

NOVEMBER 2017

[www.mtblancamusicconservatory.com](http://www.mtblancamusicconservatory.com)

## MBSMC Notes



Hello all! Welcome to the first MBSMC “Notes”! This was a project that was supposed to come to fruition months ago, but unfortunately, life caught up with me and I am only just now writing our first newsletter. Please forgive my delay!! I am excited to begin this monthly letter, and hope that it will help ease the “waiting for next summer’s conservatory” blues. ☺ Each month we will do a quick update on any interesting happenings, events, or other news related to MBSMC and its students, faculty, parents, and supporters. We will then provide interesting info and resources for our students to help with their musical studies. The newsletter will have a “listening section” where various pieces or genres of music will be highlighted to help expose our students to new music every month. There will also be a couple of articles on topics such as practice methods, music history, helpful tips for performing, theory, and so on. Our amazing faculty have offered to help write some of these articles each month, so many thanks to them!

Please feel free to email me with topic suggestions, questions to be answered, interesting news or events that you would like to share, or anything else you would like me to include in the next newsletter! The more input the better!

I will email this newsletter to everyone on our list, but I will also post a digital version on our social media accounts and on our website each month, so keep a lookout! As always, you can follow and like us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram!

Best to all! *Sarah Off, Artistic Director - MBSMC*

## UPCOMING EVENTS!!

\*Many of our amazing students and faculty will be performing for the upcoming **7<sup>th</sup> Annual Concert of Carols in the Valley to help raise money for our scholarship fund!** Check out the dates below:

December 22 1:00 pm- Colorado College, Crestone

December 22 7:00pm Del Norte High School Auditorium,  
Del Norte

December 23 2:00 pm Richardson Hall, Alamosa

December 23 7:00pm Home of Randy Macy, Fort Garland  
(Please call 719-379-4022 for reservations)

\*Dr. James Doyle will be giving a series of **percussion classes during the Fall and Spring Semesters at Adams State University** for all levels! Contact Dr. James Doyle ([jwdoyle@adams.edu](mailto:jwdoyle@adams.edu)). for more information.

Adams State University

# PERCUSSION ACADEMY

Open to all students grades 9–12, regardless of experience!

**LEARN:**

- Steel Pans • African Hand Drumming • Brazilian Samba • Drum Set
- Drum Line • Central American & Zimbabwean Marimba
- Concert Percussion • and more!!



All classes taught by Dr. James Doyle  
and students in the ASU Percussion Studio

\$25 for ALL Classes (fee waiver available)

**TUESDAY EVENINGS • 7:15PM–8:45PM**  
beginning November 7 in the ASU Music Building

- November 7, 14, 28
- December 5, 12
- January 23, 30
- February 6, 13, 20, 27
- March 6, 13, 27
- April 3, 10, 17, 24

Concluding Concert on April 25

Contact Dr. James Doyle at 719-587-7702 or [jwdoyle@adams.edu](mailto:jwdoyle@adams.edu)  
Sponsored by: Office of Title V Initiatives Center for Teaching, Innovation, & Research (CTIR)



**\*Dr. Sarah Off will be performing two solo violin concerts while she is home in December. Here is the info:**

December 15, 2017 7:00pm Wildwood Sounds Del Norte CO

\$15 at the door or reserve tickets at 719-657-4757

December 16, 2017 7:00pm Big River Music, Creede CO

\$15 at the door

**CONGRATULATIONS!! Mr. Mathieu D'Ordine is now the cello instructor at Adams State University!**

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## **Performance Nerves! How to Manage it...**

Sarah Off

“I’m SO NERVOUS!!!” At least that is how most of us feel right before we perform.... And it doesn’t have to be a big performance either! I remember when I was young and my parents would invite a friend over for dinner and then I would play something for them on my violin. I was always really nervous! Many people will say in response to your exclamation that you should not be nervous because “No one will know if you make a mistake”, or “We are all here supporting you”, or “You know this music so you will be fine”, or any other number of sentiments. All of these may be true to an extent, but they never make me feel any better. I have spent twenty-two years of my life being nervous for big performances, auditions, and even little spontaneous get together performances. I have tried everything to not be nervous too.... Bananas, green tea, run around the block two times, sit and meditate.... But guess what? None of it really works. We cannot get rid of our performance nerves, and that is actually a GOOD THING. Wait what??? Why would my being nervous be a good thing? It is simple... being nervous means you care about what you are about to do. You care about your music, you care about your ability to perform it, you care about the audience, you CARE! So, after many years of trying to stop my nerves before performances, I have decided that I don’t want to. The minute I stop caring, that means my heart is not in it, and that is sad. I don’t want that to ever happen! Now, that is not to say that there are not times when I am less nervous than others, or maybe so comfortable with my music and audience that I almost don’t notice the nerves, but they are always there. So, despite the discomfort and inconvenience our nerves can cause, they are actually a good sign. Embrace them!

