

A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR BUILDING AN APPLIED STUDIO

By Luis C. Engelke

Towson University

Building an applied studio with depth and quality is one of the most important challenges a faculty member encounters in a new position. Not only is a healthy-sized studio necessary for filling one's teaching load and providing excellence to ensembles, but also proficient students with aptitude and potential, dedication and self motivation, and a strong background are necessary for demonstrating teaching effectiveness and eventually a record of successful graduates. Newly appointed faculty may not initially have the experience and credibility of senior faculty; hence, a strategic plan for building an applied studio may be invaluable.

Is a master teacher that set the precedent of an outstanding studio being replaced? Is this a new position, possibly an expansion of an adjunct post with the expectations of both studio size and quality being improved accordingly? Does an applied studio need revival after a predecessor who may have once excelled but eventually allowed a studio to flounder toward the end of a successful career? These are just a few of the scenarios frequently encountered.

The Recruiting Process

Building a successful applied studio involves three particular steps: recruitment, retention, and achievement. Specifically, one must attract advanced students that have been already prepared musically for university study. These young musicians must be given quality instruction and advising, so that they will improve and develop the necessary skills to succeed in the field of music or music education. Additionally, these students must value their educational experiences and continue in the program. Upon commencement, graduates must receive support and direction so that they may succeed in the field. The applied teacher (whether the student's academic advisor or not) plays an important role in all of these situations because of the close one-to-one interaction.

Recruitment can be divided into two areas: macro-recruiting and micro-recruiting. Macro-recruiting consists of activities that are intended to disseminate the university's name and reputation, including the quality of its faculty and their commitment to teaching. A few effective ways of effectively macro-recruiting include performing chamber music concerts in secondary schools, hosting on-campus events, maintaining a high-profile involvement in selected professional organizations, and making contacts with applied teachers by maintaining an active performance schedule or participating in mailings (or email lists). Micro-recruiting encompasses communication, correspondence, and other contact with individual prospective students. A few of the most effective ways to micro-recruit include offering prospective students visitations to master classes, ensemble rehearsals, concerts, and other activities such as presenting prospective students with a sample lesson so they may experience the professor's teaching style first hand (these are usually recommended after all of the prospective student's auditions have been completed). Daylong visitations can also be very effective. Being available to prospective students' parents for questions and assuring them that their children will receive quality instruction is critical. Maintaining accurate records of contacts and recruiting efforts in a spreadsheet is recommended for organization - assuring that all qualified prospective students receive enough attention while over-pursuit does not disenchant others. When hosting a first regional event, selecting guest artists known personally is critical. Inevitably today's artists with national profiles

maintain extremely busy schedules. Familiarity allows more open dialogue when inevitable delays occur with the submission of scores or procurement of travel arrangements occur on the artist's part.

Macro-Recruiting

The following specific suggestions come to mind when casting a broad net with macro-recruiting. First, successful school concerts are contingent on preparation in several areas. Visiting the best schools is paramount. New faculty may be unfamiliar with the thriving music programs in the area; hence, consulting the university's ensemble directors or music educators can be extremely worthwhile. Often these colleagues will have maintained lists of schools and directors during the span of a career. As one becomes familiar with specific students through adjudicating solo and ensembles contests and other ventures, targeting specific schools because of prospective students becomes more viable. If more than one ensemble exists, for example a woodwind quintet, brass quintet, and string quartet, then developing a rotation so that the strongest high school programs are visited once each year becomes very useful.

When choosing repertoire, developing a quality educational program with a variety of interesting music, rather than simply selecting only a few complex chamber works being performed on an on-campus recital, becomes a worthwhile endeavor. The following suggestions are useful in preparing a successful performance:

- 1) Choose a theme or topic that will assist the formation of an interesting and cohesive program;
- 2) Include a balance of new and familiar music;
- 3) Involve students through some sort of participation to help stimulate interest;
- 4) Impart some pedagogical information or practice habits and rehearsal strategies to support the local music teacher's teaching;
- 5) Keep a fast pace inserting cuts when necessary, and include humor with the dialogue. All members of the ensemble should present at least one work.

