



# Kjos Band News

NEWS AND INFORMATION FOR BAND EDUCATORS

## Those All Important Vowels A-E-I-O-U

by Bruce Pearson

It's the start of another school year! New school years, like new beginnings, are filled with the hopes, aspirations, and questions of students and teachers alike. Will this be the year that all the students finish their method book? Will the students gain a new appreciation for music? Will the students achieve their potential? How will the concerts go? How will we do in the festival? The list of questions goes on and on.

Only time will reveal the answers to those and a myriad of other questions that will arise. Each of the aforementioned questions relate to a specific goal. But, perhaps equally important, is the process or the journey toward those goals.

It is important for us, as music teachers, to keep our eye on our goal, or perhaps we should say—goals. Two of our goals should be: first to develop our band's musicianship providing an aesthetic experience to the highest degree possible, and second, providing each of our band members with a wonderful, comprehensive music education.

There is, however, a third goal—to nurture the growth of our students so that each one becomes a better person. To that end, use the vowels **A-E-I-O-U**. That is, more specifically, **A**ffirmation, **E**nergize, **I**ntegrity, **O**thers, and **U**nderstanding.

Affirming your students involves noticing and praising them for who they are, not for what they accomplish. Make certain that you give as much attention and praise to the less-talented students as you do to those "first chair" players. Show your students that you respect and appreciate them, regardless of

their accomplishments. Demonstrate that they are validated and valuable.

**Energize your teaching.** To maximize your energy level, be sure to exercise your body and mind. Hike, bike, swim, jog, golf, or even walk routinely. Another tip is to eat less "fast food." Teachers (especially music teachers) expend themselves daily. It is difficult to affirm others when there is no energy left. One way to retain our enthusiasm for music is to treat ourselves regularly to great music—whether it is live concerts or fine recordings.

**Integrity**, including honesty and commitment, is an important virtue to model. Make certain your students honor the commitments they make even when they don't feel like it. One way to teach integrity is to praise honesty and to create consequences for dishonesty, insincerity, and deceitfulness.

**Others** are equally important. In this "me-first" society, culture, and generation where the individual is the center of their universe, it is important to teach students to think of others and their welfare. It is sometimes helpful to remind students of the golden rule: "Do unto others what you would have them do unto you." You can demonstrate this principle by showing your students that you value the work and classes of your colleagues in other musical genres and other disciplines.

**Understanding** your students will allow you to be a better teacher and will provide the opportunity for more effective teaching. A good teacher understands students' learning styles, musical and personal needs—even their family situation. It is difficult for a student to "give their all" when they or a family member

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has been ill or if there has been a death in the family. Understanding your students implies that we, as teachers, demonstrate compassion and empathy for them.

It's never too late to start using these vowels, **A-E-I-O-U**, to nurture the growth and development of your students so that each one becomes a better person.

## Don't Ignore the Bass Drum

### by Dave Hagedorn

**E**ach and every instrument in the ensemble makes an important contribution to the timbre of the band and its overall musical effect. This is certainly true for the percussion section, including the bass drum. While the bass drum plays a very important role, it is often one of the least respected and most ignored instruments in the percussion section. When played by a skilled percussionist, the bass drum will provide pulse, tone color, dynamics, and will help to provide and generate excitement in a musical performance. On the other hand, a poor sounding bass drum played by an inattentive percussionist can inhibit a group from reaching its full potential.

A good bass drum player should have an exceptional inner sense of "steady-pulse" and be able to see the director clearly. In much of the music played by bands, the "beat" is felt as much as it is seen. The director's motion and the bass drummer stroke should mirror one another. To see the director clearly, the bass drummer should not share a stand with any other percussionist but have his or her own music and stand.

The optimum playing spot, for most occasions, is about halfway between the rim and center of the head. See the illustration below from the **Standard of Excellence, Drums & Mallet Percussion Book 1**, page 3.



*Playing the Bass Drum*

Playing in this manner will provide a low fundamental tone with definition. Avoid striking the drum directly in the center, because this will produce a very dead tone. Also, one should avoid striking too close to the rim, as the tone will not be deep enough. Bass drummers should be sure to always strike the drum with a lifting motion so that the sound is drawn out of the drum, rather than striking into the drumhead.

