

To: Mike Balter of Mike Balter Mallets
Fr: Matt Sheppard, Westside Middle School – Omaha, NE
Re: Dr. Steve Raybine, clinician

September 22, 2016

Dear Mr. Balter,

What a treat it was for me recently to have Dr. Steve Raybine work with many of the music students at Westside Middle School. Steve combined his outstanding musical skills, passion for music and his interest in young learners to provide three most-relevant and thought-provoking clinic sessions on Friday, September 16.

Beginning with our jazz band students, Steve demonstrated the uniqueness of jazz music by combining his superb vibraphone skills and knowledge of improvisation to inspire my students to express them in ways they have not yet discovered. He demonstrated technique and style on the drum kit, piano and vibraphone! My students came away from this session more enthused about jazz music and eager to explore improvisation in our rehearsals this week.

During this session, Steve also served as a “clinician,” listening to the rehearsal of a couple of our charts and providing positive feedback for both students and myself.

After lunch, my 3rd and 4th year percussion students had the opportunity to attend a master class with Dr. Raybine. Steve talked about the importance and role of a percussionist in the ensemble, correct mallet/stick techniques on each instrument and gave the students the opportunity to ask questions in a non-judgmental atmosphere. Steve engaged each student with his energy and enthusiasm and made the session all about the students. He got to know students on a first-name basis, in a very short amount of time!

Finally, Steve presented a session on Music Motivation to approximately 250 middle school band, vocal and string students. What amazed me is that he captivated the attention of these students during the last period of the day, ON A FRIDAY, the day of the first middle school dance!

Steve had the students mesmerized by his musical interpretation and flawless mallet technique. His talk about having no regrets in life, making every moment count and taking risks were encouraging to the students. During rehearsal this week, when one particular student was having a “Pity-Party” moment, another student chimed in with a Raybine mantra “Attitude is Everything.” Needless to say, much of what Steve talked about resonated with our students.

Thank you for helping provide this opportunity for the students of Westside Middle School. Our students will fondly remember this day for a long time! I would highly recommend having Steve as a clinician at any grade level!

Sincerely,



Matt Sheppard, band director
Westside Middle School
Omaha, NE