

Navarro River String Camp program changes August 2016

1. Sight-reading with the coaches (optional evening activity at camp)

This is one of several activities that takes place on two evenings of camp. The way this activity has been organized in the past, one camper sits alongside one coach in a string quartet (i.e. one coach and one camper on each part) and this octet of players sight-reads string quartet music, with campers playing as many (or as few) notes as they can manage. This activity has received varied feedback. For some campers it has been the highlight of camp, and they have both enjoyed and learned a lot from being swept along by stronger players who keep the music going no matter what. For others it has been a traumatic and discouraging experience.

This August we will try a different approach. On Monday when camp begins, there will be a sign-up sheet for anyone interested in **playing chamber music with the coaches**. Along with signing up, campers are invited to suggest music they would like to play. The sign-up sheet will be available until Tuesday dinner. From those who signed up, the coaches will form suitably matched groups to play trio or quartet music, allocating one or more coach to each group and listing the music to be played. A notice of the groups will be posted on Wednesday morning. Groupings could vary, with one or two people on a part; for instance:

Camper	Camper + Coach	Camper	etc.
Camper	Camper	Camper	
Camper + Coach	Camper	Camper	
Coach	Camper + Coach	Coach	

The intent of these evening sight-reading sessions will shift from *sight-reading through a piece and then moving on*, to *playing chamber music and working on the piece* with your coach or coaches who are now *in* your group instead of coaching from the outside. We look forward to trying this different approach and hope it provides a satisfying experience for all.

2. Chorale Concert and Works-in-Progress Performance Sessions

We have always believed that performing at string camp is a valuable way to share the fruits of our labors and meet the challenges of performance with the support of our colleagues. For the upcoming camp we will focus on the all-important issue of *being present in performance* both with our chamber group and with the music, something that we as musicians continue to work on whatever our skill level.

At the August camp, each group will receive two pieces; one chorale-like piece, and a second piece offering more technical, rhythmic, and musical challenges appropriate to the skill level of the group. Coaches will work with groups on both these pieces during camp. All groups will have the opportunity to perform their chorale-like piece at the **Chorale Concert** on the final day of camp. Any group wanting to perform their other piece can do so at one or more of the **Works-in-Progress Performance Sessions (WiPPS)** taking place on several days of camp. These sessions will provide a more casual atmosphere in which to perform (smaller audience, listeners coming and going), giving groups the possibility of playing through a piece twice, and without having to adhere to the five-minute limit of previous performances.

Chorales by J. S. Bach and others were originally hymn tunes to be sung, but they translate well for string players, and their textures and tempos offer ear-opening opportunities to listen to all the parts. Since chorales tend to be less challenging note-wise, performing them can help each group focus on musicality and presence, which can be so easily lost under the pressure of performance.