Many times when I visit a school for a clinic, I find that the bass drum has been stuffed with newspaper or has a cloth

*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.*

stretched across the inside of the head to dampen the sound. The short, dry thump produced by a stuffed bass drum works great for rock music, and maybe pep band, but is definitely not desired in a concert band or orchestra. As a general rule, the less muffling used, the bigger, richer, and fuller the sound will be. To provide the desired resonance, a bass drum must have a good tone, not a dry "thump." For this reason, keep any muffling to a minimum. If a director wants a drier or shorter sound, the bass drummer should use his or her hand (not the playing hand) or knee (on the same side as the playing hand) to partially muffle the sound. Some bass drum stands today have a built in foot rest to give support when using the knee.

Many bass drum stands today suspend the drum with rubber straps — this allows the drum to ring freely, achieving the desired sound. Additionally, the bass drum stand should be able to rotate the drum so a two-handed technique can be used on extended rolls or fast rhythms. If this is the case, the drum could be moved 90 degrees from a vertical to a horizontal positional. The bass drum should be positioned as close to the center of the ensemble as possible so the bass drummer can have good eye contact with the director and also be able to hear everyone in the group clearly.

Since a concert bass drum is rather large (16" X 34" to 18" X 36"), it may be hard to imagine a focused tone but *not* a definite pitch. If the drum sounds a specific pitch, intonation problems in certain keys will result. The pitch to tune to depends on the drum's natural pitch range. If the heads are too tight, the drum will sound choked and lose much of its fullness and depth. If the heads are too loose, the drum will sound flabby and lose much of its tone and stick response. The pitch relationship of the two heads is also an important part of the overall sound of the drum. Generally, in the case of the bass drum, it is best to tune the playing side lower than the non-playing side. When tuning the bass drum it is important that the tension rods are tightened using the cross-tensioning technique (tightening one tension rod and then tightening the one directly across from it). Also, make certain that the tension rods on a side are tightened the same amount. This can be determined by tapping the head two or three inches from the tension rod to determine if the same pitch is produced.

The bass drum beater selection is also very important. Make sure that for concert situations a large beater with a soft pile head cover is used. Hard felt beaters are good for some marches, but

generally are better suited for outdoor marching band. It is essential to have at least one general type beater and one pair of smaller beaters that are matched for rolling. Excellent bass drum beaters may be purchased from reputable dealers that carry a complete line of percussion equipment. Don't use timpani mallets as a substitute, as they are too lightweight to produce a tone with all of the fundamental vibrations that are required.

In order to achieve a fine performance, the band director and percussion section members must view the percussion section as a "choir" of musical instruments achieving a beautiful tone. The

bass drummer must listen to the rest of the ensemble, and particularly the other bass instruments, to achieve the proper balance and blend. By following these guidelines, a skilled bass drummer can make a difference in helping his or her band achieve a great performance.

*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.*



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# If Your Students Are Watching You, What Are They Seeing?

by David Newell

It has long been a personal practice of mine to *watch* concerts of school musical groups. I am one of those individuals of whom it could truthfully be said, “He went *to see* a concert.” What I am looking for is the degree to which students appear to be watching their conductors. Unfortunately, I do not have very good results to report. The times I have left student concerts and felt that I have actually witnessed meaningful communication between performers and conductors have been far too rare. Not surprisingly, those few positive occasions have always been the most musically invigorating ones.

When students and conductors actively communicate during concerts, magic seems to happen. The band beautifully performs a delicate and difficult passage that has required a considerable amount of rehearsal time. All of the students immediately notice the smile of immense satisfaction that creeps across the conductor’s face. The students think, “*Wow! This is going really well.*” The conductor in turn notices their reaction to the satisfied smile and thinks, “*They are really watching tonight. Although we’ve never actually rehearsed it, I wonder if I could put a slight ritard in the next measure.*” The unrehearsed hesitation is executed perfectly, and everyone starts to realize that something special is happening. This concert is not a mere recitation of learned notes. Music is being made here tonight!

Most of our students are enormously cooperative and will make every attempt to watch us following the “*You must watch me*” speech. But the new resolve to watch seems to quickly fade. After numerous honest attempts to watch us, students begin to realize that they have actually received a mixed message. Although they have been told that they must get their eyes out of their music, they can’t help but notice that our eyes seem to be glued to our music. We are doing exactly what we told them they shouldn’t do. It doesn’t take very long for them to conclude that there isn’t really much to look at up there, and they revert to doing what they see us doing — staring at the notes on the page.

