

Louder Than Words

Why You Should Attend the OMEA State Conference

Kathy Briggs
OMEA President-Elect

This 2018 OMEA State Conference "Louder than Words" is an event teachers and students will not want to miss this January. In addition to our All-State honor ensembles and performances, we are designing a schedule full of enrichment, relevant professional development, networking, and camaraderie among our membership. The conference success, of course, is dependent upon attendance from our state's teachers and college students; if you are an annual attendee, you know the enormous benefit of attending our state conference. Reach out and encourage other teachers in your school, district, or cohort to attend.

Here are just a few of the reasons why you should attend our state conference

- Sessions:** We have planned excellent sessions designed to help you and your students find success: Elementary, Band, Choir, Orchestra, Jazz, and Advocacy focused sessions offer pedagogical tips, managements skills, and rehearsal techniques to help you best serve your students! Add winds on top while both (B) teacher and students play an E-flat major scale in half notes and percussion loops.
- PDUs:** You earn professional development hours. (Lots of them!) As a music teacher, these PDUs are among most focused and valuable opportunities you will find in **State A B Play 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 5, 3, 2, 1 over percussion** **tools**.
- Connections:** Sharing information with other teachers who teach the same subjects, have the same ensembles, and have similar classrooms as yours is invaluable. Finding a colleague with whom you can share ideas or a mentor who can advise you can be a treasured resource.
- Performances:** Listen to other ensembles from schools around our state. Discover great literature and celebrate the success and joy of our colleagues' student groups.



- All-State:** Being a member of an All-State honor ensemble can be a life-changing experience for our students. Come support the best of the best as our young people meet other student musicians from around the state who share their same passion and create music together with a nationally-renowned conductor. Also, a friendly reminder that if you have a student in an all-state ensemble you are required to attend the conference.

- Collegiate and New Teacher Sessions:** Along with all of the other great sessions, we will offer some collegiate- and beginning teacher-focused sessions for our newest members of the profession to help with navigating the first few years of teaching, student-teaching, and other aspects of music education.

- Fun:** Saturday evening we gather together at the banquet to celebrate music education and our teachers with a meal, awards, and entertainment. In addition to the banquet this year, we also are planning a few other social events throughout the conference for new members/attendees, a "Beer Choir" sponsored by ACDA, and collegiate receptions from some of our state universities.

Conference planning is a team effort from our board members, our area chairs, and our conference managers, for whom all of us are grateful. The conference requires copious hours of volunteer work, organization, and dedication to serve our membership.

Thank you to all who have shared time and expertise the past few months to organize a fantastic conference this January. If you haven't yet registered for the conference and booked a hotel room in Eugene, do so now. We look forward to having you join us at the Eugene Hilton, January 11-14, 2018.

Kató Havas

and the New Approach to Teaching Violin

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There are four methods and approaches used most frequently for teaching beginning and intermediate string students in individual lessons and group-class settings: Shinichi Suzuki's method, and the approaches of Paul Rolland, George Bornioff and Kató Havas. Of these, Kató Havas' approach seems to be the least known to the string education community. The purpose of this article is to provide readers with a brief history and concise summary of the major principles and teaching strategies of Kató Havas' *New Approach*. The article will conclude with a list of additional resources that might be of interest and use to beginning and intermediate orchestra teachers.


Havas' Musical Upbringing and Career

Kató Havas was born on November 5th 1920, in the Transylvanian town of Kolozsvár in Hungary. She began playing violin at age five and had her first recital at seven. Hailed as a child prodigy, she was awarded a scholarship to study violin at the Royal Hungarian Franz Liszt Academy in Budapest when she was nine. Her career unfolded in the 1930s, reaching an enviable climax in her acclaimed Carnegie Hall debut at the age of eighteen. After completing a demanding concert tour across the United States, Havas decided to withdraw from concertizing to dedicate time to her family that she formed with her husband, an American writer and three young daughters. During this time she began thinking about playing and teaching the violin in more analytical ways, and developed a revolutionary method of teaching that is based on finding logical and simple solutions to physical and psychological challenges associated with the violin. Havas' long teaching career in England included providing applied lessons and training teachers in Dorset, London, and Oxford as well as conducting master classes in England and abroad. Throughout her career she also lectured at numerous medical conferences dedicated to an emerging medical field known as "music medicine." Havas currently resides in Oxford, where at the age of 95, she, with the help of her assistants, trains teachers and accepts students on a limited basis.

