



KBB Midwest Clinic Scholarship Report

Alastair Monteath in Chicago

As the winner of the 2008 KBB Midwest Clinic Scholarship, Alastair Monteath shares his experience at the world's largest music education Conference in Chicago last December.

Wow, what a week. My head still spins when I think back to what was going on in Chicago. Down to minus 30 degrees, 5 to 6 foot high snowdrifts, Christmas everywhere with carols, sleigh bells and horse drawn carriages, ice skating, falling ice signs on all pavements – keep back from the buildings. This was all going on if you had time to pull yourself away from “the music. “

You must go onto the Midwest Clinic website and see what it's all about. If you are a conductor, tutor or teacher, there cannot be any better professional development than this in the world - amazing!

The Clinic was held within six hotels conference centres all within one block so it was easy walking distances. There were 90 clinics (some of them at the same time, luckily some repeated) ranging from “how to repair your own percussion instruments” to “producing a good tone on Trumpet”. (Check it out on the web site). There were also performance workshops with young and senior groups, performances by some amazing bands – mostly American, plus in the basement of the Hilton Hotel they had an endless array of exhibition stands ranging from – all the main instrument manufacturers, composers and their music, publishers, recruitment agencies, uniform manufacturers, travel agents and the list goes on, too many to even cover.

I decided not to try and find desperately-needed music, due to the sheer magnitude of the exhibitions, but instead got all their web site addresses and will order on line where you can hear all the music being played. A great system.

One of my main interests in the Clinic was to find a magic recipe for fixing intonation – sorry no such thing, but

many different ways to approach it. I will now describe some of the clinics briefly and give web sites for you to explore more fully:

1. **Tuning the ensemble by ear – Rob Myers.** rob-wmyers@verizon.net This demo was teaching students to hear a note when it is in tune and when it is out of tune (hearing the beats), by the use of the Yamaha HD200 Harmony Director Keyboard and a compact disk. The CD he will send to you, but the keyboard is quite expensive. Quite a technical approach but very interesting and obviously a successful system.
2. **Using good material to develop good musicianship – James Curnow.** www.curnowmusicpress.com This workshop focused on providing variety (avoiding routine) to the content and structure of the daily warm-up as well as various purposes that can be addressed during this critical initial activity.

Publication – Tone studies for band – Curnow Music.

3. **Conducting insights – moving from technique to artistry – Anthony Maiello.** amaillo@gmu.edu A very inspiring clinic for conductors, particularly the more refined approaches to baton technique, the use of the eyes and the left hand. His presentation was based on an absolute common sense approach but incredibly effective.

Publication – Conducting Nuances (little things mean a lot) – GIA Publications Inc.

4. **Rhythm: How can something so simple be so difficult to teach – David Newell.** newell@sbcglobal.net A very well thought out system. It is crucial to do the steps of this system in the right order particularly for junior players.



Publications – The simple rhythmician - Kjos Ed. W38.

5. **All music must dance – Weston Noble.** Weston Noble is considered to have the same high profile as Bernstein, Copeland and Barber. This workshop was very interesting. He worked mainly on demonstrating the kinetic energy from beat 2 and 4 in the bar which is created in the downwards pressure of the bow in Baroque music and consonants and vowels in Chorale music.

Publication – Creating the special world – GIA Publications Inc.

6. **Beyond their years – Chip De Stefano.** cdestefano@skokie735.k12.il.us Chip worked with a middle school band from Chicago. He did a range of techniques but one that had amazing results is as follows: The group played a short Bach chorale through once. He then said “I want you to imagine the best band in the world playing this piece, that is with fantastic tone, balance, blend and play together. Now we are going to turn your brain into a tape recorder. I want you now to press record, follow your own part through and we will now record this amazing group”. He conducted them through, imagining this sound. “Press stop”. “We are now going to press play and do it again still imagining this group”. “Press stop”. And then they physically played the music. The difference was absolutely outstanding. You must try this one.

Occasionally in life you have a defining moment and I had one at this final workshop.

7. **The art of expressive conducting – Conducting from the inside out – Allan McMurray.** McMurray@colorado.edu Allan has quoted “Conducting work begins not with movement but with the study of music. Before a conductor can pick up a baton and lead

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with confidence they must know where they are going”. Allan started by demonstrating how any piece of music can change dramatically depending on what picture the conductor can paint or describe for his band. He painted a word picture of the audience being in a bar singing Happy Birthday to an audience member. Then, the audience had to re-sing Happy Birthday with the visualisation that they were singing to a newborn baby. The change was breathtaking and moving so much so that the majority of the audience could not complete the song. Allan was trying to point out the huge contrast between two totally different word pictures but the same music and the different effects and energy that that entails.

Publications – Conducting from the inside out – DVD 1,2,3 – GIA Publications Inc.

There were many other clinics that I went to but these were the most helpful and inspiring. I went to many performances, the highlights being – The United States Army field Band, a community band from Japan called The Ensemble Liberte Wind Orchestra. What an incredibly expressive group they were. What was really great about all performances was it was also a demonstration of repertoire, even the best groups played music from grade 1 – 6.

I would highly recommend anyone involved in music to apply for this year’s scholarship, it is the best professional development you could ever ask for, and I can’t thank KBB Music enough for their support to New Zealand music and for sending me to this amazing occasion. I know some of this is brief but if anyone wants any further information please don’t hesitate to contact me: Alastair Monteath als@nettel.net.nz

Please see page 14 on how to apply for the 2009 KBB Midwest Scholarship.



The 2009 Midwest Clinic will be held at McCormick Place West in Chicago.