A conductor’s most expressive tool is the face. A left hand jabbed into the air in the general direction of the trombone section while the head is buried in the score is a mechanical gesture, not a musical one. It is telling the trombones *when* to play, not *how* to play. Musically meaningful messages demand eyeball-to-eyeball, face-to-face, two-way communication. Students develop and embrace the habit of checking with us for musical messages if they notice that the vast majority of times that they look at us, we are looking at them. If the all-important lines of two-way communication are to be opened, it is the responsibility of directors to start the dialogue by watching their students. In short, the expected student behavior must be modeled from the podium.

## A Challenge

I invite each of you to run a personal and exciting experiment this school year. It could make a major difference in the musical results you achieve. At your next concert, I challenge you to **conduct at least one number with no score**. If a professional orchestra conductor can conduct a Mahler symphony from memory, surely we can learn a four-to-five minute band score. Decide which number it will be before the band sight-reads it. The two-way “conversation” described above is not something that can be *added* to the mix after a piece is learned. It must be an integral part of the students’ experience with the piece from the beginning.

After the initial sight-reading of the selected piece, rearrange your personal furniture in the room every time you rehearse this particular number. Change the location of your music stand from directly in front of you. **Move it off to the side of the podium**. Getting rid of that metal barrier that separates you from your students will psychologically do wonders. With your music stand out of the way, you will immediately feel a more direct connection with your students and they with you.

This simple act of getting the stand out of the way is essential. Even when scores are completely memorized, if the music is in front of us, we will look at it. **Looking at the score must be inconvenient!** Measure numbers or rehearsal marks do not need to be memorized. Simply ask students where it is that the horns and saxes have the countermelody. They will tell you “*Letter C,*” and the rehearsal can continue. If they can’t tell you, your score is within easy reach — just off to the side. In fact, there will obviously be numerous times during the early rehearsals in which the score needs to be carefully checked for correct notes, rhythms, and so forth, but that poses no problem. It can simply be read from the stand off to the side, or the stand can temporarily be pulled around to the front of the podium again. (For ease of movement, your stand for this piece needs to be a regular student stand, not an oversized conductor’s stand). Once the problem is fixed, move the stand back to its unobtrusive position and conduct with your eyes once again fixed on your students. Instead of the impersonal trombone cue referred to earlier, you are now free to conduct the trombones as though there were no other students in the room. With facial expressions and conducting gestures, with your body turned toward them as though you were reaching out only to them, demonstrate how the passage is to be played. When it is played well, tell them so *visually*, not verbally. These facial “pats on the back” condition all of your students to check with you to see if they can also please you. It is feedback that students feel is well worth looking for. The lines of communication are now open.

As time progresses and the concert draws nearer, place your score on the stand off to the side, but don't open it. Keep it closed unless you absolutely have to check something. For the final rehearsals before the concert, just keep the score in your folder and have no stand anywhere near you for this number. On concert night, leave the score in your office and enjoy the results.

### Watch Them!

Non-verbal, visual communication between performers and conductors is enormously important to a truly musical performance. Simply telling students to watch will not work unless there is something meaningful to see. Directors need to know that the greatest responsibility in achieving this goal lies with them. They must set the example on a daily basis. The next time you hear yourself say to your students, "Watch me," it is my hope that you hear a small but insistent voice in your head that immediately says, "Watch them!" Or, as your students might put it, "You first!"

### A Self-Assessment

There is an easy and very interesting way for you to privately assess how well you are watching your students. First of all, have a reliable student take daily attendance. Then, as soon after the rehearsal as possible, look at a list of your students different from the official list used by the student who took attendance. As you peruse each student's name on your list, you should be able to recall whether or not he or she was in rehearsal. Write down the names of any students you don't remember seeing that day. Finally, compare your "after the fact" absence list with the attendance list compiled by the student. If you are making meaningful, visual contact with your students, you will find that on average, your personal attendance list is highly accurate.

