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THE MUSIC EDUCATION ARTS MAGAZINE

FEBRUARY 2026



A woman with long brown hair, seen from the back, stands in front of a large, ornate building with many arched windows. She is wearing a blue denim jacket, blue jeans, and a blue backpack with brown leather straps. Her arms are raised in a celebratory or welcoming gesture. The background is a bright, sunny day with green grass in the foreground.

# MAKE YOUR GROUP TRAVEL A SUCCESS

## What's Inside?

- Preservice Teachers: Practice Your Leadership!
- Inclusive Teaching Strategies for the K-12 Guitar Classroom
- Are You Running on Empty?
- Rebuilding a Repair Budget:  
Practical Strategies for Music Educators

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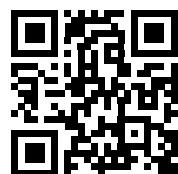
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**Sweetwater**

# Perspective



By Tom Palmatier **SBO+** Editor-in-Chief

I've recently been lucky enough to do some traveling at home and abroad and it reminded me once again what an incredibly valuable experience it can be for anyone, but especially students. Because of my long military career I've been in every U.S. state and to 61 countries (and counting) and there is nothing that can replace the chance to experience other cultures, regions, accents, and food.

Speaking of accents, it reminded me of the time when the Army band I was with was doing a concert in Stratford-On-Avon in England, the home of William Shakespeare. We had one of our soldiers who was from rural South Carolina, introduce a piece and the audience members seemed deeply perplexed until I said, "sometimes we can't understand him either."

In this issue, several of the leading and most reputable student travel companies share their tips on how to have a successful student travel experience. This is one of the most important decisions a director can make because of the potential for great educational experiences and the amount of resources required from families. Years ago, when I was working to support a Presidential Inaugural Parade, I had a friend whose band was selected to march in the parade. He had hired a hometown inexperienced agent who was a friend of a band booster and was the lowest bidder. When my friend described their itinerary to me, it was obvious the agent had no inkling of Washington, D.C. geography or traffic and the plan was completely unworkable. Sadly, the band missed several planned events and even worse, several pre-paid meals. Don't let this happen to you!

The deadline for submitting a nomination for "50 Music Teachers Who Make a Difference" is rapidly approaching. Make sure your music ed hero is recognized. Go to [SBOpplus.net](http://SBOpplus.net) and select Awards.

One of my more recent trips was to the 2026 NAMM Show. Wow! This should be on every educator's bucket list to experience. The quantity and quality of clinics, sessions, performances, and exhibits is unmatched. You never know who you will meet or hear performing on the exhibit floor because all of the major manufacturers have their performing artists there to play for (and with!) attendees. I went to a reception sponsored by VanDoren and heard three of the most incredible jazz clarinetists I ever heard. If you're looking at the exhibits, there's a very good chance you'll cross paths with Stevie Wonder who comes every year.

Next month, our team of secret correspondents will share their selection of the "Best Tools for Schools" from the NAMM Show.



Stevie Wonder at NAMM 2026.



BAND, ORCHESTRA, CHORAL, THEATER AND MORE!

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# YOUR PERFECT FIT: HOW TO CHOOSE A TRAVEL PROVIDER

By Tami Rogers, Co-CEO, Bob Rogers Travel

If you've traveled as a performer or an educator, you know that performance travel is very different from any other kind of travel. Venues, instruments, attractions, meals, security and group reservations all take a lot of planning – which is why most music programs choose to work with a travel provider.

Traveling with your student performers is exciting and meaningful, creating bonds, memories and lessons that last long after the trip itself. The trip-planning process typically involves 9-18 months of discussions, decisions and details – so it's essential to work with someone you trust, someone who will put your needs first and someone you enjoy working with.

But how do you choose the best provider for your group? Here are some boxes you'll want to check as you find the right partner to plan your next trip.

## Start With Trust

There's very little margin for error in student travel. When it comes to choosing a provider, it's all about trust – including trust in yourself.

## Trusted Referrals

Start by tapping into your network of colleagues and peers for trusted referrals. The veteran music educators in your circle have been through the travel-planning process and likely have providers they can recommend.

You might also explore director-specific online communities and social media pages, where fellow educators are always willing to share their perspective.

## Trusted Insights

You can also trust their insight on performance travel itself, so ask for more than a referral – ask about their experiences. What did they wish they knew about traveling with their students? What would they have done differently with the benefit of hindsight? What advice would they give you about travel at this stage in your career?

## Trusted Recognition

Armed with a list of referrals, you can start doing a little research. Specifically, investigate the credentials, accreditations and awards each company has received. Have they earned awards from leading destinations? Have they been recognized for delivering outstanding service? (The first annual SBO Teachers' Choice Awards, announced this past December, is a great place to start.)

## Trust Yourself

Finally, it's essential that you trust yourself. You know your students and your program better than anyone. So take the time to consider your travel dreams and your musical, educational, and cultural goals before talking to travel providers – this will help you to help them get it right.

## Find Your Fit

With a short list of potential partners in hand, we recommend moving on to fit – which is all about customization, experience and vibes.

## Your Needs Come First

It's your trip, after all. You'll want a provider who asks questions and listens before they start pitching ideas or building itineraries. Your group has its own history, needs and dreams, so an "off the shelf" trip is rarely going to be a fit.

Find a provider who will take the time to get to know you and understand your program – that's the foundation that the perfect trip for you is built on.

