



Class Levels and Descriptions FOR AFTMD MUSIC FACULTY

The morning Core Instrument classes at AFTMD are divided by experience level, and there is a class that will excite and challenge everyone. **At AFTMD, class levels are defined not by “*how advanced is this student?*” but by *what sort of instruction students can expect in each group.*** Levels are self-selecting, and students are welcome to switch freely between the different levels during the camp — though as material in most classes is progressive throughout the week, students are encouraged to choose the class that is best for them as close to the outset as possible.

Full descriptions of each level can be found on [the AFTMD website](#), but as an overview:

Moose (a.k.a. “Novice”)

For students who are relatively new to their instruments, and wanting a full-immersion exploration of trad music, from the ground up. You can expect that Moose students are able to play at least 3 songs on their instrument (any style), but have little or no prior experience in trad music. Teaching should focus on learning the basics of the instrument *through playing tunes*, and include building the foundational technique needed to play each tune (finger patterns / chord shapes, foundational bowing / strumming patterns, etc.), learning how to learn by ear, basic ensemble skills, musical vocabulary, etc.

We highly encourage the Moose Fiddle and Guitar classes to collaborate, learning tunes in common and getting together to play them periodically throughout the week. If you like, the Moose classes are also welcome to perform as a joint ensemble on the Saturday night student concert (not required, only if you want to!)

Seal (a.k.a. “Intermediate”)

Designed for students who want to develop both their knowledge of traditional music AND their individual technique, all while learning some of the best repertoire each style has to offer. You can assume that Seal students have a basic command of their instruments, with plenty of room for development. Teaching should focus on learning both *what* to do (ie. how the tune/chord progression goes) and *how* to do it (ie. the technique needed to play that particular tune/chord progression). For example: “This tune uses a 5-note roll, and here’s exactly how you would play that”. Instruction should include helping students develop comfort and fluency

with learning by ear. Assume you'll teach ~1-2 tunes -- or equivalent -- per class period (~2-4 for a Fiddlers' Shuffle double period) at a reasonable pace, with plenty of guidance and repetition to get things feeling comfortable.

FIDDLE teachers: Please note that you will have 3 different Seal groups in the Fiddlers' Shuffle, distinguished as follows:

Harbor Seals (a.k.a. "Relaxed Intermediate")

A fun and relaxed learning environment, with emphasis on developing foundational skills through tune-playing. You can assume that these are passionate but less experienced players who want to build comfort and confidence on their instrument. Please plan to teach 2-3 tunes each morning (a double period), with *MANY repetitions* of each tune or skill, and *clear guidance* on exactly how to produce specific kinds of sound, bowing, ornamentation, etc. Being upbeat, encouraging, and supportive is key with this group!

Grey Seals (a.k.a. "Fast Intermediate")

Also focused on building foundational stylistic bowing/ornamentation/sound production, but will move at a notably faster, more intensive pace than the Harbor Seals. Please plan to teach 3-4 (maybe more?) tunes each morning, often with fewer repetitions of each part since these students should be much more comfortable learning by ear. This will give you time to dive further into things like finding an "authentic traditional accent" in the genre you're teaching, and grooving at the full tempo needed for a dance or jam session.

Hooded Seals (a.k.a. "Classical Background")

Designed for "classical" or note-reading players who have always wanted to explore the world of fiddling and learning by ear. You can expect that these players have comfortable technical facility on their instrument, but little or no experience with traditional music or learning by ear. Therefore, plan to focus on learning *HOW* to learn by ear, and start finding a "traditional fiddle sound" through stylistic bowing, ornamentation, etc. It's great to teach "standard" tunes that your students can immediately use in camp jam sessions! Teaching approximately 2-4 tunes each morning is appropriate.

***NOTE: The Hooded Seals may include one or two experienced viola or 'cello players, but you AREN'T responsible for knowing how to play those instruments! Just treat them like "fiddlers" in their own right, though any suggestions for fingerings that you feel comfortable making (i.e. shifting, playing down an octave, etc.) are always welcome.*

Bear (a.k.a. “Advanced”)

Designed for experienced students who want to develop their stylistic fluency in different genres of traditional music/dance, and polish their playing to the highest level. You should assume that students have the technical facility to navigate their instruments easily on their own, and are comfortable both learning quickly by ear and playing fluently at dance tempo. This means your teaching can focus on exploring the nuances and artistic details of your genre. For example: “Sligo jigs use a lot of 5-note rolls – here are four different ways you could play that ornament, okay now let’s put a bunch of them in this tune!”. Assume you’ll teach ~2-3 tunes – or equivalent – per class period (~3-4 or more for a Fiddlers’ Shuffle double period) at a rapid, fluent pace, and focus on giving a deep dive into the essence of your genre. If you wish, it is totally appropriate at this level to set some time aside for short “masterclass” performances to give individual feedback to students who want it.

***Even though some students may over-place themselves into this group, please plan to teach a **TRULY “ADVANCED”** class when working with Bear groups! We want this group to foster development for really experienced players, and be something to work towards for students who aren’t quite at this level yet.*

Eagle (a.k.a. “Advanced, Pre-Professional”)

A multi-instrumental cohort, focused on helping experienced players and dancers deepen their artistry at the very highest level and develop the skills they will need to become the next generation of “musical ambassadors” in traditional music. Plan to teach tunes quickly by ear, and then use them to explore broader artistic ideas, such as arranging, honing performance skills, deepening connection to essential dance and rhythmic elements, and other collaborative ideas. If you wish, it is totally appropriate at this level to set some time aside for short “masterclass” performances to give individual feedback to students who want it.

***IMPORTANT: The difference between the Bears and the Eagles is not about the level (both “advanced”), but about the focus of the class. The Bears are focused on developing their individual playing to the highest level, while the Eagles are focused on exploring the outward-facing ensemble/performance/outreach skills needed to become a “musical ambassador” or tradition bearer. This means, for instance, that you may have, for example, a “less advanced” player in the Eagles who is working on starting a band/playing concerts/teaching others/etc., and that’s totally fine.*