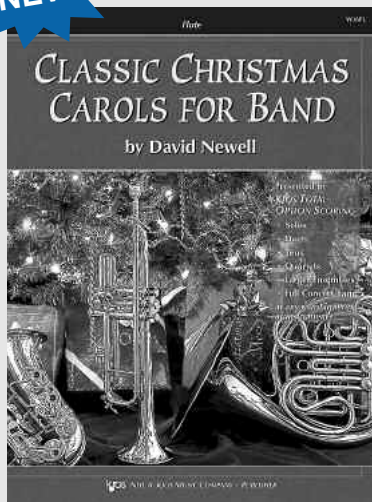
*David Newell has taught instrumental music for thirty years in the public schools of Berea, Ohio. In 1979 he received the Martha Holden Jennings Foundation's "Master Teacher" Award for Excellence in the Classroom. He also received the Alumni Achievement Award from Baldwin – Wallace College in 1987.*

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## A Tribute to William Adam

by Robert Baca and Brian Thorstad

The following interview involves a rare glimpse into the perspective of one of the world's greatest brass pedagogs. Bill Adam is widely respected for his views on sound development and its applications for becoming a successful player. Many of his students, such as jazz trumpeters Randy Brecker and Chris Botti, orchestral players such as Bob Platt from the Berlin Philharmonic and LA studio greats such as Jerry Hey, Charlie Davis and Larry Hall to name a few, dominate the performance world and are known for their beautiful tone and rich musical ideas.

In this volume of *Kjos Band News*, Mr. Adam will share his philosophical beliefs about brass playing and its applications to teaching. A future volume of *Kjos Band News* will include direct applications of these ideas for use in any band program.

As part of a teacher/student collaboration effort, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire student Brian Thorstad (BT) and I, Bob Baca, developed the following questions for an interview conducted with Mr. Adam (WA) on January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2003. The following are excerpts from that interview.

### Background

BT: Can you tell me about growing up in the Colorado area and developing your early interests in music?

WA: Well, when I was seven years old I heard Dell Stagers play the Carnival of Venice with the Goldman Band. I told my father at that time that that's what I'm going to be — a trumpet player. And I haven't changed my thinking since. We were able to buy an old cornet. And by the way, the funny part about it was that it was called a "Honk" that was made by the Montgomery Ward & Company. When I first started out, I went to see **Ben Folss**, who, at that time, was the director of the community music and the local barber. He told my dad, "I've never taught anybody anything about playing, but send him down and let's see what happens." The first thing he did was play a note. Rather than tell me how to play the note, he simply said, "Will you copy

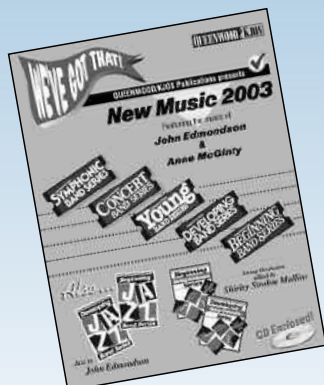
that?" Following the lesson, he told me to go home and find that note. So, that's what I did. I went home and I started to practice, without any music. The next day he introduced me to tunes like *Happy Birthday*, *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star*, and all those little nursery rhyme tunes. We sang them, and then we played them. As time went by, I learned all those tunes. When I was ten years old he said, "I think that you better go down to Denver and see the Likes." **Mabel Keith Like** was a fine cornet player and **John Like** was a cornet player in the John Philip Sousa band, who sat next to Herbert L. Clarke. When I started to study with the Likes, I would play a note or whatever the assignment was and they would stop me and say, "Make it sound like this." So all this time that I'm growing up and learning to play the horn, I had never been given any instruction about forming my embouchure or how to finger the notes on the instrument. It was always on the musical end of things. And they always said, "Make sure you sing the sound." And that's where I see that my teaching has all been centered — on singing the sound. You have to develop the sound that you want to hear—the beautiful sound of the trumpet. The embouchure, breathing, and all the rest of the stuff is rolled up into what you hear.

My mother was quite a piano player and vocalist so every Sunday I played in a church orchestra where we played all the hymns. We didn't watch much television but we made music every chance we got.

### Self Image

BT: Can you describe how your beliefs about teaching can be applied to any subject area?