## Specialized Expertise Is Essential

You'll want someone with group travel experience, but more importantly, you want a provider with significant performance travel expertise. Clinicians, logistics, rentals, industry connections – you need a performance expert who's been there and can handle every detail, anticipating your needs throughout the process.

## Vibes Matter Too!

Your fit is so much more than an experience match – it's also a vibe check. You'll be working with this person for months, so make sure you get a good sense of their empathy, communication style, responsiveness and listening skills.

It's important to genuinely enjoy working with your travel provider, since you'll be partners in dreaming up an incredible experience for your students.

## More to Look For

Finally, here are two more focus areas that will help you choose between potential partners.

## Systems, Tools and Resources

As you connect with specialists and learn how they work, consider some of the finer points of the process. Find out how each provider operates when it comes to payment collection, communication, crowdsourcing of funds and more. Every company works differently; look for what works best for you. Keep track of what each provider offers so you can compare apples to apples.

## The Devil's in the Details

There are thousands of ways to build a trip to any given destination, and the finer points are often what make the difference between a decent trip and an outstanding one. Carefully review the full lists of inclusions and identify the items that differ. Does the experience hit all your high notes? Does the itinerary offer the right balance of learning opportunities and fun?

The process for finding the right travel provider for your program doesn't have to be overwhelming – it should be exciting! You know your group best, so take the time to find a provider you can trust and who fits in all the important ways, while also delivering the service, systems and inclusions you deserve.



## WHAT MAKES A TRULY GREAT STUDENT TRAVEL EXPERIENCE

By Kasie Smith

It's true: There's a lot that goes into the planning process of each student trip. Every piece is an integral part of the puzzle that ultimately comes together to make a student trip one that creates memories, broadens perspectives, and influences a student's education for years to come.

Whether it's your first or 50th trip, keep these helpful tips and considerations top of mind to ensure your student travel experiences are always top tier.

### START PLANNING EARLY

One of the most vital trip planning components relies on something we all wish we had more of—time. And taking advantage of planning your trip early pays off in more ways than one. From increased funds and higher attendance to more time to ensure access to all your preferred itinerary items, planning early always pays big. Your tour operator should break down the entire planning process so you understand where you're at every step of the way.

### UTILIZE FUNDRAISING PLATFORMS

Lack of funds is often the most significant barrier students face when it comes to travel, meaning that a strong fundraising approach is of the utmost importance to make a memorable trip a reality. Platforms such as Snap! Raise, Simple Raise, and Fundly can be an invaluable resource and key to the success of your fundraising efforts.

### PUT THOUGHT INTO YOUR KICKOFF MEETINGS

A well-planned kickoff meeting is more than just an informational session—it's your first big opportunity to build momentum, generate excitement, and get buy-in from students and parents alike. Whether it's your first time leading a trip or your 10th, a strong start sets the tone for everything that follows. Highlight your tour operator's safety protocols to build trust with parents, rev up the excitement by sharing visuals and stories from past trips, offer a trip planning timeline, and more.

### CONSIDER DIGITAL MARKETING

Digital marketing platforms can do a lot of the heavy lifting for you when it comes to marketing and managing the interest in your trip. Consider creating a Google form to track a list of interested students, and consider setting up a trip-specific landing page or webpage with dates, benefits, pricing, deadlines, and an FAQ section. Stay in touch with parents by using email marketing platforms (like Mailchimp) to share any updates and reminders.

Buy-in from both students and their parents can truly shape the success of a trip. A good operator will provide tools, fundraising ideas, organizational resources, and even kickoff meeting ideas to spark enthusiasm and keep momentum strong.

With thoughtful planning—and the right partner—you'll not only simplify the whole process, but also ensure your students have the truly meaningful and memorable trip you've been aiming for.

### CHOOSING THE RIGHT PARTNER

Planning a student trip is exciting, but it can also feel overwhelming without the right partner by your side. This is where choosing the right tour operator comes in. From the get go, they can truly make or break the experience! So, before you sign on, it's important to ask the right questions:

"What does the student travel planning process look like?"

Ask about step-by-step support: How often will you receive updates? Will you have a dedicated contact? When are payments due? Knowing the process up front helps you stay confident and organized.

"What can you make happen with our budget?"

Presenting a clear budget helps you and your operator set realistic expectations. Ask how flexible pricing can be and what's included to avoid surprises later. Not sure what a realistic budget is? The right partner can walk you through it all.

"What is the right time to take this kind of trip?"

Outside considering your school calendar, exam schedules, and seasonal travel costs, a knowledgeable operator will help you identify the best windows for affordability, student availability, and opportunities at your chosen destination.

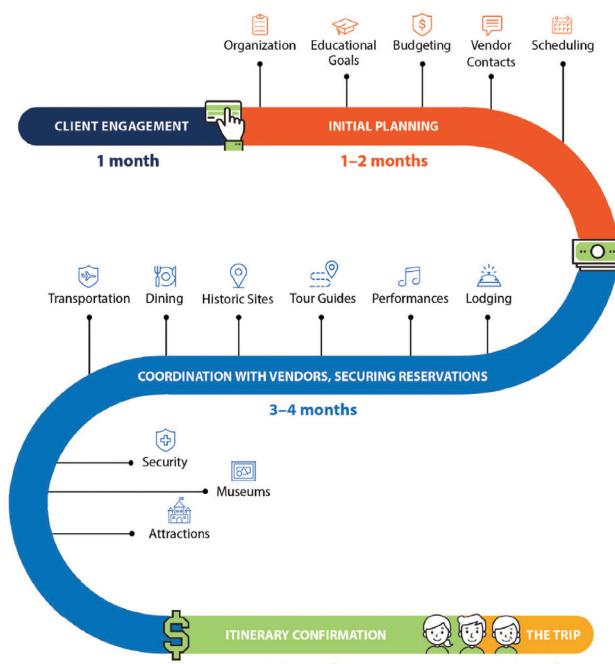
"Our group is approximately \_\_\_ number of students. What does this mean on your end?"

