



# KASTA

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Rebecca Tast, Editor

## President's Message

Karen McGee-Hensel

Refreshed and ready for 2013! I hope this describes every KASTA member.

I am looking forward to seeing all of you at KMEA. Please let any board member know if you have any new business you would like for the KASTA board to consider before our board meeting on February 22. Board meetings are open to any member who wishes to attend.

As your representative on the KMEA board, I had the pleasure to choose some outstanding clinic sessions that I am sure will be of interest to all string teachers. I did make a real effort to include topics that appeal to those colleagues who teach elementary and middle school string students. If your district allows elementary and middle school teachers to attend KMEA then thank your administration.

I hope many of you are planning to attend the National Convention in Providence. Please let me know if you will be there so we can get together. I am anxious to attend the National Leadership Workshop and represent our state. It is an honor to serve you.

See you in February!

Karen McGhee-Hensel



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# How to Prepare a New Piece

## Matt Means, Fort Hays State University

One of the most challenging hurdles a string player may face in their work pertains to the matter of planning and learning a new piece from the beginning. Does a single best method exist that gains results quickly and provides the most consistent execution? I believe that there is no one, perfect, all-applicable method – each person and learning style is different and each player’s past history on the instrument and various strengths and weaknesses require tailored approaches. However, I have decided to offer the following in the hopes that it provides some basic guidance for getting the process underway. I give this to each of my students at FHSU as a set of guidelines and a workable process to help them organize their efforts. Please feel free to take and discard ideas as you see fit!

### HOW TO PREPARE A NEW PIECE

#### **Step 1: RESEARCH**

- Read about the composer and the piece you are playing (what was happening in the composer’s life at the time your piece was written? Is this an early work? Mature work? What other pieces did he/she compose at the same time? What aspects of this piece are typical or atypical of the style/period?).
- Study the score/piano part (if your piece is with orchestra, find out which instruments are playing with you when you are playing. Is the piece thickly scored (balance considerations) or is it lightly scored? What is the structure of the piece (sonata form? Rondo? Theme and variations?)? What is happening in the HARMONY? Play the piano part/reduction, or ask a friend to help you)! Apply your theory knowledge: do a harmonic (roman numeral) chord analysis of your piece. Note sequences/repetitive material, and important harmonic/melodic notes. Does the harmony stay stagnant or does it rapidly change? How does this affect your part?
- Listen to recordings (especially ones from different generations of violinists/violists. Write down what you like/don’t like about each recording.) and listen to your pieces several times each week. Also listen to recordings of other works by the same composer!
- As you work on your piece, imagine you are playing with the recording; what differences do you note between your interpretation and the artist’s?

## Step 2: PLAN, PLAN, PLAN

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- Find the climax/most interesting part of your piece, by listening to it/studying it. Mark it in the music.
  - Find each phrase and mark the climax of each phrase. Note phrase LENGTHS: many times they're in 4 bar units, but some may vary.
  - Analyze dynamics: what KIND of forte, piano, etc.
  - Research/look up all terms, especially tempo markings: what KIND of allegro? What is the character?
  - Come up with 1-3 adjectives for each phrase/special moment
  - Note how similar passages/phrases are varied (sometimes slightly) by the composer when repeated, and make interpretive decisions based on this.
  - Review and possibly revise fingerings and bowings. When doing this:
    - a. make decisions based on MUSICAL reasons, not technical!
    - b. take into consideration the composer's original intention(s)
    - c. decide if certain bowings/fingers are better at faster tempi v. slower tempi
    - d. decide if extending or shifting is better for a given passage
    - e. plan bow usage and placement! Sounding point, amount of bow, part of bow, etc.
  - Devise 5 definite dailies:
    - a. DDs will be practiced with the metronome every day, slowly, with a gradual buildup of tempo over time
    - b. DDs will be practiced in RHYTHMS and in different parts of the bow, with varied bowings (make it as creative and mentally challenging as possible, so that the permutation is harder than the print).
    - c. DDs will cycle in and out at different RATES (some will stay with you the entire time and some will be mastered sooner)
    - d. DDs will always be practiced with NO BODY TENSION, and usually at a mf dynamic or softer
    - e. DDs will usually be practiced UNEMOTIONALLY, surgically, and clinically, with special attention paid to body awareness/energy/tension.
- \*It is not necessary (and usually counterproductive) to practice every note of every piece every day. High quality practice on the most difficult sections is always better than substandard practice on everything.

