Fall 2002 Volume 6

Kjos Band News

NEWS AND INFORMATION FOR BAND EDUCATORS

On Your Mark, Get Set...

by Bruce Pearson

Go! You're off for the start of another school year. Some have likened a school year to a race — not a sprint, but a marathon. While it's important to start well, it's more important to finish well. Those in a race receive their reward at the end of the race, not at the beginning.

Like a race, preparation is the key to finishing each school year strong. It's not only important to work hard, but equally important to work smart. Here are a few suggestions to help you have a great school year:

1. Pace yourself. Plan your school year so that it is balanced with just the right amount of challenges and rewards spread evenly throughout the school year. Don't expend all your energy at the beginning of the school year, for if you do, there will be little energy left at the end of the year.

2. Keep your eye on the goal. Years ago my father-in-law taught me how to use a tractor for cultivating crops. I grew up in "suburbia" and driving a tractor was a new experience for me. My first attempt found me tearing up more crops than weeds. I just couldn't keep that tractor going in a straight line. He advised me to set my sights on the goal (or target) across the field. I was amazed — it worked.

Keeping one's eye on the goal is important whether one is a farmer, a runner, or a band director. But as band directors, what *is* our goal? We may have many goals. Two of the most important should be to develop our band's musicianship, providing an aesthetic experience to the highest degree possible, and secondly, providing each of our band members with a wonderful, comprehensive music education. Our activities should be consistent with our goals.

3. Remain enthusiastic about our work. I am constantly asked, "How can we keep our students motivated?" Let's not forget that our students are a reflection of us. If they lack enthusiasm, we need to examine our enthusiasm. In order to stay enthusiastic about teaching and band directing, we should regularly re-visit our reasons for entering the field initially—our love for kids and our love for music. We can remain excited about the process of making music by watching our students' eyes light up. Nothing motivates a real teacher more than seeing their students achieve.

Band directors expend themselves daily. Remember, *If your input doesn't exceed your output, then your upkeep will be your downfall!* One way that we can fill our "musical tank" is by regularly treating ourselves to great music—whether it be live concerts or fine recordings.

If you put these suggestions into practice you will have a far better chance of finishing the race, or school year, strong.

Bruce Pearson is an internationally-known author, composer, clinician, and conductor. He has taught at the elementary, junior high, high school, and college levels for over thirty years. In December of 1998, Bruce was awarded the prestigious ***Midwest Clinic Medal of Honor*** *in recognition of his outstanding contribution to music education.*

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Where Has The Time Gone? The Drums

by Dean Sorenson

In this series of articles we are looking at the different instruments of the rhythm section of the jazz ensemble. In the last issue of *Kjos Band News* we examined the bass and its role. In this issue we will look at the drums in more detail and offer some insights to help your drummers become better players and, in turn, help your jazz ensemble sound better.

The drummer is often called the "driver of the bus." This analogy is as good as any to illustrate the importance of the drummer's role. More than any other instrument in the jazz ensemble, the quality of the drummer's playing has a direct impact on the sound of the ensemble. A good drummer can make an otherwise mediocre band sound great. Conversely, a weak drummer can seriously harm the sound of an otherwise strong group.

The most important skill a drummer can possess is GOOD TIME. In jazz, "time" refers to the ability to play a consistent tempo. All other elements — flashy technique, snazzy drum set up, long solos — are meaningless without the ability to lay down a consistent tempo for the ensemble. Playing with good time is certainly the responsibility of everyone in the group; however, if the drummer cannot do it, no one else in the ensemble will be able to either. This idea holds true no matter what style of music the band is playing, or what the tempo is. The drummer must be able to hold the tempo steady.

Drummers should spend a considerable amount of their practice time working on playing with good time. As with all instruments, practice with a metronome is extremely helpful. A good practice technique for drummers is to isolate an element of a groove, and practice only that element along with a metronome. For example, a player can concentrate on playing the hi-hat on beats 2 and 4 along with a metronome playing four beats to the bar. Another possibility is to isolate the kick drum pattern of a funk chart. Drummers should break down the different parts of every groove they play and make certain that all the elements can be played with good time before putting them all together. Some excellent practice examples are included in the **Standard of Excellence Jazz Ensemble Method, Drums** book.

Ideally, the drum chair is more than a timekeeper. Having the drums accent band figures by playing setups and fills not only adds excitement for the listener, but also makes the figures easier to play for the ensemble. I have had the good fortune to play with some drummers who set things up so well that it was hardly necessary to count! These drummers are clear about where the time is, and set up each horn entrance so that the entire performance rides along on a smooth cushion of rhythm.