Group size impacts everything from motorcoach logistics to hotel assignments. Be upfront about your expected numbers so your travel consultant can tailor the plan to meet your exact needs.

"Our goals are focused on \_\_\_ and \_\_\_. What should I include in my itinerary to accomplish this?"

Every trip is different—whether your focus is history, music performance, language immersion, or team-building. Share your vision so the pros can ensure your itinerary is robust and reflects your students' learning objectives and overall expectations.

"How can you help me motivate my students to buy in for this trip?"



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## TRANSFORMATIVE TRAVEL: HOW THE RIGHT MUSIC TOUR PARTNER ELEVATES STUDENT LEARNING

By **Dave Mazzarisi**

**W**hen students step into new places, encounter new cultures, and connect with new people, especially through the universal language of music, the experience becomes transformative. These eye-opening, life-shaping moments stay with them forever. As educators, this is the true reward: watching learning leap beyond the classroom. Travel elevates education, deepens personal growth, and creates memories that last a lifetime. Choosing the right student music travel partner is essential to ensure the experience is both meaningful and unforgettable for students and their families. The provider you choose will shape not only the travel experience itself but also the safety, learning outcomes, and overall confidence of everyone involved.

### Travel as an Extension of Education

The primary objective of any music trip should always be its educational value. Performances, workshops, and hands-on cultural experiences are what transform travel from a simple getaway into a meaningful extension of your music program. What truly matters is whether the trip will provide your students with experiences that strengthen their musicianship, broaden their perspective, and support your ensemble's curriculum and goals.

Trip planning on its own can feel overwhelming. Venue coordination, transportation logistics, safety requirements, scheduling, instrumentation needs, and financial planning are just the beginning. Veteran directors understand the best outcomes come from delegating these complex details to specialists who live and breathe student music travel. A dedicated music travel company doesn't just simplify the process; it ensures every component of the trip is intentionally designed to support learning, performance excellence, and student growth. That expertise is what turns a good trip into an unforgettable one and why having the right partner becomes truly indispensable.

### Start with Voices You Trust

Other directors are your greatest source of truth. No one understands the realities of student music travel better than the educators who have already navigated the process. Ask colleagues who they've traveled with, what aspects of the experience genuinely exceeded expectations, and what challenges they encountered along the way. Encourage them to share both the wins and the pain points—because the small details they mention often reveal far more than any brochure ever could. Most importantly, ask the question that cuts through all the noise: Would you travel with that company again? A director's willingness to return is the clearest indicator of real value and reliability.

Remember, your travel partner becomes an extension of your leadership, representing your program to students, parents, administrators, and performance venues. That's why peer feedback is invaluable. Honest insights from fellow directors can help you confirm strengths, understand how each company supports educational outcomes, and identify possible red flags that may not surface in polished marketing materials or sales conversations.

### Affiliation With Trusted Industry Organizations

A reputable travel company should be connected with well-established industry organizations known for upholding safety and delivering high-quality travel experiences. These may include SYTA (Student & Youth Travel Association), the leading authority in student and youth travel; the ABA (American Bus Association), which upholds the highest standards for safe, dependable motorcoach travel; and the NTA (National Tour Association), a trusted network of professional tour operators committed to quality and reliability.

### Set the Right Timeline

Before diving into itineraries and performance venues, it's critical to start with a realistic planning timeline. Even the most exciting destination has to make sense within the rhythm of the school year. Factors like testing windows, district-wide events, concerts, holidays, athletic schedules, and other extracurricular commitments all influence when your ensemble can realistically travel. Establishing these boundaries early prevents later conflicts and ensures the trip supports, not competes with, your educational calendar.

A seasoned music travel company can guide you through this process with planning templates, reminders, and benchmarks drawn from years of experience. They can help you anticipate decision points, payment schedules, administrative approvals, recruitment strategies, and rehearsal needs. But no matter which company you work with, one principle holds true across all successful trips: early planning is essential. The most sought-after performance venues, adjudicated festivals, parades, and hotel blocks often book out 12–18 months in advance. Starting early not only secures better options but also gives you more time to build student and parent buy-in, spread out fundraising, and navigate administrative procedures without stress.

In the end, a thoughtful timeline becomes the backbone of the entire trip. When planning starts early and stays organized, everything else—from performance quality to student excitement—naturally falls into place.

### Safety First, Always

No educational experience matters more than student safety. It is the foundation upon which every successful music trip is built. When evaluating potential travel partners, look for companies that demonstrate not just a policy but a culture of safety. This begins with transparent, well-structured emergency protocols that outline how they prepare for, prevent, and respond to incidents ranging from minor injuries to major disruptions.

A true test of a company's reliability is its emergency communication system. A "24/7 contact" is only meaningful if it's staffed by real people who can make decisions and coordinate support—not an answering service or a voicemail box. You should feel confident that if a situation arises at 2 a.m., a knowledgeable team member will be ready to assist immediately.