## Considerations when repeating DDs:

- Stop between each repetition and take at least 3 DEEP BREATHS.
- Practice groupings of notes (gestures).
- Place the passage in context with what happens before or after (try adding 'border' notes gradually over time to absorb DD into context)
- Don't ever play any passage more than 10x in a row, and vary each repetition in some way to prevent the mind from wandering: REMEMBER THE GOAL OF PRACTICING: EXHAUST THE MIND, RECHARGE THE BODY.
- Treat the metronome as a chamber music partner. Try counting out loud with/against it, with the same character, inside while you play. Imagine your heart beating the same speed as the metronome. Feel like you are playing 'tug of war' with the metronome; don't 'follow' it...'engage' it!

## Step 2a: DEVISE A GAME PLAN/TIMELINE

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- Start with the goal first (performance date) and work backwards. Set weekly/daily goals!
- Guidelines:
  - a. memorization should be solid 3-4 weeks before the performance.
  - b. work with accompanist should begin 4-6 weeks before the performance.
  - c. schedule goals, breaks, times of day, how much time is needed on each piece... and WRITE IT DOWN!
  - e. each repertoire piece should be brought memorized into at least 3 lessons before a performance.
  - f. each repertoire piece should be brought with an accompanist into at least 3 lessons before a performance (more for degree recitals and major competitions/auditions).

### -TWO WEEKS BEFORE PERFORMANCE:

After tuning, immediately record a run through of your piece. Listen to this run through at least 3 times, and take notes (written) in each of the following categories: articulation, phrasing, sound quality, rhythm/pulse, intonation. Assign yourself a rating of 1-10 for each category. Mark specific sections to be practiced. These notes from your recording will now become your practice priorities (replacing definite dailies).

## -ONE WEEK BEFORE PERFORMANCE:

Do the above but add:

At the end of the day (sometimes might need to be earlier, depending on people's schedules), play your piece for someone. Give the listener a copy of your music and a pencil and ask them to make notes as you play. Ask for both verbal and written feedback. Ideally, this performance should be when you are TIRED, and after you have already recorded yourself earlier in the day and fixed the problems you heard after listening to the recording. Vary who you play for. Play for both faculty and students, musicians, and non-musicians. Do not use the same people constantly...and play for people who will make you nervous!

## **Step 3: PERFORM AND EVALUATE**

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-What did you like about your performance? What things went better than you had expected and vice versa...and, most important, WHY? Bottom line: did you feel like you had communicated a part of yourself when you performed? If not, what were the obstacles? Remember: the ideal performance is an event that communicates two things: the spirit/essence/intention of the composer, and spirit/essence/history of the performer.

-Take notes immediately after the performance and reflect. What lessons did you learn from this performance that you can use for your next performance? Was the time you allotted to prepare your piece enough time? Not enough? Too much? Learn about yourself, how you prepare, and your capabilities by this reflection. Over time, you will be able to know your capabilities with ever-greater confidence, and be able to comfortably push your capabilities with new/more challenging repertoire and/or shorter timelines.



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# KMEA All-State Orchestra Report

## Jeffrey Bishop, 2013 All-State Orchestra Chair

The 2013 Kansas All-State Orchestra will be conducted by Mark Russell Smith. As part of his duties while conducting the All-State Orchestra, Maestro Smith will present a clinic on "Rehearsal Techniques to Encourage the Creation of Mature, Expressive Sound in Student Ensembles." A consummate musician and teacher, Smith offers the student musicians and music teachers of the state insights into creating the most effective musical experiences in the classroom and performance hall.