Young players should be careful, however, not to allow their desire to play setups and fills to get in the way of the time. Fills and setups that are marked in the drum part should be ignored if the drummer cannot play them with solid time. The drummer should isolate these parts in the practice room, and gradually add them when playing with the ensemble. If the horns are having trouble with a certain rhythm figure, listen carefully to make sure the drum setup is logical. Have the horns play the passage without the rhythm section. If they sound fine by themselves, but stumble when the rhythm section is added, the drummer is often the culprit. Have the drummer play straight time through the passage, instead of attempting to set up the figure. Either work with the drummer in rehearsal, or have him or her work out the problem in the practice room. Consistent tempo always supersedes setups and fills.

Since drum setups and fills are rarely written out, it is important that drummers and directors listen to great drummers to get a concept in their ear. A list of suggested players and recordings is included in the **Standard of Excellence Jazz Ensemble Method, Director Score** and also the **Standard of Excellence Jazz Combo Session, Director Score**. Drum parts, more than any other parts, are sketches at best, and leave a great deal to the imagination and musicianship of the player. The importance of listening and imitating cannot be overemphasized.

Most young drummers can benefit greatly from a "back to the basics" approach. By keeping the technique simple and concentrating on the time, everything else improves. To keep it simple, focus on single element of a groove—a ride pattern or kick drum pattern for example. To concentrate on time, this element should be practiced with a metronome at various tempos. This will help build the drummer's own internal sense of time, which is critical to playing more complex grooves, fills, setups, and solos. Your drummer will sound better, and your band will also.

Dean Sorenson is a prolific and highly sought-after composer, trombonist, and clinician. He holds degrees from the University of Minnesota and the Eastman School of Music, and was recently appointed Interim Director of Jazz Studies and Performance at the University of Minnesota-Minneapolis.

Is Your Clarinet OK? – Part Two

by Ken Cance

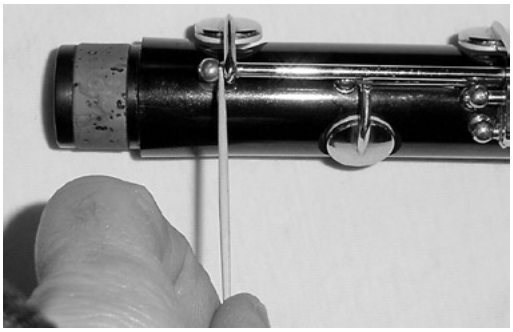
As woodwind instruments are played, slight changes in materials will cause the instrument to slowly go out of adjustment. Because changes to the function often are gradual, the experienced musician learns to compensate for the deficiencies and unknowingly expends more energy to make the instrument play. The beginning or young musician can become so frustrated that they will give up trying to learn.

In the last issue of *Kjos Band News* we examined issues with clarinet maintenance, specifically: socket rings; tenon and tenon corks; upper and lower joint assembly; mouthpiece, ligature and reeds; bore, tone holes and body; and the thumb rest. In this issue we discuss the key mechanism, pads, and springs.

KEY MECHANISM

LUBRICATION OF KEY MECHANISM

• Two drops of heavy weight oil on a toothpick placed at each pivot screw point and two drops of medium weight oil (30 weight motor oil) placed at each hinge screw point is appropriate for most clarinets. Fine tipped needle oilers are also available for this process.



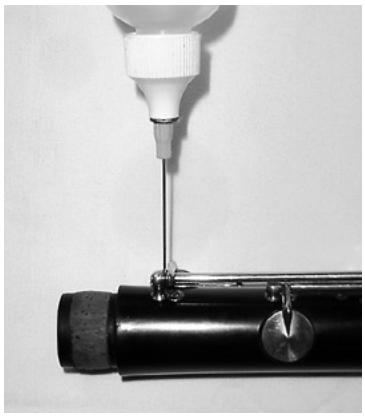
Lubricating with a toothpick

The keys and levers on the clarinet are mounted in such a way that friction is constantly placed on metal-to-metal parts. Some keys are solid and supported by pivot screws at the end of each hinge. Others are hollow tubes supported by an internal steel hinge screw arrangement. Because of the friction between moving parts, lubrication is needed to maintain continued free movement, as well as quieting of the key mechanism during playing.