Just as important is a proven record of handling unexpected circumstances smoothly. Whether it's last-minute schedule changes, weather-related issues, medical emergencies, or transportation delays, experienced student travel providers have seen it all—and have refined their response systems accordingly. Ultimately, safety is not a checklist item; it's a partnership. The right travel company will prioritize your students' well-being as intensely as you do, giving you the confidence to focus on the music while they manage the rest.

### The Performance Experience Is the Heart of the Trip

For music ensembles, performance opportunities are not simply



part of the itinerary—they are the reason for the trip. General travel companies often treat performances as an optional add-on rather than the centerpiece they truly are. Exceptional performance experiences require specialized knowledge, from securing meaningful venues to managing acoustics, staging, equipment needs, and rehearsal schedules. Your provider should understand what empowers students to shine and should support every aspect of the performance process.

#### Why On-Site Tour Directors Matter

provide full-time tour directors, but when your focus is performance, having an on-site professional is invaluable. A professional who stays with your group from start to finish ensures every detail, from transportation and timing to venue coordination and rehearsal management, runs flawlessly. Problems don't get a chance to become problems; they're solved before you even notice them. Students stay focused, directors stay supported, and the entire group performs with confidence, knowing everything behind the scenes is handled by an expert who understands the unique demands of performance travel.

#### Customization, Creativity, and Transparent Costs

Be cautious of pre-packaged itineraries or companies that

charge excessive fees for changes. Every ensemble has its own goals, traditions, and personality. Your trip should reflect that. Look for a partner who listens to your vision, adapts creatively, and respects your budget. Transparency is key. Payment schedules, refund policies, and costs associated with changing traveler numbers should be communicated clearly from the start. Your travel partner should help you balance cost with quality and educational value.

#### Selecting a Partner in Education

In choosing a student travel provider, educators and families are ultimately selecting a partner, not merely a service. This partnership supports learning, safety, personal growth, and global awareness. The right provider brings expertise, preparation, and passion to the experience, ensuring students return home not only with memories but with new skills, expanded perspectives, and deeper curiosity. By carefully evaluating safety practices, educational design, financial transparency, experience, support systems, ethical values, and flexibility, decision makers can feel confident they are placing students in capable hands. The right provider will not only manage the logistics of travel but will help create a life-shaping journey, something students will carry with them long after they return to the classroom.





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**MusicTeacherGuild.org**

## Dr. Tim Given High Honor by National Band Association

Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser was presented with the Academy of Wind and Percussion Arts (AWAPA) award. This award was established for the purpose of recognizing those individuals who have made truly significant and outstanding contributions to furthering the excellence of bands and of band music. The nine inch silver "AWAPA" figure is designed to be the "Oscar" of the band world.



**NationalBandAssociation.org**



## Music World Mourns the Passing of H. Robert Reynolds

Internationally recognized conductor, educator, author, and orchestrator H. Robert Reynolds died peacefully at home in Ann Arbor on Jan. 30, 2026. He was 91.

When Robert was 9, his grandfather gave him his first instrument, an E-Flat alto horn, and music lessons. Later, Robert was guided by his middle school and high school music teachers, Mr. and Mrs. Inglefields, a married couple, and he spent a summer studying at Interlochen. During Robert's senior year, Mr. Inglefields asked if anyone wanted to conduct the band. Robert raised his hand.

After high school, Robert attended U-M, earning a bachelor's in music education (1956) and a master's in wind instruments (1958). During that period, he also studied conducting with Elizabeth A. H. Green, whom Robert would later say was "the greatest teacher I ever had."

Robert began his music career as a high school band director in Onsted, Michigan, then moved to California's Anaheim High School. He began his collegiate career in 1962 at what was then Long Beach State College, and he joined the Los Angeles Philharmonic. In 1968, he headed to the University of Wisconsin-Madison to become director of bands.

In 1975, he accepted the storied director of bands position at his alma mater in Ann Arbor, a role he held for 25 years. He also served as the Henry F. Thurnau Professor of Music, director of University Bands, and director of the division of instrumental studies. Robert had a lasting impact on the university's band program, expanding the number of student performance opportunities and establishing a fund that commissioned or co-commissioned nearly 40 works during his U-M tenure. The fund continues to be used for new commissions today.

Following his career at U-M, Robert accepted a position as principal conductor of the wind ensemble at the University of Southern California, where he held the H. Robert Reynolds Professorship in Wind Conducting for 19 years.

Robert also served as conductor of the Detroit Chamber Winds and Strings for 35 years, and, for 20 summers, served as conductor of the Young Artists Wind Ensemble at the Tanglewood Institute, summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

Over the course of his career, Robert conducted performances all over the world, including at Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center, Chicago's Orchestra Hall, Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, the Maggio Musicale in Florence, the Tonhalle in Zurich, the Holland Festival in Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, and at the Sydney Opera House. In May 1984, in a historic tour with the Michigan Symphony Band, he gave the premiere performance of Karlheinz Stockhausen's opera "Samstag aus Licht at La Scala Opera" in Milan, a work he and his students recorded for Deutsche Grammophon.