You are probably thinking to yourself “Great. Embrace my nerves. What about when they cause a physical or mental side effect that

makes it difficult to perform well?” Yes, they do. Darn it. ☺ Here is what we can do to help with that.

The first thing to do, is identify what happens to you personally when you get nervous. Do your knees shake? Sweaty hands? Memory slips? Dry throat? Do you rush through the most difficult passages of your piece?

For me, I typically get shaky hands, cold fingers, shallow breathing, and.... I rush. My brain speeds away and my fingers follow. Once, you have observed and figured out what happens to you personally when you get nervous, then it is a lot easier to handle when it happens! Instead of putting a bunch of effort into stopping or avoiding the nerves, we can put the same effort into dealing with them in a productive way.

Since I know that I tend to get cold fingers I always have hand warmers with me backstage, and in some cases, will even take them with me onstage. For my shaky hands and shallow breathing, I will be sure to take ten minutes before my performance to sit and focus on deep breathing. I also make sure to breath deeply before I begin playing. During the performance if I feel that I am getting shaky again I will find places during rests to take a couple of deep breaths. In other words, I have a plan of action to deal with my nerves, and they don't take me by surprise when they show up! ☺

Some side effects are harder to deal with than others. Things like memory slips or rushing can be difficult to manage in the moment and should be addressed in the preparation for a concert as well.

One of the most important parts of my practice routine is mental practice. What I mean by this is practicing without my instrument. I will sit and study the music, listen to the piece, and most importantly I will practice “playing it” in my head without my instrument. What this does is it takes away the physical action of playing and makes your brain fully engage. We often rely upon muscle memory when we perform and this can lead to rushing and memory slips. We are usually physically affected by nerves, so relying completely on muscle memory can be dangerous since most likely you will be nervous. If you have studied your music and know it completely (not just in your muscles) then you are far likelier to have complete control

over your performance. I will also practice starting in the middle of a piece (somewhere that is very awkward to begin) and play from there. This helps with memory as well.

Practice with a metronome in order to prevent rushing, and try to develop what I call an “inner pulse”. This means developing your ability to maintain a steady tempo without the metronome. Playing things like scales and exercises at different tempos is a good way to practice this.

When you are practicing, do not allow yourself to rush. If you let yourself get away with things in your practice that you would not want to happen in a performance, you are much more likely to do those things when you are on stage. Always be preparing when you practice. Do not just put the time in.

The most important way to get better at performing and dealing with nerves is to.... PERFORM! All the time! Even if it is for your friends or family. The more you do it, the better you get at it. So, get out there and perform! 😊

In the next newsletter, we will have a session on productive practicing!

If you have any questions or comments on dealing with nerves, or if you have a request for a topic for one of our next newsletters, please email me! I would love to hear from you!

*Sarah*

Sarahoff@mtblancamusicconservatory.com

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## **Listening and Media:**

Here are some amazing performers to check out:

### **Time For Three**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=34bgjdQRjIM>

Time for three is described as a “classically trained garage band.” They have fused all types and genres of music together in their music! Enjoy! Here is their website: [www.tf3.com](http://www.tf3.com)

### **Lang Lang, Pianist**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CfC1bZr5Ezc>

Lang Lang is a world-renowned pianist who performs not only the standard music from the classical repertoire, but has also collaborated with a wide variety of musicians including Metallica! He is an avid instructor as well and you can check out more about his work and teaching here: [www.langlang.com](http://www.langlang.com)

### **Ella Fitzgerald, Voice**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nSR7YAdqurU>

Ella Fitzgerald is one of the most famous female jazz singers of all time. She has been named the “First Lady of Song”. Read more here: [www.ellafitzgerald.com](http://www.ellafitzgerald.com)

### **Composer Spotlight!**

There are thousands of fantastic composers and pieces of music out there, so this is a hard task, but I will pick a few for each newsletter to highlight. I suggest you go to YouTube and type the name of the composer into the search. You will probably come across many other great pieces and composers that way too! I will give you a link to listening for each. Enjoy!

### **Jean Sibelius (1892-1957)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fE0RbPsC9uE>

### **Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cQFjDBFXN58>

**Lou Harrison (1917-2003)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vSzIKjnwTEs>

**Clara Schumann (1819-1896)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2sN4730F26w>

**Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cH2PH0auTUU>

**Also, Leonard Bernstein was a wonderful teacher. Here is one of my favorite videos from many years ago:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XuMSopdrWSQ>

**Who are some of your favorite composers? Share them with me! Sarahoff@mtblancamusicconservatory.com**

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**Alright, that's it for now! Until next time!**