As a guest conductor, Smith enjoys a burgeoning international reputation that has already brought him engagements and re-engagements with prestigious American orchestras, including the St. Louis Symphony, the Houston Symphony and the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra. With the Minnesota Orchestra, he made his critically acclaimed Sommerfest debut in 2006 and made his subscription series debut in March of 2009. He will debut with the Virginia Opera in the fall of 2013, leading a new production of Mozart's *Magic Flute*. In November 2007, he returned to his alma mater to lead the Symphony Orchestra of The Curtis Institute of Music in Verizon Hall, and led the orchestra on tour in China and Korea in the fall of 2011. Smith's debut at the Nomus Music Festival in Novi Sad, Serbia was met with critical and audience acclaim and led to immediate reengagement. Other recent and upcoming appearances include the Minnesota Orchestra, Santa Barbara Symphony, Brazil's Orquestra Sinfônica da USP, the Hartford Symphony, Orquesta Sinfonica de Xalapa, the Phoenix Symphony, the Colorado Symphony, the Eugene Symphony, the Curtis Opera Theatre, the Jacksonville Symphony, the Berkshire Choral Festival, the Eastern Music Festival, the Tulsa Philharmonic, Orchestra London (Ontario), and the European Center for Opera and Vocal Art in Ghent, Belgium.

Smith grew up in a musical family in Phoenix, Arizona where he began the serious study of conducting while still in his teens. He is a graduate in cello performance of the Juilliard School, where he studied with Claus Adam, and of the Curtis Institute of Music, where he studied conducting with Max Rudolf and Otto-Werner Mueller. While at Curtis, Smith was first prize winner in the National Repertory Orchestra Conductors Competition, and upon graduation, was named Assistant Conductor of the Opera Company of Philadelphia and the Philadelphia Singers. From 1989 to 1994, Smith served as Associate Conductor of the Phoenix Symphony Orchestra and from 1992 through 1999 served as Music Director of the Cheyenne Symphony Orchestra. His dynamic personality, creative programming, and focus on outreach helped revitalize the Springfield (MA) Symphony, where he served as Music Director from 1995 through 2000.

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**Tuesday, September 11**

Rossini • Overture to *La Cenerentola*  
Mozart • Symphony No. 35 "Haffner"  
Rimsky-Korsakov • *Russian Easter Overture*

**Tuesday, October 16**

Debussy • *Sarabande* • arr. Bryce Craig  
Two Concerto Contest Winners  
Brahms • Symphony No. 2

**Tuesday, November 29**

von Weber • Overture to *Oberon*  
Roy Harris • Symphony No. 3 in One Movement  
Beethoven • "Triple" Concerto •  
Kristin Mortenson, violin; David Littrell, cello,  
Slawomir Dobrzanski, piano;  
Paul Hunt, conductor

**Thursday-Friday-Saturday, March 7-8-9 Opera**

Mozart • *The Marriage of Figaro*

**Tuesday, April 23**

*An Evening of Rodgers & Hammerstein Classics*  
Great Songs from *Oklahoma!* *State Fair*,  
*Carousel*, *South Pacific*, *The King and I*, *The*  
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# Echoes From Orchestras Past

## Larry R. Williams

1960, in Ottawa, Kansas, a very young first-year teacher was given the task of building an orchestra program in a town that had wonderful high school orchestras in the 30's and 40's. The program had died a few years earlier. The first enrolled class of beginners, in the jr. high school, numbered about ten students so I recruited the study halls and got another eight prospects. Not a bad beginning.

Since small orchestras promote small orchestras, I wanted a symphonic-sized string section. Word went out that a pianist was needed in orchestra to add a couple more bodies who read notes. (In actuality, quite a bit of string orchestra music has either a piano/harp part or a piano/conductor score.)

The pianists soon noticed that not all pieces had parts, so I suggested that he or she take up string bass or cello. I would teach the student how to play and would help with progress. They used the practice room with the new instrument while the orchestra played music with no piano part. Since they already read notes and rhythms, they were playing easy music on the bass or cello within a few weeks. Soon a new section player emerged who could also play the piano/harp parts.

In the following years, many young pianists, recruited for orchestra, became string or actual harp players. My first piano recruit in Ottawa became a string bass major in college. One of my piano recruits in Lawrence is currently the Wichita Symphony harpist.

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