# Anytime, anywhere!

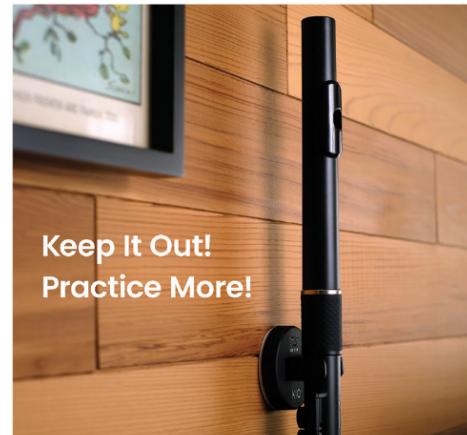


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## YOU CAN'T RUN A PROGRAM IF YOU'RE RUNNING ON EMPTY

By *Don Stinson*

### Most music teachers are barely holding it together.

You're doing the job and running the rehearsals, but something's not right. You're tired, irritable, and shaking your head. You wonder if your beginning music teacher conned you when they said, "Try this instrument! This will be fun - Isn't this FUN?"

I've been there. So have most people who dedicate their lives to teaching music. This isn't about quitting. It's not about overhauling your life or starting a side hustle. It's about taking care of yourself. You can't run a strong program if you're running on fumes. And you don't have to wait for a breakdown to make a change.

### Pick a Day to Leave - Then Actually Do It

Pick one day. And leave. Not "stay a little late." Not "just one more thing." Actually leave when your contract says you can. The first time you do this, you'll feel guilty. Like you're breaking a rule. But you're not. You're just breaking a habit that was never healthy in the first place. One day won't destroy your program. But staying late every day might destroy you. Protecting one afternoon gives you a chance to recover and make time for the other parts of your life that are important to you.

### Protect Your Prep

Prep time isn't extra. It's yours. You need it to actually do your job. But it disappears fast if you don't protect it. Knock-knock. "Got a minute?" (I don't even have a second) "Yeah, what can I do for you?" And soon, 35 minutes dedicated to score study are gone.

It's always quick stuff - quick meetings, quick coverage, quick favors. They add up. And now you're working nights to make up for the time you gave away at 11:15 a.m. You already treat your rehearsal time as sacred - start doing the same for your prep time.

Because when you treat it like it matters, others will too. This was hard for me to do at first. I felt bad telling others "no." But every time I told someone else "yes," I was the one getting the "no." I didn't need to say "no" to every request for the rest of my career, but I did need to prioritize myself.

If you see this being difficult, try going to another part of your building for your plan or hanging an "available in 30 minutes" sign on your door. Once you're used to having this time you can practice saying, "thanks for stopping by - can we connect when I'm done with this project?"

### Keep a Recovery Drawer

Rough days are part of the job. Plan for them. I thought it was negative to think this way. Then I realized, if I didn't plan for some tough times, those difficult situations could take even more hours of my days. Better to plan for them so they don't steal more time I don't have. Now I keep a drawer. Protein bars. Headache meds. Backup socks. Clean shirt. Deodorant. Nothing fancy. Just stuff that keeps me functional when things don't go as planned. Added bonus: the protein bar doubles as a career saver. If someone says something outlandish to me, I can then shove the entire bar in my mouth. This keeps me from saying something I'll regret.

### Say No to Something Small

Practice saying no. Start with something small. A meeting. An extra performance. A "can you just...?" One time a community member asked my group to perform at their event - tomorrow. "Sorry, I have to pick my kids up from an activity." But they were very helpful - they offered up their spouse to watch my kids. I learned that day that people will go to great lengths if they want you to do something for them. After that, I stopped overexplaining. You: "Thanks for the opportunity, but we're unable to make it. Please keep us in mind in the future." Them: "Oh, we wish you could make it! What do you have?"

You: "Really appreciate it - wish we could, we're just unable to make it. Hopefully next time." The more you practice, the easier it gets. You are allowed to protect your time.

### You Can Teach Music Without Giving It Your Whole Life

You chose to go into teaching music because you loved it. You're good at it. It comes natural to you, but you also work hard to provide for your students and community.

### You can't miss somewhere if you're always there.

When you spend every waking minute somewhere, it can be easy for the job you always wanted to turn into the place you most resent. You don't need to move things around on your calendar. Or a new strategy. Or to "just push through." You need rest. You need time.

You need to stop giving every piece of yourself to the job. This doesn't mean you care less.

It means you want to continue doing what you love - and still be around to do it for years to come.

A tired teacher burns out. A rested one stays. And your kids will learn more from the one who's still around next year.

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The cover of the book "BROWSE JUST-RELEASED ORCHESTRA MUSIC" by Kendor Music Publishing. It features a green and yellow abstract background with a QR code. The Kendor logo (a red 'k' and white 'm' inside a square) is at the top, and the text "BROWSE JUST-RELEASED ORCHESTRA MUSIC" and "NEW FOR 2026-2027" are prominently displayed.

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## BEHIND THE STRINGS: ON BEING THE MARINE BAND'S SOLO HARPIST

By Staff Sgt. Taylor Fleshman

In military music, where every job is unique, Marine Band Harpist Staff Sgt. Taylor Fleshman has a truly rare position. "There are seven of us in the military," Fleshman said.

"By the time I turned 7, I had been playing piano for two years and many of my friends were starting to play a second instrument,"

Fleshman said. She continued, "You see harpists on TV, but rarely in person. On the way home from church one night, my dad asked me if I would like to learn how to play the harp. My parents initially ordered a tiny harp from the internet, technically an adult lap harp, but I was so small that I played it like a full-size instrument!"

