Finalist, and was selected to march in the 2018 Rose Parade and the 2019 Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.



GREG WHITE

Ronald Reagan HS

San Antonio, TX

Greg White is currently Associate Director of Bands at the Nationally renowned Ronald Reagan High School in San Antonio, Texas. In addition to his band director responsibilities, Mr. White has developed and oversees an active chamber music program that has included winners at State, National, and International competitions. Mr. White had the privilege of directing the first public school chamber ensemble to win the prestigious M-Prize International Chamber Music Competition. Additionally, Mr. White has directed multiple ensembles that have advanced to the quarter and semi-finals of the Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition, including the winner of the 2018 American Brass Quintet Junior Wind Prize. In December of 2015, Mr. White directed the Quid Nunc Saxophone Quartet in a featured concert in the 69th Annual Midwest International Band and Orchestra Clinic.



MASON DAFFINEE

Ronald Reagan HS

San Antonio, TX

Mason Daffinee has served four years as Associate Director of Bands at Ronald Reagan High School and is in his fifteenth year as a professional educator. His duties include co-directing the Symphonic and Concert Bands and assisting with all other administrative and musical facets of the band program. Mr. Daffinee is a native of Binghamton, New York and a graduate of Ithaca College (2002) where he earned a BM in Tuba Performance and Music Education. He was a four year member of the Spectrum Drum and Bugle Corps from Owego, New York and a four year member of the Phantom Regiment Drum and Bugle Corps from Rockford, Illinois. As a member of the Phantom Regiment, Mr. Daffinee was the 2002 DCI Tuba Solo Contest Gold Medalist and was named the Mark Glasscoe Memorial Member of the Year. Upon graduation, Mr. Daffinee toured North America and Japan with the Tony Award-Winning Broadway show Blast! His passion for the marching arts continues today through his drill design for Reagan High School and other bands across Texas.