It is recommended that the key mechanism be lubricated two or three times a year. If played frequently, lubricating more often may be necessary.

After oiling, operate the keys rapidly, causing the oil to disperse along the bearing surface through capillary action. More oil will be required on key mechanisms supported by long internal hinge screws.

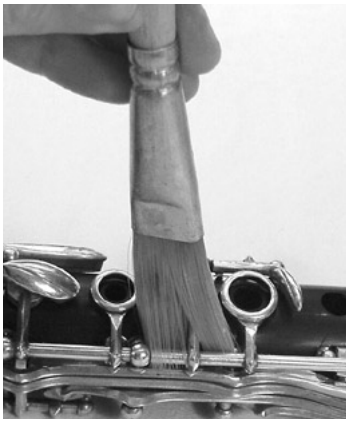
It is suggested that the player seek guidance from a professional repair technician before attempting the key oiling procedure. Excessive oil can harm pads, or break down glue joints that secure key and tenon corks.



Lubricating with a needle oiler

CLEANING KEYS

• A watercolor brush may be used to remove dust and dirt around the key mechanism.



Keys and lever touchpieces may be wiped with a clean lint free dry cloth. A cotton swab is useful for removing dirt from around the rings, along the hinges and inside the tone holes. Use caution not to rub against the edge of the pads, which can cause premature wear of the pad skin coverings.

• DO NOT use silver polish or other polishes to clean the key mechanism. The polishes contain an abrasive, which may enter the lubricated pivot points, tear pad skins, or break down key cork adhesion.

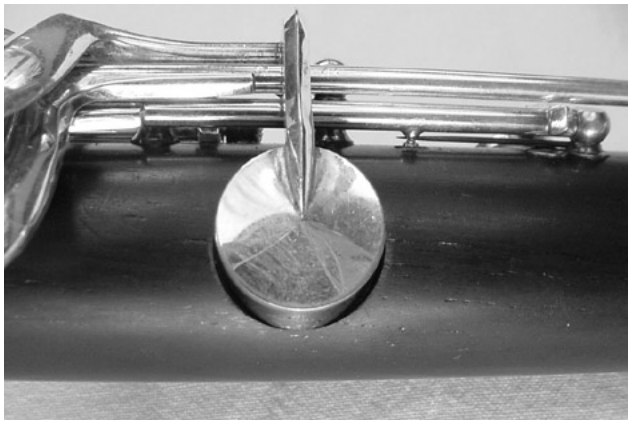
If polishing is required, it is best performed by a qualified repair technician, who will disassemble the instrument, polish and clean the instrument and keys. An appropriate time for this process is when the instrument is in need of complete repadding.

PAD CUP ALIGNMENT

• Pad cups are intended to fall centered over the tone hole and parallel to the tone hole face.

Most pad cups are manufactured and mounted on the instrument such that the cup will fall centered over the tone hole and parallel to the tone hole face. The clarinet body can be a general reference for sighting the cup parallel to the tone hole face.

A careful inspection of each individual pad cup placement over the tone hole will often reveal leaks present where a pad is not sealing the tone hole completely. While bent keys are often obvious and detectable, subtle bends or misalignment can easily go unnoticed without careful scrutiny. If key and pad cups appear out of alignment, take the instrument to a qualified repair technician. Often the longer the deficiency exists, the more involved the repair can be to bring the instrument back into good playing condition.



Pad cup is centered over the tone hole

Pad cup is not centered over the tone hole

Pad cup is not parallel to the tone hole face

PADS

• **The principle function of the pad is to create an airtight seal upon contact with the tone hole.**

The clarinet bladder pad construction consists of:

a. a cardboard backing for stability
b. a layer of felt to allow for a light impression
c. a double thickness bladder covering to provide a positive air tight seal when contact is made with the tone hole.

The bladder pad is the most common pad type used on the soprano clarinet. Other common alternatives include cork, leather and synthetic pads. These types are normally installed based on a special request by the musician. The pad is secured into the cup with an adhesive and is installed by floating the pad on the glue so it will conform perfectly as it contacts the tone hole. A variety of adhesives are available for this purpose, the most common being a hot melt glue type.

Failure of the pad to seal may be due to a number of reasons. The following checklist will help identify the most common problems.

Check for:

✓ MISSING PADS

- A tone hole cannot be sealed by cup alone.