Finding a teacher was initially difficult, but Fleshman had a stroke of luck after six months of being guided through an introductory harp book by her piano teacher:

"When I started playing, we lived in Canada because of my mom's job, but we moved back to the United States, and I was fortunate enough to find a harp teacher who was local. I started taking lessons with her and she introduced me to the world of harp technique and repertoire. Once I got to high school, I started doing more orchestra-based things. I did two youth orchestras, starting my sophomore year, and then my junior year I started participating in my school's orchestras. By that time, I was at the North Carolina School of the Arts so there were more opportunities for me to participate in their arts program."

Fleshman decided to pursue a professional career as a harpist early in high school. "My freshman year, before I transferred to School of the Arts, something just clicked. I was also playing sports at the time and was thinking about where I wanted my life to go. I said, 'what am I doing? I play harp. This is my career,'" Fleshman said. "There aren't many of us who play, so there are a lot of opportunities for harpists."

After graduating from high school, Fleshman attended the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, where she studied with Dr. Gillian Sella, principal harpist of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. Following her time in Cincinnati, she earned an MA from the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University, studying with Florence Sitruk.

Fleshman wanted to audition for "The President's Own" the second she saw the opening advertised, saying "I knew of the harp position with the Marine Band because my predecessor, Master Gunnery Sgt. Karen Grimsey, came to my area in North Carolina when I was around 10 or 11 years old and gave a clinic explaining her job."

Fleshman was one of 14 harpists who answered the audition announcement at Marine Barracks Washington. Recalling the process,

she said "I know 14 isn't a huge number compared to some of our auditions that can have 100 or more applicants, but there aren't that many harpists so it was intimidating! I was number 12, and when they called out my number as the winner of the audition it took a moment to process that they were talking about me."

There is no "normal" week for Fleshman. In less than three years of service, she has already performed across the nation during the Marine Band's National Concert Tour and at hundreds of events including a baby shower for Naomi Biden, President Jimmy Carter's funeral and two receptions at the CIA. Many of her engagements are solo performances, so the pressure is always on: "I have to make sure to take really good care of my health. It's hard to replace a harpist if I get sick," Fleshman said. "I had a cold during President Carter's funeral – it took all my effort to keep from sneezing on live TV!"

It isn't all solo work; Fleshman frequently performs at events with small groups from the Marine Chamber Orchestra and the Marine Band during concerts. "Violin and harp duets, performing with a brass quintet, summer concerts with the full band, I get to do it all!"

Fleshman said. "All of us in the Marine Band are lucky enough to be witnesses to moments in history, but I feel particularly lucky that I get to be there for all of it due to my position. It can be hectic, but the variety of things I get to do in this role are what sets it apart for me."

In addition to the interesting places she gets to play, Fleshman also enjoys the wide range of music she is able to perform due to the versatility required by the Marine Band's varied schedule. Her repertoire includes everything from harp standards to concert band pieces to popular music numbers. "I'm always on my toes staying on top of which pieces I need to have ready for the different groups!" Fleshman said.

The decision seems daunting, but Fleshman says young musicians interested in playing a niche instrument such as harp shouldn't be discouraged.

"There are opportunities out there for young people to get into this instrument, so take advantage of the opportunities that are in front of you. Nothing will work unless you do. If you do your research on harp teachers, you'll find there are a lot more teachers out there than people realize. It's up to you to look for them. The big principle that I've always stuck to is to not try to copy somebody else's path, because yours will not look the same as theirs. People will tell you that you need to be part of a certain symphony, festival or masterclass, and that isn't always true."

From a lap harp ordered off the internet to performing for presidents and dignitaries, Fleshman's path has been anything but conventional. By embracing a unique instrument and forging her own way, she has found not just a career, but a front-row seat to history.



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## REBUILDING A REPAIR BUDGET: PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR MUSIC EDUCATORS

By Lisa Canning

In the world of music education, maintaining instruments in good condition is essential for fostering a successful learning environment. But what happens when your repair budget is non-existent or severely limited? This can strain programs and affect student engagement. If you find yourself in this situation, don't despair—here are practical strategies to help you rejuvenate your repair budget and validate its necessity, so your program remains vibrant and effective.

### Assess Your Current Inventory

Start by taking a detailed inventory of your instruments. Assess their condition and categorize them:

- Instruments in Good Repair: Fully functional, requiring little maintenance.
- Needing Minor Repairs: Require small adjustments before use.
- In Disrepair: Need significant repairs or replacement.

A detailed inventory provides clarity and can justify future funding needs.

### Create a Repair Scorecard

Using your inventory, develop a "repair scorecard" for each instrument, including:

- Instrument type
- Condition and repair needs
- Estimated repair costs
- Frequency of use
- Impact on program

This visual tool helps stakeholders understand where funding is needed most and how repairs support student learning.

### Engage Students and Parents

Your community can be an invaluable partner in rebuilding your budget. Encourage involvement through:

- Maintenance Workshops: Teach parents and students basic care techniques.
- Fundraising Performances: Host concerts or talent shows with small admission fees.
- Crowdfunding Campaigns: Use platforms like GoFundMe or DonorsChoose to share your story and invite support.

Community participation builds awareness and strengthens commitment to your program.

### Seek Partnerships and Sponsorships

Local businesses and organizations can be strong allies. Approach music stores, manufacturers, and civic groups with a concise proposal outlining your program's value, repair needs, and the benefits of their involvement—such as publicity and community goodwill.

Sponsorship can include discounted services, donated supplies, or direct financial contributions.

