

TO: Mike Thomas, Dr. Hicks, and the TEPS Committee
FROM: Andrea Runfola, Music Teacher
RE: The Midwest Band and Orchestra Conference
DATE: December 28, 2017

I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to attend this year's Midwest Band and Orchestra Conference from December 20th to December 23rd, 2017. As always, this is the only conference to offer multiple opportunities to gain professional development in every area of my teaching. I cannot begin to describe how much I gain from attending this amazing conference.

This year, I took full advantage of the conference and made sure I attended at least one session/concert/ booth that could enhance my teaching in every area. Here are just some of the sessions I attended and a short description:

The Gulliver Academy Jazz Ensemble: This Middle School Honor Jazz Band from Miami, Florida was amazing. Some of the students were 6th graders and they played music that only high school players could tackle. I gained programming ideas and was able to hear some incredible jazz improvisation.

The Alabama Winds: This group of auditioned local musicians, mainly adults and music teachers around the state of Alabama, performed several premiere works by composers that I really respect. Aside from the quality of playing, many of the selections focused on historical events and personal loss. The music was written to celebrate the lives of those lost so tragically. It brought the audience to tears. Again, they played some great pieces I might perform with my group.

Rehearsal Lab: "Practical Solutions for Small Bands": Since moving to two combined 7/8 bands at the middle school, I had to change my repertoire to meet the needs of a smaller band. William Owens gave a great clinic on how to get the most out of my students by meeting their needs, musically and psychologically. Every band has its own successes and we need to achieve them through strategic programming and incentives. It was my favorite clinic.

T.A. Howard Middle School Honor Band: The band played well and I heard some great new works by great composers. I was surprised to see some performance practices that are a little against my philosophy of teaching but in this scenario, it yielded some benefits to this group.

Jazz – New Music Reading Session: by The United States Army Blues (Washington D.C.): This is usually my favorite "concert". I chose nearly all my repertoire from this clinic two years ago and heard some great new pieces again this year. They played an excerpt from about 40 new works for jazz band and they sight read every piece. Amazing.

Fillmore Wind Band: Another adult ensemble with fantastic new music and “oldie but goodies”. Their trombone section performed “Lassus” Trombone; a super easy arrangement with professional trombone players.

North Shore Senior High Wind Ensemble: 64% of the students from this school are eligible for financial aid. It was so nice to hear and see a school where they put a lot of effort into producing such a fine music program. They understand what music means to a child’s development and they find whatever means possible to keep providing that to students.

Creekwood Middle School Percussion Ensemble: Percussion is not my main specialty so it was great to hear and see middle school percussionists perform at such a high level. Some kids were playing with four mallets at once. Performances like this really raise the bar on my expectations.

These were just the highlights of the Conference. Aside from these sit down clinics/concerts, it took me 4 hours to go through all the exhibits; new instruments, new music, gadgets to make playing easier, fundraising booths, technology and new computer software just to name a few.

Once again, this conference is like no other in the United States. I gain so much professional development from every session. I can’t thank Dr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, and the TEPS committee enough for providing this opportunity for me, and ultimately, my students.

Respectfully Submitted,

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