✓ HARD OR BRITTLE PADS

- Pads are exposed to varying degrees of moisture emitted by the player, as well as environmental changes in humidity and temperature. Over time the pads often become brittle and too ridged to seal the tone hole. The leakage of these pads is often revealed by closing the end of the joint with a plug or hand, closing all open pads with light finger pressure, and blowing into the instrument. If air leaks from a tone hole, the pad probably needs replacement, or at the very least, adjustment.

✓ TEARS IN THE BLADDER

- Any tear or flaw in the bladder skin where it makes contact with the tone hole will cause a leak as the pad covers the tone hole. Sometimes a leak occurs due to a slight cut in the bladder, which is often difficult to detect without removing the key and examining it closely.

Tears in the bladder skin may cause leaks

- When wiping the instrument body with a cloth during cleaning, avoid rubbing against the edge of the pad surface. This is often a cause of premature wearing of the bladder skin on the pads.

✓ STICKY PADS

- Accumulations of dirt, saliva, and body acids are all common causes of sticky pads. Removing the accumulation of foreign materials from the tone hole and pad impression will usually resolve the sticking problem. One method of removal is to place a clean, thin dry cloth between the pad and tone hole, close the pad lightly, and draw the cloth against the surfaces. This may need to be done several times. Do not use a dollar bill or apply materials such as baby powder to relieve the sticking. While they may resolve the sticking temporarily, they will contribute to the stickiness over the long term, as baby powder will attract dirt when it becomes moist, and the dollar bill merely places a thin layer of dirt onto the pad surface.

✓ UNLEVEL PADS

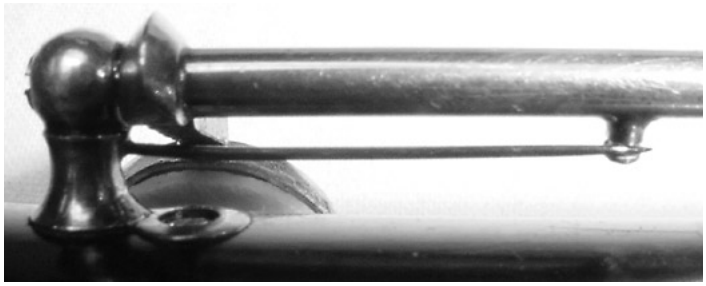
- For optimum seal, the pad must contact the tone hole evenly. A feeler gauge may be used to check for even closure. A feeler gauge may be constructed from a piece of cassette tape connected to a round toothpick, or simply making a handle with masking tape.

  While depressing the key lightly, closure of the pad can be checked by inserting the feeler gauge between the tone hole and the pad to check for consistency of "drag." Several points around the pad should be checked to ensure that it is contacting the tone hole evenly all the way around. A consistent light touch is required when depressing the key in order to accurately feel the minute discrepancies as the pad closes.

SPRINGS

- **Springs function to maintain closure and opening of key cups, and are responsible for the action of the keys.**

The two principle kinds of springs used on woodwind instruments are flat springs and round springs. Of the two types, the round springs tend to be the most problematic.



Round spring hooks into the spring cradle

Check for key action

Check the key action by moving each key individually as fast as possible as in a trill. If the spring is functioning properly, the finger should not be able to trill faster than the key will respond. It should respond to your fastest trill. This check will also reveal spring tension, missing springs, weak springs, and springs that may come unhooked from the spring cradle.

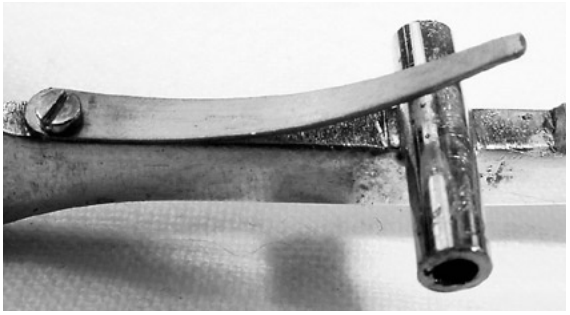
If the spring tension is too heavy, it can cause slowness of action, finger fatigue, as well as deep impressions in pads causing early retirement of the pads. Spring tension that is too weak can leave a pad not sealing fully or cause a pad to blow open when air is emitted into the instrument. A balanced feel throughout the instrument (light and snappy) will allow ease in facility and a comfort during long playing engagements.

Flat spring screws often become loose or corrosion accumulates where the spring contacts the body or spring track.