### Leverage Grant Opportunities

Grants are one of the most effective ways to rebuild a repair budget. Research:

- Local Arts Organizations: Many offer funding for community music programs.
- State and Federal Grants: Explore opportunities through the National

Endowment for the Arts and similar programs.

- Educational Foundations: These often support arts education initiatives.

When applying, clearly explain the need for repairs, include your inventory and scorecard, and highlight how repairs improve student outcomes.

### Make Use of Local Resources

Collaboration with nearby schools, educators, or organizations can stretch your limited funds. Consider:

- Partnering with Colleges: Music education or repair students may seek hands-on experience.
- Attending Repair Clinics: Join or host local workshops to access shared expertise.

Pooling resources can make large projects more manageable and cost-effective.

### Implement a Maintenance Program

Preventive care reduces costs over time. Create a maintenance schedule that includes:

- Instrument Rotation: Rotating use spreads wear evenly and helps identify issues early.
- Scheduled Care Days: Dedicate time each semester for students to clean and inspect instruments.

Teaching students to take responsibility for instrument care fosters respect and reduces future repair needs.

### Communicate Transparently

Transparency builds trust and ongoing support. Whether requesting donations, sponsorships, or grants, keep stakeholders informed about your needs and progress.

Share updates on funds raised, repairs completed, and improvements in student performance. This accountability encourages continued investment and strengthens your credibility.

### Evaluate and Validate

Consistently measure how instrument repairs improve your program. Collect data on student participation, performance quality, and engagement. Use these results to demonstrate the return on investment that a repair budget provides.

Highlight success stories and visible outcomes to validate ongoing financial support from administrators and community partners.

Reestablishing and validating a repair budget ensures the longevity and effectiveness of music programs. By assessing your inventory, engaging the community, seeking partnerships and grants, and maintaining transparency, you can not only restore your repair budget but also elevate your program's value within the school and community.

With collaboration, planning, and creativity, you can create a sustainable foundation that keeps instruments in tune and the music playing for years to come.

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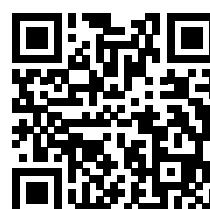
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# INCLUSIVE TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR THE K12 GUITAR CLASSROOM

By Kevin Vigil

*The following article sample was reprinted from American String Teacher, vol 74, issue 4 with permission from ASTA and the author.*

Occasionally, a new student will enter our classrooms and present us with a new pedagogical challenge. While you may initially think you are not equipped to support the student, upon reflection you may just find a key to that student's success. More times than not, the solutions and strategies to meet these challenges will benefit not only the new student, but their classmates as well. Here are some teaching strategies for helping the hearing impaired, the visually impaired, and students who may struggle with reading musical notation become successful musicians in the K-12 classroom.

## Assisting the Hearing Impaired

Two weeks before the school year started, I was told a deaf student would be in my class. I was not sure how I would teach this student, so I watched a documentary about Evelyn Glennie (2005) called, *Touch the Sound*. Glennie is a professional percussionist who is deaf. The documentary was fascinating, but it did not directly lead to the specificity needed to play guitar.

Further reflection led to a practical solution, "touch the sensation." If the student could feel the vibration underneath his left-hand fingertip, he would know that he plucked the correct string. If he did not feel the vibration under his fingertip, he did not pluck the correct string. To know if he played the correct open string, he could simply watch the string vibrate.

## Assisting the Visually Impaired

Proprioception is the ability to know where your extremities are in space whether or not you are moving. This is quite useful when playing your instrument. Try this exercise yourself and with students:

Step 1: With your guitar in position, drop your left arm so it is down and at your side.

Step 2: Swing your arm from the elbow into a playing position without aiming.

Where did your hand land? For me, my hand consistently lands in 7th position. With this information, I am able to reference the fingerboard without looking at it. If I want to be in fifth position, I swing my arm and feel slight tension as I move my arm to the left. If I want to be in first position, I simply open my armpit. Ninth position is very easy to find by using fine touch. I simply let the side of my fourth finger touch the body of the guitar. Several years ago, a blind student played for me in a master class. I was fascinated by her ability to play along the entire fingerboard with shifts from one position to another. She was a master at proprioception and indiscriminative touch. She learned music from braille music notation and had to memorize it. Using proprioception and indiscriminative touch in this way can help all students with increased facility and shifting on the instrument.

## Assisting Students Who Struggle with Musical Notation

Reading music is a learned ability. Many students have difficulty learning this skill. The lines and spaces are often taught with acronyms like Every Good Boy Does Fine for the lines and F-A-C-E for the spaces. While these may be useful at the onset, many students continue to use these years later rather than knowing the notes. In this system, students are scanning from bottom to top for every note.

The sense of vision can be more efficiently applied. Humans look for focal points in the visual field. Edges outline these focal points. The bottom and top lines can be considered edges. The bottom and top lines are alphabetical. In treble clef, the notes are "E" and "F." The middle line is also a focal point as it is in the center of the edges. The middle line is "B" in treble clef. I teach my students to remember that "B" is between everything. With the bottom, top, and middle lines as focal references, it is easy to apply the alphabet forward and backward.

When I teach the staff, I ask a student who has never read music before to stand at my white board. I point to the notes on the bottom, top, and middle lines and have them tell me the note names. I continue by pointing to notes just below or above the three points of reference then increasingly point more randomly. Most students can identify the notes on the staff within 5 minutes. This may be a much more efficient approach to learning notes on the staff.

