

# String Players vs. Rhythm: Let the Battle Begin!

Presented by Jeremy Woolstenhulme

*But wait! There's no time for a battle today... or tomorrow.  
String players have the perfect equipment and strong voices to create a rhythmically strong team. Add to it a wealth of great teaching tips and games to make them confident rhythmic readers and counters. Soon, you'll have a winning collaboration that will quickly catapult them into more advanced learning and literature.*

*Rhythm is the first step in establishing the basic needs of the orchestra.  
A right note in the wrong place is still a wrong note.*

## I. Rhythm with Beginners

A. Pulse: Show students how to count through the note.

D 2 D 4 A 2 A 4 D 2 D 4 A 2 A 4

B. Note values: Use different note values and rests early in the year—it works!

C. Note Name System with Numbers vs. Number System (Only Numbers).

1. Note Name System with Numbers (Example: "Symphony No. 1 (Brahms) - 1<sup>st</sup> Movement)

G C 2 B C A 2 G C D E F E C D 2 C G D E F E D 1 E F E D 1 E F E D C 2 3

2. Number System (Only Numbers)

4 1 3 4 1 3 4 1 2 & 3 4 1 3 4 1 2 & 3 4 2 & 3 4 2 & 3 4 1

D. Relationships between long and shorter valued notes

A musical score consisting of four staves in 4/4 time. The first staff contains four whole notes (semibreves) on a single pitch. The second staff contains four half notes (minims) on a descending scale. The third staff contains eight quarter notes (crotchets) on a descending scale. The fourth staff contains sixteen eighth notes (quavers) on a descending scale. This illustrates how a single whole note is equivalent to two half notes, four quarter notes, or eight eighth notes.

II. Counting Systems

- A. Count aloud everyday choose new lines of music to count—comparable to a sight reading experience.
- B. Use different counting systems. Why not?
- or
- C. Use a single counting system that works for you and the age and/or sophistication of your class.
  - 1. Traditional System using “one-ee-and-uh”

A musical score in 4/4 time with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The melody consists of four measures. Below the notes are the following counting cues: 1 2 & 3 4 & | 1 e & a 2 & 3 e & a 4 & | 1 & a 2 & a 3 & 4 | 1 e & 2 e & 3 & 4

2. “Eastman” Counting System

A musical score in 4/4 time with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The melody consists of four measures. Below the notes are the following counting cues: 1 2 te 3 4 te | 1 ta te ta 2 te 3 ta te ta 4 te | 1 te ta 2 te ta 3 te 4 | 1 ta te 2 ta te 3 te 4

3. Word Association Counting: Sports Theme

A musical score in 4/4 time with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The melody consists of four measures. Below the notes are the following word associations: play soc - cer | play soc - cer wa - ter po - lo | soc - cer wa - ter po - lo | soc - cer

A musical score in 4/4 time with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The melody consists of four measures. Below the notes are the following word associations: ice hock-ey | ice hock-ey soc - cer | play bas - ket - ball | bas - ket - ball soc - cer | play

## 4. Word Association Counting: Food Theme

pie ap - ple pie ap - ple wa - ter - mel - on ap - ple wa - ter - mel - on ap - ple

blue - ber - ry blue - ber - ry ap - ple pie ap - ri - cot ap - ri - cot ap - ple pie

D. Incorporate subdividing as part of your counting system because it helps students understand musical time.

1. Example: "St. Paul's Suite" (Holst) – *Jig*

Subdivision

2. Example: "Serenade for Strings" (Tchaikovsky) – *1<sup>st</sup> Movement*

*cresc.*

Subdivision

*cresc.*

## III. Rhythm Dictation

A. Rhythm of the Day: It only takes a few minutes.

B. Dictation: Learn it backwards!

C. Writing: Taking dictation helps students to be better listeners and readers.

(see page 7 for rhythm dictation sample)

## IV. Strategies to Strengthen Weak Rhythm Readers

A. Challenge #1: Students must count silently to themselves, especially during rests or long valued notes!

## Rain Festival

Jeremy Woolstenhulme

♩ = 80

The musical score for "Rain Festival" is presented in a system of five staves. The top two staves are for the Violin I and II parts, and the bottom three are for the Violoncello and Double Bass parts. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 80. The music consists of four measures. In the first measure, there are rests for all parts. In the second measure, the strings play a half note G4 (Violin I), a half note G4 (Violin II), a half note G3 (Cello/Bass), and a half note G3 (Double Bass), all marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a pizzicato (*pizz.*) marking. In the third measure, there are rests for all parts. In the fourth measure, the strings play a half note G4 (Violin I), a half note G4 (Violin II), a half note G3 (Cello/Bass), and a half note G3 (Double Bass), all marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

From *Rain Festival* (SO342C), ©2012 Neil A. Kjos Music Company.  
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## 1. Pizzicato is a great tool to fix rhythm problems

This musical example shows a single staff in 4/4 time. The first two measures contain rests, with the text "R R R R" written below the staff. In the third measure, a half note G4 is played, marked with a pizzicato (*pizz.*) and piano (*p*) dynamic. The fourth measure contains a half rest. The piece ends with a double bar line.

## 2. Subdividing will assist towards accurate counting and steady pulse

This musical example shows a single staff in 4/4 time. The first two measures contain rests. In the third measure, a half note G4 is played, marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic. This half note is subdivided into four quarter notes (G4, A4, B4, C5). The fourth measure contains a half rest. The piece ends with a double bar line.

B. Challenge #2: Avoid the tendency to mimic what they hear.

C. Challenge #3: Strengthen bow skills that otherwise hamper ability to coordinate note lengths with bow usage/bow speed.

