What Are You Doing This Summer?

Often people will remark how great teachers have it with summers off. Veteran music educators know that while summers do provide an opportunity to recharge batteries, between marching band rehearsals that start several weeks prior to school, and continuing education requirements, summers are best characterized as “Class Prep.”

Many have discovered the benefits of attending a summer professional development workshop. Not only do they offer continuing education credit, some of these workshops have tremendous clinicians and the opportunity to share best practices from across the country. I have been privileged to participate in probably the two most successful summer director workshops, the Conn-Selmer Institute and the Music for All Summer Symposium. As a disclosure, I am a Conn-Selmer Educational Clinician and am on the faculty of the Music for All Summer Symposium (sponsored by Yamaha) but neither are compensating me for this article.

Both summer workshops are examples of the incredible support to music education by Conn-Selmer and Yamaha. I can say from first-hand experience that their focus is on helping all of us do our jobs better; not once did I see anyone trying to sell instruments. The workshops are scheduled at different times, often share faculty, and are characterized by an amazing energy that comes from terrific staffs and enthusiastic music educators. There are some differences between them, so I’ll try to summarize what they have to offer to enable SBO readers to determine which might be the best fit for them.

The Conn-Selmer Institute (CSI) is held June 9-12, 2019 at Bethel College in Mishawaka, Indiana. There are usually around 350 attendees (100 future music educators, 220 directors, and 30 music program leaders). CSI organizes tracks according to each attendee’s focus area and years of experience. Tracks typically include groups of 25 – 35 people who have a tailor-made schedule that addresses real-world issues facing teachers in their content area. However, attendees can sample sessions outside of their track if they see something they want to attend. CSI’s mission is to provide content-rich curriculum presented by world-class clinicians who focus on need-to-know topics that can be immediately applied in one’s classroom. They create space for building relationships and growing a network of support through shared experiences such as meals, concerts, factory tours (don’t miss this!), and performance activities. Attendees can receive up to two graduate credits through VanderCook College of Music. CSI also certifies 37 hours of professional development. More information is available at csinstitute.org.

The Music for All (MFA) Summer Symposium, presented by Yamaha, is held June 24-29, 2019 on the campus of Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana. While MFA has student camps at the same time, my focus here is on their Director’s Academy. MFA offers daily sessions on Teaching Ensemble Skills & Techniques, Developing Individual Sections, and Band Director Master Classes. Marching band opportunities include One-on-One sessions with designers and technology experts, Carolina Crown “How-To” sessions, and Marching Band Design and Judging Sessions. There are also directors’ reading concert and jazz bands. The band director tracks include Marching Pedagogy, Middle School and Young Teacher Pedagogy, Jazz, Technology, Administration, Organization, Boosters, and Ethics but as with CSI, attendees can sample sessions outside of their track. There is also conducting coaching for music educators with on-podium time followed by video recording review and one-on-one sessions with master conductors. MFA offers a “Director’s Lounge” where educators can either “drop in” or schedule individual sessions on topics of their interest. The Director’s Academy offers more than 40 hours of Professional Development and graduate credit is available through the VanderCook Academy.

Whether you choose CSI or MFA (or both!) you won’t be disappointed. You will leave with your music educator toolbox filled to overflowing and reenergized for the upcoming school year (the continuing education and graduate credits are a bonus). Most importantly, you will have forged professional and personal relationships to last a lifetime. What are you doing this summer?

*Colonel (Retired) Thomas Palmatier is an active conductor and clinician following his nearly 38-year career in military music culminating as Leader and Commander of The U.S. Army Band “Pershing’s Own.” You can contact him at www.ThomasPalmatier.com.*