The following is a sample outline of a program on interpretation presented many times with a description of why each piece was chosen:

Sample Chamber Music Program for Brass Quintet "Interpreting Different Styles"

Claudio Monteverdi's *Fanfare* (Arranged by Chuck Seipp)

This exciting opener also serves to provide some history about brass instruments. Monteverdi was the first to utilize brass instruments in a work with strings.

Giovanni Gabrieli's *Canzona per Sonare No. 2*

The demonstration of different instruments commences with the cornetto before the work is performed antiphonally on modern instruments.

Anonymous *Fanfare*

Performed on natural trumpets for the purpose of demonstrating how and when instruments evolved to the present day. A part of the fanfare was used as the theme for the movie *Rocky*. Both the recycling of music and the importance of musical traditions are discussed.

Antonio Vivaldi's *Concerto for Two Trumpets* (Arranged by ensemble-member Phil Snedecor)

A demonstration of a short portion of the concerto on natural trumpet and then garden hose precedes performance on the piccolo trumpet. Some insight into Baroque articulation and ornamentation is also presented.

W.A. Mozart's *Aria No. 14 Queen of the Night* (Arranged by David Kosmyna)

This famous aria, originally for coloratura soprano, performed on tuba serves as an interesting twist. Developing technique and expressiveness, a soloistic style, and a vocal approach to wind instrument performance are discussed.

Victor Ewald's *Quintet* (third movement only)

A standard work originally for brass quintet is used to demonstrate thematic development and tempo nuances from the Romantic period.

Sousa's *Washington Post* (Arranged by Harold Gore)

This selection represents a work the students would have likely performed. Some of the things that help make the performance sound great, such as balance between melody and accompaniment, are addressed.

Bix Beiderbecke's *Davenport Blues* (Arranged by Rhodes Whitehill)

Early Jazz and Dixieland are discussed, as well as improvisation and the Blues tradition.

Duke Ellington *Caravan* (Arranged by Darren Bange)

Both the big band era and how Ellington's and other composers' travels across the globe influenced their music are addressed. An ostinato in the low brass ends with audience claps throughout the work (audience participation is included).

Neil Diamond's *I'm a Believer* (Arranged by Phil Snedecor)

Band directors have been contacted and music distributed to a student drummer before the visit. The student performs with the quintet without any prior rehearsal. Both having a peer perform with the ensemble and the currency of this tune with the re-release by the group Smash Mouth (the song was first recorded by the Monkees) are engaging this late in the program.

TV/Movie Trilogy (Arranged by Phil Snedecor)

In the trilogy, *Harry Potter*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and the *Simpsons* are presented. Students immediately connect to current movies/shows or classics. A short question and answer session precedes these final works. Information on the university or conservatory is also presented.

Dimas Sedicias's *Trilogia Matuta*

This Brazilian piece for brass quintet serves as a great encore in addition to demonstrating music from different cultures and a Latin style.

Every faculty member speaking and introducing a work is important both for variety and for prospective students to meet everyone. Forming a program that is both educational and informative as well as entertaining is critical. Although maintaining an accessible program is recommended, producing a program that challenges the students beyond their current knowledge of music is preferable versus one that is too simple and trite. Similarly to faculty ensembles, student groups can also serve to provide effective outreach

programs. Additionally, performing concertos with some of the finest high school bands and orchestras in the area can be an excellent way to establish oneself in a community, particularly when departments are without faculty ensembles.

Hosting on-campus events such as an instrument day or a professional conference is obviously an excellent way to raise the profile of an applied studio. While advertising oneself may be awkward and appear pretentious, marketing a day with another artist of national or international stature will not only be much easier but will also attract a greater audience. Providing recitals and master classes and introducing a university's ensembles makes for a diversified and entertaining day and allows community members and prospective students an opportunity to learn more about the overall music program and specific applied studio. Additionally, current students also receive an opportunity to work with another artist/pedagogue. While finances are always a consideration when producing an event with one or more guest artists, being resourceful and pursuing several forms of sponsorship can alleviate many obstacles or restrictions. Some professional organizations, such as the International Trumpet Guild, allow for the formation of chapters that can apply for grants. State arts councils often support recitals that can be included as part of a day-long event. Many artists/clinicians are sponsored by music industry corporations that will provide part of an honorarium for a master class. Most departments or universities provide some funding for guest artists, so combining these internal funds with other forms of support for a regional event makes optimal use of these resources. Additionally, a nominal fee will not deter guests. Great care should be taken when selecting an artist. In fact, utilizing a former teacher or well-known colleague is highly recommended. Performing a recital and presenting a master class may not be an artist's first choice of employment, and some artists may be swayed by other opportunities, such as recording a soundtrack or performing with a major symphony orchestra. Knowing the artist and agreeing to terms that will insure their participation once publicity has begun is critical, especially as one is learning all of the logistics involved.