1. Example: St. Paul's Suite (Holst) – *Ostinato* – 2<sup>nd</sup> Violin

This musical example shows a single staff in 2/4 time. It features a continuous eighth-note ostinato pattern: G4, A4, B4, C5, G4, A4, B4, C5. The piece ends with a double bar line.

## V. Page to Stage: Assess and Apply Knowledge of Rhythm.

### A. Teach music through math *and* visa versa!

#### Examples

Complete the equations:

$$\text{♩} + \text{♪♪} + \text{♩} - \text{♩} = \underline{\quad} \quad || \quad \text{♩} + \text{♩} - \text{♩} = \underline{\quad} \quad || \quad \text{♩} + \text{♪♪♪♪} + \underline{\quad} + \text{♩} = 6 \quad |$$

Write in the bar lines:



Write in the note(s) or rest(s) to complete the equation:

$$\text{♪♪♪} = \underline{\quad} \quad \text{1 note} \quad \text{1 rest} \quad \text{2 notes} \quad || \quad \text{♩} = \underline{\quad} \quad \text{1 note} \quad \text{3 rests} \quad \text{1 note and 1 rest} \quad |$$

Match the rhythms to complete the equations. Four letters will be used only once, and one letter will not be used at all.

- |                           |            |
|---------------------------|------------|
| 1. ♩ ♩♪ ♩ = <u>      </u> | A. ♩ ♩ ♩   |
| 2. ♩ = <u>      </u>      | B. ♩♪♪ ♩ ♩ |
| 3. ♩ ♩ ♩ = <u>      </u>  | C. ♩ ♩♪♪   |
| 4. ♩ ♩ ♩ = <u>      </u>  | D. ♩ ♩ ♩   |
|                           | E. ♩ ♩ ♩   |

B. Bring basic composition to students' musical experience by having them compose and perform their own rhythm lines.

From *String Basics, Steps to Success for String Orchestra, Book 1—Teacher's Edition*, page 395 (115F)

Compose a rhythm line that has repeated patterns and different patterns so it is both predictable and interesting. Use quarter notes, eighth notes, and half notes. Be sure the rhythm comes to rest in the last measure so it has a sense of "the end."



Play your rhythm line on an open string. Can you hear the repeated and different patterns? Listen and make revisions until you like how it sounds.

#### Composition Checklist

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> One or more quarter notes         | <input type="checkbox"/> Each measure has exactly 2 beats  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> One or more pairs of eighth notes | <input type="checkbox"/> Notes are drawn correctly         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> One or more half notes            | <input type="checkbox"/> Last measure feels like "the end" |

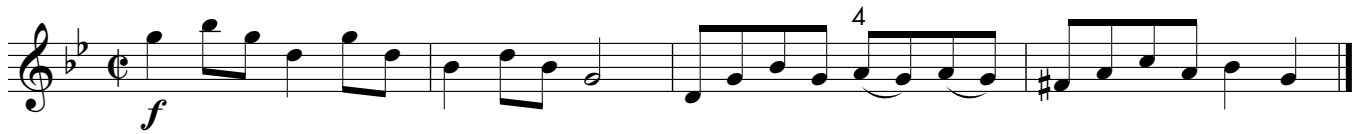
## VI. Rhythmic Precision as an Ensemble

A. Bow usage/strokes affect rhythmic cohesiveness and precision.

1. Watching and copying others bow usage.
2. Insist upon the *top secret* "one inch" rule.

B. Use the baton and encourage eye contact.

1. Conduct phrases or passages differently forcing players to look up and watch.
2. Teach games students can do while following the baton.



From *Badinerie*, J. S. Bach/ arr. Woolstenhulme (SO305C), ©2012 Neil A. Kjos Music Company.

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From *Symphony No. 13 in D Major – 1<sup>st</sup> Movement*, Haydn/arr. LaJoie (SO318C), ©2012 Neil A. Kjos Music Company.

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**SAMPLE**  
**Rhythm of the Day**

# Week 11

## Eighth Notes

On Every Line:

1. Write the notes & counts.
2. Count the line out loud.
3. Perform the line on a single pitch.

Write counts

**51**  $\frac{4}{4}$

Write notes

**52**  $\frac{4}{4}$

Rhythm Dictation

**53**  $\frac{4}{4}$

Rhythm Dictation

**54**  $\frac{4}{4}$

Rhythm Dictation

**55**  $\frac{4}{4}$



**Jeremy Woolstenhulme** received his Bachelor of Music Education degree from Brigham Young University in 2000, and a Master of Arts degree in cello performance from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas in 2005.

Currently serving as the orchestra director at Hyde Park Middle School in the Clark County School District of Las Vegas, Nevada, Mr. Woolstenhulme teaches 400 students daily. His orchestra was selected to play at the 2008 Midwest Clinic, and in 2010 and 2011, at the National ASTA Conference. He has traveled with his orchestras to London, Washington, D.C., Boston, San Diego, New York, and Orlando. In 2011, he was guest conductor for the Queensland Honor Orchestra at Griffith University in Brisbane, Australia. Also in 2011, he received a “Teacher of the Game” award presented by the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, MGM Resorts, Channel 8 News, and the Clark County School District.

Mr. Woolstenhulme is a commissioned and published composer with a number of works to his credit. He is also co-author with Terry Shade and Wendy Barden of *String Basics*, a comprehensive string method curriculum. Included in the *String Basics* curriculum is his popular *Steps to Successful Ensembles*, a collection of elementary-level ensemble pieces.

As a performer, Jeremy Woolstenhulme is a contract cellist in the Las Vegas Philharmonic. He is also a member of the Seasons String Quartet and also performs as a freelance musician at many entertainment venues in Las Vegas. He and his wife, Taryn, live in Las Vegas with their three children, Cadence Belle, Coda Blake, and Canon Thomas.