• DO NOT use a rubber band as a substitute for a broken spring. The rubber contains sulfur, which can tarnish and strip the silver-plating on the key.

These are some suggestions for keeping clarinets in top shape. When in doubt contact your woodwind repair specialist for assistance.

Ken Cance has been Woodwind Repair Instructor of the nationally recognized Band Instrument Repair Program at Minnesota State College-Southeast Technical (Red Wing) since August 1994. In addition to teaching instrumental music for twelve years, he has also managed the Department of Defense Musical Instrument Repair Facility located in Germany, has operated a repair shop in Texas and has established his own band instrument repair business in Wisconsin. Ken is a member of the National Association of Professional Band Instrument Repair Technicians (NAPBIRT) and has presented clinics both regionally and nationally.



Flat spring screws may become loose

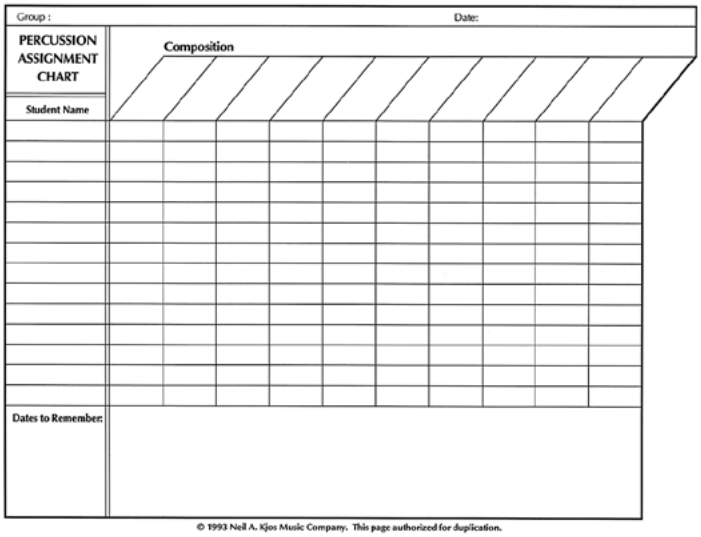
STANDARD OF EXCELLENCE LEADS THE WAY IN ADDRESSING THE NATIONAL STANDARDS

Since its release with **Book 1** in 1993, **Standard of Excellence** has led the way in addressing the National Standards for Music Education. While using the "draft standards," the **Standard of Excellence Comprehensive Band Method** was carefully and meticulously designed and written so that, upon completion of **Standard of Excellence**, **Book 3**, all Grade 5–8 National Standards are addressed and exceeded. You may obtain a copy of a handout that shows which activities address each of the Standards by calling or writing the Neil A. Kjos Music Company. In addition to the method book, the **Standard of Excellence IN CONCERT** series presents exceptional arrangements, transcriptions, and original concert and festival pieces. Each of the over forty pieces currently available provides valuable activities that will help students meet, address, and achieve the National Standards. In fact, when considering the method book and correlated pieces, **Standard of Excellence** is the only curriculum that addresses the National Standards with both components.

Percussion Section Positioning and Set-Up

by Dave Hagedorn

My previous articles in *Kjos Band News* have concentrated on specific percussion performance technique. I thought we should change gears this time and address both the physical set up of the percussion section, and how to organize parts. On page 621 of the **Standard of Excellence Book 1, Conductor's Score** there are some suggestions for instrument placement, and on page 622 there is a sample chart for part assignments. In this article I will use these as models, and discuss organizational factors in detail.


Group : Date:

PERCUSSION ASSIGNMENT CHART

Composition

Student Name

Dates to Remember:

Page 622 – **Standard of Excellence Book 1, Conductor's Score**

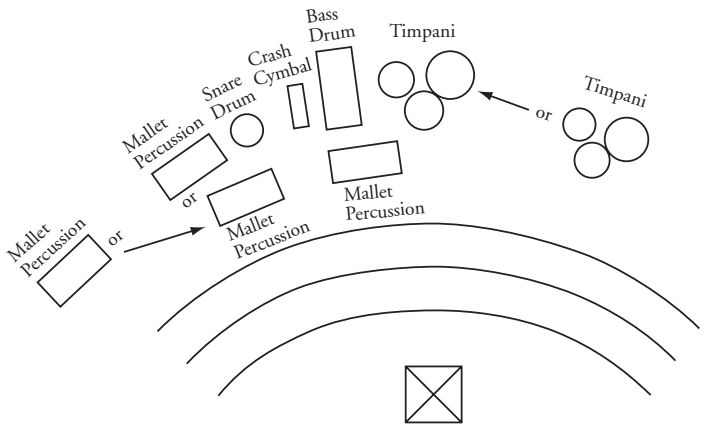
One of the biggest problems with playing percussion is simply having the instruments where they are needed, and figuring out how everyone can get to them in the easiest ways. It is important to try to limit instrument sharing by more than one person, so there is less of a need for "choreography." I have witnessed concerts by groups of all levels of experience where I was distracted by percussionists bumping into each other, jumping around instruments, running to instruments, or even standing in line waiting for a player to play a part and then hand the instrument to the next person. Purchasing more than one of the smaller instruments can solve some of these problems. However, that can be impractical due to budget restraints or space limitations on stage.