Web sites can be used to promote the studio and provide other information as well. This can include syllabi, proficiency levels, repertoire lists, pedagogical resources, degree requirements, a photo gallery of past events, professional organizations, etc. Prospective students will be enthused to see level of development and commitment for the program. Meeting secondary teachers and private music instructors is critical. This can be done through performances at the state music educators conference or even by merely freelancing within the community. Maintaining an active performance agenda in regional orchestras and other venues will surely lead to many excellent connections. Even the visibility of serving as an adjudicator for solo and ensemble festivals can be very beneficial. While building an applied studio of secondary students can help, these students often are ready to undertake study by another teacher if they have had at least a year or two of instruction already.

Micro-Recruiting and Student Selection

Once successful macro-recruiting has attracted a large applicant pool, stimulated interest, and provided specific students to pursue, recruitment on an individual basis commences more efficiently. Several methods of micro-recruiting include the following: individual student visitations to on campus events including master classes, ensemble rehearsals and concerts; in some cases a gratis lesson with the applied teacher (recommended only after a student has successfully auditioned and is in the last stages of

selecting a school); writing each individual student about their strengths and weaknesses, how their development will be enhanced by their decision to attend your school, and the opportunities that will arise; allowing prospective students to speak with current students and alumni; when appropriate, speaking with parents about the school, curriculum, and the profession of music. These actions will all be enhanced by always providing a positive atmosphere, including the audition.

Esteemed pedagogue Vincent Cichowicz (1927-2006), Professor Emeritus from Northwestern University and retired from the Chicago Symphony, once stated that he never changed one student's embouchure in over three decades of teaching. This fact supports his colleague Arnold Jacob's philosophy of "Wind and Song" that focuses primarily on sound and air (one usually reaches an optimal playing position naturally when using proper air, focusing on a good sound, and producing beautiful phrasing). However, Cichowicz had a national reputation as a pedagogue of the trumpet, and there was no shortage of the best young talent from all over the world lining up to study with him. Not everyone will be so fortunate, and choosing the best students is not always clear-cut. Several factors warrant consideration.

Aptitude and disposition are of equal importance. Both current competence and estimated potential are important in measuring aptitude, and both motivation and attitude are critical in evaluating disposition. In fact, each one of these four attributes may be of equal importance as follows:

- 1) Current Competence (technically and musically)
- 2) Estimated Potential (Will a student's current physical set up including embouchure, allow for long-term development? Since aural training takes longer to develop than theoretical knowledge, is the student proficient or adept at ear training?)
- 3) Motivation (aptness for self-motivation and desire to succeed in one's field)
- 4) Attitude (ability to work with others and interest in a particular school)

The first three considerations are obvious indicators of a candidate's future success. The student's attitude however is of equal importance for several reasons. Not only will it also contribute to their future success, but also maintaining a studio of students with a positive attitude for their colleagues and their institution that both inspire and motivate each other is critical for long-term success. Students that hold an institution as their last or only choice and do not respect divergent interests of other student (e.g., a performance major not valuing an education major's dedication to teaching) may quickly become disenchanting with a particular situation. Getting to know students through interviews and visitations is a critical component in the evaluation process. If there is a significant doubt regarding a student's deportment, then expectations should be discussed before admission. By attracting the most advanced students with the most motivation and best dispositions, a studio can begin to thrive, and eventually, momentum will make recruiting easier.