Origination of the New Approach to Violin Playing

While at Franz Liszt Academy in Budapest, Havas studied with Imre Waldbauer who also taught Paul Rolland. Waldbauer was a student of Jenő Hubay who in turn was student of the legendary Joseph Joachim. According to Havas, Waldbauer "was the first one to turn away from imitative Old School of teaching and was the first one in the history of violin pedagogy who began to experiment with Gestalt in his teaching." Havas in Kennerson, p. 299). Gestalt theory is based on the premise that the whole of anything is greater than its parts and the aim of this theory is to explain how "things are put together" (Encyclopedia Britannica). Havas credits



her interests in the role of the whole body in violin playing, as well as her interests in the concepts of mutual dependency of natural body movements and fundamental balances, to her exposure to Waldbauer's experiments with Gestalt in his violin studio. In addition to giving credit to her experience with Waldbauer's innovative teaching, she acknowledges David Mendosa, with whom she studied violin while living in New York. He helped her develop ideas about left-hand techniques, in part by making her aware that the source of all movements and actions of the fingers originated in the tendons and muscles of the back of the hand, not in the finger.  was, 1973).

In addition to being influenced by string pedagogues who approached violin teaching in a more holistic manner, Havas often acknowledges several other important influences which contributed to the development of the *New Approach*. She credits renowned Gypsy violinist, Csicsó for modeling the "freedom of playing" concept that became one of the cornerstones of the *New Approach*. Her keen observations of the manner in which Jascha Heifetz held his violin led to the development of the *New Approach's* exercises designed for the development of the lightness of the left arm and head, and the weightless feeling of the violin. Additionally, Havas incorporated many ideas from Zoltan Kodaly's approach to teaching music, including "finding the inner pulse", rhythmic training, and sight-singing.

As her reputation as an innovative violin teacher began growing, Noel Hale, a Music Education Adviser to the City of Reading, England, accidentally stumbled upon her private studio in Dorset. He asked Havas for permission to write a series of articles for *The Strad* about her approach. These articles attracted great interest within the string teaching community and Bosworth publishing company asked Havas to write a book about her "new approach." The success of her first book: *A New Approach to Violin Playing* (1961) encouraged Havas to write four more books including *The Twelve Lessons Course* (1964), *Stage Fright, Its Causes and Cures* (1963) and *Freedom to Play* (1981). All of these books are still in print and have been translated in multiple languages. In 1991 Havas released her teaching video *A New Approach on the Causes and Cures of Physical Injuries in Violin and Viola Playing* in which she personally demonstrates and explains the basic principles of the *New Approach*.

In 1992, Havas was awarded the American String Teachers Association (ASTA) prestigious Isaac Stern International Award for her "unprecedented achievements" and in 2002 she was

appointed to the Order of the British Empire (OBE) by Queen Elizabeth II for "her service to music." In 2013, the European Teachers' Association presented Havas with an award "in celebration of a life-long contribution to music."

Selected Principles and Teaching Strategies Used in the *New Approach*

The Principle of Fundamental Balances and Movement: Havas proposes that students must be taught how to synchronize playing motions with the "internal balance" of the body from the onset of the instruction. To convey this principle, Havas uses the image of "see-saw" and explains that all arm movements originate in the big muscles located around the spine and the shoulder blade. These muscles act as one side of the "see-saw". The other end of the "see-saw" can be either the right or left arm while the body acts as the pivot.

The Principle of "Inside-Outside" Playing:

When learning a new piece of music, Havas asks students to first learn information about the composer, the piece and the style/era of the music in which the piece is composed. Next she asks the student to find the "inner pulse" by clapping the pulse and miming the playing movements. As in Kodaly's method, she then asks students to "sing-sing" the entire piece using the letter names of the notes while also clapping the pulse, which leads to the development of "inner ear." Only then, according to the *New Approach*, are students ready to start practicing their piece on the instruments.

The Major Causes of Physical Tension in Playing:

Havas identified several physical factors that contribute to physical tension in violin playing. She proposed the sense of "hardness of wood", the material that violins are made of as one of the major threats to the establishment of physical order that is necessary for the uninterrupted flow of music. To overcome this natural obstacle, Havas suggests various exercises including stroking the side of the violin neck with the player's left thumb while imagining that they are "stroking a cat's ear" to "sensitize" their touch to the "soft and silken" capacities of the instrument (Havas & Landsman, p. 8). She suggests younger players give their instruments a name to develop their love, respect, and sensitivity towards the instrument. Another physical obstacle that prevents players from playing without physical tension is "the eyes." She noticed the fear that many string players have of playing in higher positions because their eyes, when they glance down the fingerboard, give them a false