The most practical way around this issue is to exclusively assign a few instruments to each person on any particular piece. For example, if a percussionist is assigned to bass drum and wood block, then no one else should play those instruments on that piece. That way the player can place the wood block close to the bass drum, creating a single station, and no movement is necessary on stage. This can be problematic if only one person has the ability to play mallet instruments. Thus everyone in the section should strive to be versatile, and have skills on all percussion instruments.

How can a percussion section have parts organized so that there is limited sharing of instruments, and so that everyone gets a chance to play each instrument? The chart on page 622 of the **Conductor's Score** of **Standard of Excellence Book 1** can help. It is important when assigning parts that the organizer (section leader or conductor) goes through the entire piece to make sure that nothing is left out, especially where the percussion scoring gets dense. If there are a limited number of players, then the instruments for one player should be placed adjacent to each other to avoid too much movement on stage.

What is the ideal physical placement of percussion instruments on the stage? In a concert band, the timpani can be placed in a number of locations, depending upon the limitations of the rehearsal and performance spaces. If possible, it works best to have the timpani on the same side as the rest of the percussion, generally on the conductor's left. If that is not possible, a "stereo" set up with the timpani on the other side of the stage will work, especially if the low brass is set up there. In orchestra settings, it's best to have the timpani close to the trumpets and basses, as the majority of timpani parts are in conjunction with those instruments and it will aid in the intonation. Another ideal position for the timpani is near the center of the orchestra. This only works on a stage with large enough risers.

The percussion section should have the bass drum closest to the center of the band, with the crash cymbals next. Often the crash cymbal parts mirror the bass drum parts, as in marches, and being able to see and feel the other player's presence considerably helps the overall ensemble. The snare drum should be next in line. If there is a large mallet section with marimba, vibes, chimes, and xylophone, these should be placed in the front row of the percussion section with the drums immediately behind.



Make sure that the mallet instruments are slightly angled to the audience, as the sound projects from the resonators. If the resonators are directed straight at the ensemble, the sound might be covered up. I have attended many concerts where the mallets, especially marimba and vibes, are in the last row of the band and are generally inaudible. If there is only the xylophone and glockenspiel, they should be able to fit on the end of the bass drum-crash cymbals-snare line. Larger instruments or metallic instruments such as gongs, suspended cymbals, tom toms, and triangles can be in the back row, since those sounds usually project with no problems.

It is also important to have stick trays and small instrument trays available. It is not acceptable to place sticks, mallets, or small traps on a bare music stand. No matter how careful one is, it will always make an unwanted sound. There are commercially produced products for this, or towels on a music stand can be used to hold mallets and small instruments. Black towels are preferable, since the color black blends in with most music stands and is unobtrusive. When I have a large amount of instruments for a particular piece, I often use a piece of plywood covered with carpet and placed flat on a restaurant-style tray stand.

Another concept that is often overlooked is sight lines. Each percussionist must have a direct line of sight to the conductor without other players in the way. The music stand should be positioned just high enough to make it possible to see the conductor by raising the eyes, rather than moving the head. This will make it less likely that the player will lose his or her place when looking up for cues and tempo changes. Each percussionist should also have their own copies of the music, or at most two players should be sharing one piece of music. This further allows constant eye contact and helps create a more solid ensemble. If there are multiple percussion set ups or stations, make sure players can get to each instrument and still have a clear sight line.

If percussion sections follow these extra-musical guidelines before they start playing it will ensure that conductors can focus on musicianship issues during performance and rehearsal. Having a logical stage set up and clear sight lines to the conductor will allow percussionists to connect with the rest of the ensemble, and generally make percussion playing much easier. A written organizational chart of part assignments will help remind everyone in the section who is playing what instruments on each piece, allowing for quick setup and change. These organizational charts can also be used to make sure that everyone in the section gains experience on all of the percussion instruments.