Once students have committed to your institution, then mentorship should begin early. An orientation, or at least a letter that addresses the course of study and the instructional materials needed for the first year, is very beneficial. Additionally, marginal students should be informed of the work necessary to begin their first year at an appropriate level. This allows everyone to begin their studies in the most productive manner possible, not having to wait for etude and orchestral excerpt books or solos to arrive via mail. Again, the teacher's preparation and commitment will be appreciated, and this level of professionalism will carry through to incoming students.

Final Thoughts/Conclusion

Recruitment begins the first time a new applied faculty member arrives on campus; making the most of the current studio and promoting the best retention assures that the studio will be seen in the best light. One may come to a new position in a smaller less developed department than at the leading universities or conservatories they attended and be dissatisfied with the level of the students. Perhaps recruiting was not highly successful by the previous instructor, the institution does not have the resources or reputation to attract the top talent, or the quality of teaching and mentorship was not at today's standards. Nonetheless, the students currently in the program must be given every opportunity to succeed. Higher standards may take some time to be established and maintained. Through consistent and dedicated mentorship changes can gradually be accomplished.

Leadership and inspiration are among the most important in succeeding, and music is the biggest asset. If everyone is excited about the music being performed, growth will commence. When selecting repertoire for juries and recitals, allowing students to choose between four and five pieces is recommended. When a teacher demonstrates this, many excellent works of varying styles, students will immediately be drawn to at least one. Through a positive learning environment and a collective appreciation for all of the repertoire being performed in an entire studio, comradeship will develop, and students will motivate each other. Gradually, students who are not devoting themselves satisfactorily and who are not engrossing themselves in the study of music will see their shortcomings. While some will undoubtedly pursue other interests and career paths, most will see the difference daily dedication makes and increase their efforts.

Occasionally, there may be students who want to transfer to a school with greater prestige or resources. The best policy to adopt is a positive one; that helping every student is the top priority as long as they continuously work toward their musical goals and maintain a positive attitude toward the program and other students as long as they are in attendance at your institution. While some students may be lost, they will leave with an appreciation for the program and the overall morale of the studio will not suffer. While musical aptitude is the highest criteria for selecting students for scholarships, weighing interest in the program becomes critical. When students with scholarships transfer, their allocated financial assistance is likely lost while another deserving student could have been helped. Moreover, an approach of helping all students goes a long way toward building credibility and establishing a positive reputation within the community that will pay dividends in the future.

Recruitment efforts may take some time to develop fruition. With job descriptions often including recruitment as a duty and requirement for tenure, and promotion becoming increasingly demanding, documenting one's efforts in recruiting is critical. If immediate results do not commence, then a record of recruitment activities serves to notify administrators and faculty of a strong effort and commitment toward recruiting, and yearly evaluations will likely reflect this. As a result, successful progress toward tenure can be maintained until the efforts do result in improved recruiting. One of the best ways to do this is by submitting lists of students who are interested and want to receive information on the university. Additionally, logs can be maintained highlighting recruiting activities.

Some faculty may have to assist in recruiting for an entire family of instruments. Again, providing staff with lists of interested students after any recruiting endeavor greatly assists in disseminating the school's literature. Working with colleagues is critical,

from updating curriculums to providing the necessary training in today's world to simply providing each other advice, such as knowing and targeting the best high schools in the area. In conclusion, recruiting and maintaining a prosperous studio requires many strategies, energy, and persistence. Over time momentum will develop, and recruiting will become much easier.

About the Author

Luis Engelke is professor of trumpet at Towson University in Maryland. He performs more than a hundred engagements annually as an orchestral and chamber musician, soloist, educator, scholar, composer/arranger, and conductor, and currently serves as Music Reviews Editor for the International Trumpet Guild Journal. A former member of Orquestra Sinfônica Brasileira and current member of the Lancaster and Kennett Symphony Orchestras, he has performed with numerous orchestras throughout the USA and abroad. His scholarly work includes well over one hundred publications in the *ITG Journal*, *Euro-ITG Newsletter*, *Jazz Educators Journal*, the *NACWPI Journal*, as well as others. Engelke is a Yamaha Performing Artist/Clinician.