View the pictorial samples and read more by accessing the full article at [www.astastrings.org](http://www.astastrings.org).



Sponsored by Kendor Music Publishing

Students thrive when they know what to expect. Using clear, consistent patterns in your rehearsal each day saves time and encourages student independence. In my middle school orchestra classes, students know that we will first tune, warm up, and sight read, but we may focus on a different part of our technique, such as moving the bow straight or shaping the left hand.

Starting in the second year, I train students to lead our tuning and warm up procedures. They take charge, freeing me to address individual tuning or technique concerns. Consider using routines at the start of class to spend less time talking and more time playing!

*Matt Arnett, Educator and Kendor Composer*



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## TONE DEAF COMICS

*By John Bogenschutz*

SBO+: After decades in music education, this is the first time I've heard the term "turd burglars." I will do my very best not to use it in a classroom.

## BEGINNING BAND





# PRESERVICE TEACHERS: PRACTICE YOUR LEADERSHIP!

By Katrina A. Cox

## **Future Music Educator Readers,**

When do you become an arts educator? Is it when you earn your degree or sign a job contract? Perhaps a better question is: When do you start teaching? Many people describe what you are doing now as “preparing” to teach. But when we change the verb from anticipating to doing—“I am ‘becoming’ an arts educator”—we acknowledge your accomplishments and expect continued practice of your accumulated knowledge and skills. When you are “becoming,” you are developing and growing into your teacher-self.

One conceptual skill that society expects teachers to have is the ability to lead. We can often identify good leaders and even some of the behaviors they exhibit. However, many of us struggle with making those behaviors our own so that we feel competent and confident leading large groups. So how can we become better leaders?

## **LEADERSHIP**

Successful leaders consistently demonstrate some common specific behaviors, no matter their personality, profession, or who they are leading. Furthermore, researchers agree that these behaviors are skills that can be learned and improved upon. Here are a few ways you can practice your leadership skills when working with peers or students.

**Be Inspirational.** One of the most inspiring things you can do as a teacher is to be great at your craft. Take time to create or perform in educational ways. When you model an ideal outcome beautifully and then immediately provide students with feedback or directions that allow them to see, hear, or feel their own improvement in real time, you gain respect as an artist and trust that you will share your knowledge.

**Notes.** The goals of modeling (e.g., tone, agility) can transfer across mediums and instruments. So, keep your primary instrument on hand for these needed demonstrations as you continue to gain greater acumen on secondary instruments. The purpose of modeling should be educational; if the focus stays on the teacher for too long, it becomes performative and can result in student frustration and resentment.

**Foster Mutual Respect & Trust.** Learning is a vulnerable endeavor. We are all more likely to take risks and stay focused on improvement when we feel supported by a teacher and our peers. Respect comes before trust. Model respect by using people’s names, actively listening when someone speaks (i.e., making eye contact and attending and responding to questions/comments), anticipating and providing for academic and physical accommodations, maintaining professional boundaries, and interacting with every person in your group and student in your class.

Model trust by verbalizing your own goals, admitting mistakes, consistently being prepared for lessons or activities, focusing on student improvement, providing honest, specific, helpful feedback,

and being predictable in instruction and behavior management. Teach respect and trust by providing students with opportunities to lead and interact with outlined expectations (e.g., tell your partner which measure seems particularly difficult, then try to improve it together). These types of prescribed collaborative activities can simultaneously build relationships, evaluative skills, and confidence.

**Notes.** Start with short, limited-option, low-stakes feedback opportunities to foster trust and monitor peer interactions. Using “we” and “us” in goal setting builds team rapport and group motivation and tends to make individuals feel more supported by both their leaders and peers.

**Be Focused & Responsible.** Great leaders coordinate collaboration and facilitate cooperation; in other words, the spotlight is on people achieving a goal, not the leader. This takes intelligent planning, consistent focus, and tenacity. To practice, zoom in and out on a goal (e.g., fundraising, costume mapping, performance) to predict where challenges and time-consuming tasks might arise. Scaffold smaller sets of tasks with frequent deadlines and prepare support and resources in advance. You know you have planned well when everyone is able to stay on task and motivated to achieve the goal.

**Notes.** One common misconception that leads to peer resentment is that group work should be shared equally. Practice choosing or creating sets of goals or projects that will allow variability in students’ levels of contributions (e.g., project 1 focuses on composing; project 2 focuses on marketing) and then explicitly describe, model, and monitor communication acknowledging differences in group members’ responsibilities, needs, and growth. This can promote buy-in while providing students with practice in professional intelligence.

## **YOU ARE A LEADER**

**Remember:** You are not preparing to be a leader, you are becoming a successful leader. This means you are deliberately practicing leadership skills whenever opportunities arise. Start in safe places with behaviors that come more naturally to you: perhaps use attentive listening skills with friends, greet people at a family reunion by name, or ask an on-task question when your study group loses focus. As you gain confidence with successful leading experiences, push yourself to practice in more formal settings. Ask professors or cooperating teachers if you can lead additional discussions or sectionals and consider applying for a camp counselor or summer school aide position. Practice! And when you take a breath to reflect on your habitual and deliberate behaviors, you will discover that you are a leader.

Dr. Katrina Cox began her career as the Director of Choral Activities and Drama at Centralia High School in Southern Illinois. Over the past decade, she has created and implemented a wide array of music course curricula (e.g., class guitar and piano, choral methods, world music pedagogy).

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