Dave Hagedorn is a professional percussionist in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. He is the percussion instructor at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota.

Rehearsing The Very Young Band – Part Two
SOUND ADVICE!

by Bruce Pearson

In the first issue of *Kjos Band News* (Spring, 2000), I authored an article entitled A + E = T. Simply stated A (Air) + E (Embouchure) = T (Tone). This means that the tone quality an individual produces on a musical instrument is determined by two factors: air (speed and direction) and embouchure.

The tone or sound of a band, however, is more complex than just the aggregate sound of the members of the ensemble. A band may be comprised of great players, playing with great individual tone, but the ensemble sound may still be deficient. In this article of *Kjos Band News,* I will present SOUND ADVICE — that is, advice regarding how to produce a good band sound.

Before a director can instruct students on how to produce a good sound, he or she should have a concept of the ensemble sound they want. John Paynter, the late Northwestern University band director, emphasized "the sound you have in your mind is the sound you will make." This is true for directors and students. Listening to recordings or live performances of bands will offer a variety of models for study and emulation. It is very important that the band director not only knows the sound he or she wants, but is able to instruct his or her band on how to produce that sound.

A good band sound is produced by good balance and blend, and is often described as "dark" or as a "pyramid of sound." This sound fosters accurate intonation and good dynamic control. It is achieved by having the lower (bass) instruments predominate, with the tenor, alto, and soprano instruments less pronounced.

Begin with exercises designed to teach students dynamic understanding and control. When students are comfortable with the execution of basic dynamic levels (piano, mezzo piano, mezzo forte, and forte), integrate the following "pyramid-creating" steps:

1. Begin with the bass instruments and have them play the root of a B♭ concert triad at a *f* volume level. (The percussion instruments should execute a long roll when it is their time to play).

2. Add the tenor instruments playing the fifth (concert F) of a B♭ concert triad at a *mf* volume level.

3. Next, add the alto instruments playing the third (concert D) of a B♭ concert triad at a *mp* volume level.

4. Finally, add the soprano instruments playing the root of the B♭ concert triad at a *p* volume level.

This is the start for producing a good band sound. As each group (bass, tenor, alto, and soprano) plays, insist that there be good blend within their group. That is, there should be a wonderful, homogenous sound where no instruments "stick out." Also ask each member of the ensemble to listen for the instrument listed immediately below them on the chart and blend their sound with that instrument. Additionally, ask students to "get inside the sound of the person sitting next to them."

Soprano Voices

Woodwinds	Brass	Percussion
Piccolo	1st Trumpet	Bells
Flute		Xylophone
Oboe		Snare Drum
1st Clarinet		Triangle
		Cymbals

Alto Voices

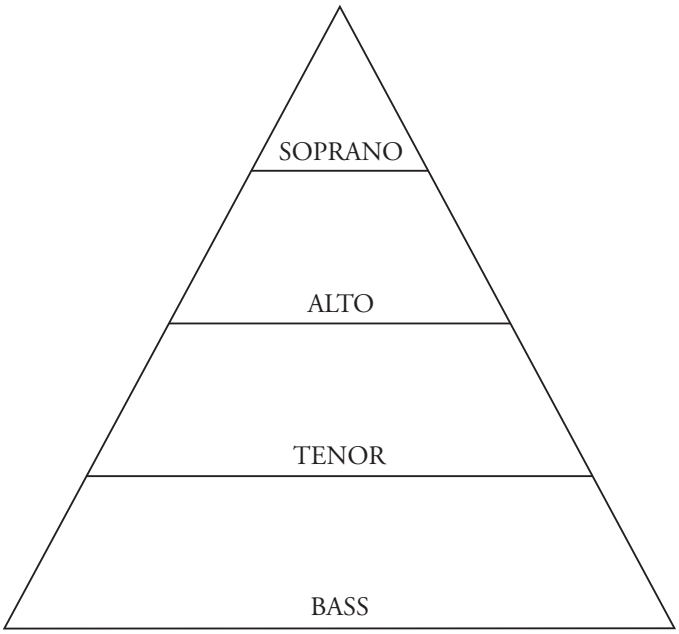
Woodwinds	Brass	Percussion
2nd Clarinet	2nd Trumpet	Marimba
3rd Clarinet	3rd Trumpet	Chimes
1st Alto		Wood Block
		Tambourine