perception about the real length of the fingerboard. She points out similar concerns about bowing in terms of using too much or too little bow. To remedy this fear, Havas asks players to carry a piece of thread in their cases so that they can measure the length of the fingerboard or the bow to help diminish optical illusions and relieve their anxieties. Yet another physical obstacle considered by Havas when developing freedom of playing is the concept of "holding the violin" and "holding the bow". She proposes a unique dual concept for these basic playing techniques. Instead of holding the violin "with the chin" she proposes a "no violin" violin hold and instead of gripping the bow, suggests the "no bow hold" bow hold. *New Approach* uses an exercise called "Humming Fiddle" to develop the feel of the "no violin hold" concept (Bakshayesh, 2010). In this exercise players first touch their neck to feel how soft it is. Next, with their left hand around the violin's right rib and the hold of a "feather light touch", the student swings the violin from their side to in front of their body and then to their neck. This lack of pressure causes the string to vibrate while "humming with apparent delight." (Havas, 1964; Havas & Landsman, 1981).

The Major Causes of Mental Tension in Playing:

Havas also identified several common techniques and beliefs about violin playing that contribute to "mental tension" in players. She proposes that most violin schools emphasize "downward motions" which, in addition to the forces of gravity, contribute to an immobile feeling in players and excessive tension throughout the body. An example of this would be "the downward pressure of the head on the chinrest, and the downward pressure of the fingers on the fingerboard and the bow" (Grindea, ed. p. 17). To remedy this tendency related to posture, Havas proposes practicing opening the arms in front of the body in a "horizontal plane" which produces a psychologically liberating sensation. For diminishing the vertical pressure in the fingers of a player's left hand, in addition to bending the left wrist inward and creating the "gypsy" or "giving hand" position, she suggests a three step process for placing the fingers on the string: (a) "Slide": When the fingers are placed on the string they "swing backward then forward across the strings horizontally creating the movement that Havas calls "lateral slide"; (b) "Cradle": One finger is placed on the string with the other fingers surrounding it in a "halo-like" fashion creating a resonating "sound chamber" and (c) "Tilt" or "lean", immediately upon contact with the string, the player's finger tilts towards the scroll to prevent a vertical finger pressure. This enables players to locate the "harmonic" of the desired pitch first, which leads to "purer tone quality", better intonation, and playing with less tension.

Strategies for Curing Stage Fright and Avoiding Playing Injuries:

In her book *Stage Fright* (1973), Havas suggests several psychological techniques useful to all musicians to help control

stage fright: (a) Players should avoid heavy "soul-searching" and judgmental attitudes towards music performances; (b) Players should avoid dwelling on mistakes and they should avoid obsession with "perfect cosmetics" such as a bow which is perfectly parallel with the bridge and (c) She reminds players to always look for ease in playing, suggesting that players repeat to themselves "It is either easy or impossible." According to Havas' teaching videos, all common injuries in violin playing such as tendinitis, fibrositis, bursitis, tenosynovitis, carpal tunnel syndrome, can be prevented and cured by obeying the principles of the *New Approach* which are proved by research and endorsed by the medical community as being therapeutically beneficial to players who suffer from performance related afflictions.

Useful resources for beginning/intermediate orchestra teachers:

In addition to Havas' books and teaching videos, beginning and intermediate level orchestra teachers may find books written by Havas' associates to be interesting and useful. These method books provide many well-illustrated exercises applicable to teaching young students:

- Chet Porcino, *Flying Fiddles*, Bosworth and Co.
- Gloria Bakshayesh, *Dancing Bows*, Bosworth and Co.
- Gloria Bakshayesh, *Ringling Strings*, Bosworth and Co.
- Ian Bewley, *A Cellist's Inner Voice*, Bosworth and Co.

The Kató Havas Association for the *New Approach* (KHANA) is a professional organization founded by Havas' former students with the purpose of spreading *New Approach* ideas worldwide. KHANA issues a twice-yearly newsletter that features editorials written by Havas: <http://www.katohavas.com/khana.html>

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Djiana Ihas conducting.

Dr. Djiana Ihas is an Associate Professor of Music Education at Pacific University, in Forest Grove, Oregon, where she teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in music education, serves as an applied viola instructor, supervises student-teachers, and conducts university orchestra. She is a Founding Director and Master Teacher of the String Project, the first and only program of its kind in Oregon. While teaching in public schools, her orchestras won numerous state and national competitions. Dr. Ihas' research interests evolve around instructional strategies, mentoring undergraduate research, and application of string pedagogy methods and approaches in orchestra classes. Her publications appeared in *American String Teacher* (AST) magazine, *Journal of String Research*, and *Council for Undergraduate Research* (CUR) Quarterly. Dr. Ihas' educational background include MFA in Viola Performance (University of California, Irvine, MM in Music Education (University of Arizona) and PhD in Music Education (University of Oregon).

