

Program changes to Navarro River String Camp starting 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 it's 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's 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's a traumatic and discouraging experience.

In August we have decided to try a different approach, and here's how it will work. On the first day of camp, there will be a sign-up sheet for anyone interested in **playing chamber music with the coaches**. Along with signing up, campers are welcome to suggest music they would like to play if they feel so inclined. The sign-up sheet will be available until the following day at dinner time. After that, from the names signed up, the coaches will form suitably matched groups to play trio, quartet, or cello ensemble music, allocating one or more coach to each group and listing the music to be played. A notice of the groups will be posted in the morning on the third day of camp.

Groupings could vary, for instance:

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|------|
| 1. Camper
Camper
Camper + Coach
Coach | 2. Camper + Coach
Camper
Camper
Camper + Coach | 3. Camper
Camper
Camper
Coach | etc. |
|--|---|--|------|

The emphasis for these evening sight-reading sessions will shift slightly from *sight-reading through a piece and then moving on*, to instead, *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. Final chamber group performance and casual performance sessions

We have always believed that a "sharing" or performance at the end of string camp is a valuable experience to share the fruits of our labors and stretch with the support of our colleagues. However, for the upcoming camp we are shifting the focus of the final chamber group performance to allow more attention to be paid to the all-important issues of being present in performance with our chamber group and with the music, something that we all as musicians continue to work on at whatever level we may play. For the **final chamber group performance**, each chamber group will perform a chorale-like piece that will be one of the two pieces mailed out in advance of camp. Chorales by J. S. Bach and others were originally hymn tunes to be sung, but they lie very well for string players and their texture and tempo offer an ear-opening opportunity to listen to all the parts. Since in chorales the notes tend to be less of a challenge, performance of a chorale will allow each group to focus on musicality and presence, which can so easily be lost under the pressure of performance. The number of **casual performance sessions** happening over several days of camp will be increased so that any chamber group that would also like to perform their other assigned piece(s) can do so, and without having to adhere to the five-minute limit of previous final performances.