Tenor Voices

Woodwinds	Brass	Percussion
Alto Clarinet	Horn	Tenor Drum
2nd Alto Saxophone	1st Trombone	Tom-Tom
Tenor Saxophone	2nd Trombone	

Bass Voices

Woodwinds	Brass	Percussion
Bass Clarinet	Baritone	Timpani
Bassoon	3rd Trombone	Bass Drum
Bari. Saxophone	Tuba	



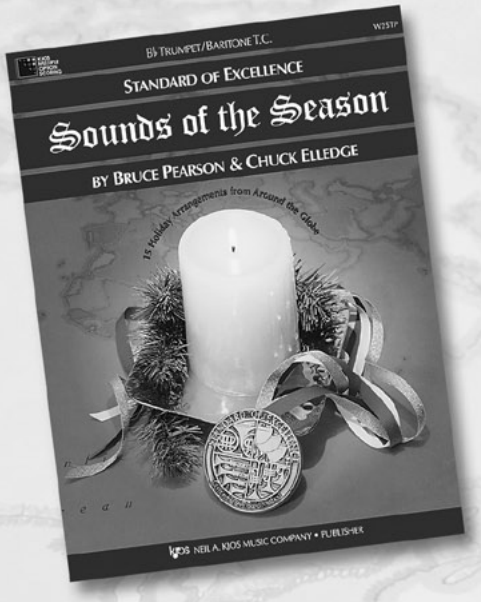
Each instrument or instrument family has a specific function in creating a pleasing band sound. The conical brass (tubas, euphoniums, baritones, and French horns) produce the dark, rich quality; the low woodwinds produce the "resonance"; while the upper woodwinds, brass, and percussion produce the brilliance. It is often helpful to suggest to your students to "get inside the sound" of the conical brass.

Once the basic pyramid is established, maintain the relative balance and blend of the pyramid sound while performing crescendos and decrescendos. One approach is to have the band begin by playing the notes listed on the preceding page at a *p* volume level and then execute a four or eight count crescendo to a *f* volume level, followed by an equal number count decrescendo. Use the following proportions:

- Bass instruments crescendo/decrescendo 100%
- Tenor instruments crescendo/decrescendo 75%
- Alto instruments crescendo/decrescendo 50%
- Soprano instruments crescendo/decrescendo 25%

Remind students that whether they are playing loudly or softly, the air speed should remain constant. Loud playing requires more volume (quantity) of air than does playing softly. Students should strive for consistency of air speed whether they are playing loudly or softly.

This is a simple, but very effective way to produce a wonderful, pleasing sound with your band. I call it, SOUND ADVICE.

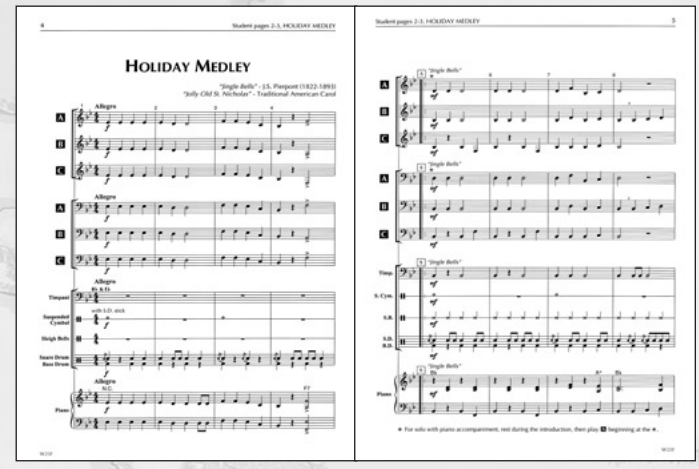


Standard of Excellence

Sounds of the Season

by Bruce Pearson & Chuck Elledge

Sounds of the Season is a collection of 15 Christmas and holiday songs from around the globe, representing holiday musical traditions from Africa, the British Isles, Germany, France, the Middle East, the West Indies, and the United States.



Kjos Multiple Option Scoring allows each arrangement to be performed as a solo, as an ensemble of any size or instrumentation, or as a full concert band work.

All pieces are correlated with **Standard of Excellence Comprehensive Band Method Books 1** & **2**. Both secular and sacred titles are included, making **Sounds of the Season** ideal for use in school, church, or community settings.

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