WA: Well sure. The thing that we want to do is to make sure the person who is studying is free — is mentally free. So that's why I have my students read *Psycho-Cybernetics*, *As a Man Thinketh*, *Zen in the Art of Archery*, *Golf in the Kingdom*, and books like that. And the reason for that is that very few of the



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students that come to college have understanding about their self-image. Whether it's trumpet playing or whether it's some other job you must have a good self-image. The one thing about teaching is to make sure that you're going to help the student to become a better person. Now there are many trumpet players in the world today, but there is only one like you.

### Embouchure, Breathing and Developing a Practice Routine

One day **Horis Ickler** asked me about the embouchure and I said, "Well, I don't know very much about it." And he said, "Well that's good, you can never adjust an embouchure unless the air is going through there." That woke me up considerably. So I got to thinking about that and I thought well, that's going to help answer a lot of my problems because if the air isn't going through the trumpet, you can't adjust anything. First it's the breath, but then along with the breath, you have to be able to hear that sound. That went back to old **Ben Folss** and the **Likes**. You listen. You sing the sound. The sound has to sing. And of course, if you go through the routine, you notice the first thing that we do is to blow through the tube. The reason for this is to make sure the air is moving through the tube. Not tightening up to blow at it, but blowing through the tube. So the first part of the routine is to set up the freedom of breath. Now, your avenue of breath has to be the same when it goes out as when it comes in. There is to be very little restriction of breath. In fact, the breath is always hot and wet. Thinking hot, wet air causes relaxation. That's what we're after. So we're not going to do anything to squeeze the breath. It has to be full and free and float the sound.

BT: So the first part of the routine is to activate and relax the breath. The next part of the routine is playing long tones. Are those used for the same purpose?

WA: That's right. When we introduce the long tones, you notice that I play the note before you play it? I do that so that you are hearing what the note sounds like, not only the pitch of that note, but the

quality of the sound. Then I'll play the next note followed by you playing that note. Always, the teacher is involved in creating within the student the things that are mental. In other words, the pitch is what you hear. You have to pronounce the pitch. And you have to pronounce the freedom and flow of the breath through that sound. The air must flow freely through the horn without you restricting it, to the point where you don't have the feeling that you're making the note, but you're floating the note. The trumpet then becomes an extension of your thoughts. All this time, we're trying to increase the ability, not only to hear the note, but the ability to have the breath be free. When you develop the long tones that way, the embouchure and breathing should develop naturally.

Next, we play chromatic exercises. The student should know that when you see a note you know the fingering, right? And as you see a note, you know what the note sounds like. All the time you are developing your ears. When we play through the first note, sometimes we'll hold the first note out, right? We think horizontal, meaning that it's straight out. So that's what we try to develop. We try to develop a routine to make the basic things work a lot better. You've read *Zen in the Art of Archery*?

BT: Yes, I have.

WA: Okay. So the guy pulls the bow back and all of the sudden the arrow flies out of there, right? You don't pull it back and hold it. In other words, you pull it back and when you're on target, she's gone. You take a great big breath like you're going to yawn and it turns around. You don't want to hold it in. It's not going to come out as fast as it comes in, right? But the same sensation is going to be there.

### Starting beginning players

BT: Are there any things you recommend that a music teacher do when they are starting a beginning trumpet student?

WA: That brings to my mind, where does that sound always come from? That sound comes from your ear. What are you hearing?



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BT: Do you have any recommendations about what they should listen to or play?

WA: Well, they better be able to sing all the tunes. How many trumpet students come in and you point to a note and they can no more hear it than they can play it? But that doesn't mean that that's all bad. They have to develop that sort of thing. The goal of hearing the note is a primary goal. There was a series of videos made at the University of Alaska that I would recommend to you. I would highly recommend that you look at those.

BT: In the school systems today, sometimes band directors can't teach private lessons anymore. Instead they teach all of the trumpet students at once. When there are those limitations in the school system, what can a teacher do to make the best of the situation?

WA: Pray. (Laughter) That really makes it tough. One of the things they can do is listen to a lot of music and work on their hearing and ear training.

BT: As a music teacher, how can you instill a positive attitude and an open mind in your students?

WA: Well I think a teacher must be very non-critical, be an inspiration, and lead by example.

BT: Have you ever had any epiphanies or realizations about teaching?

WA: Well, of course becoming a better person and that you have to be an example for your students. You don't criticize anybody because if you criticize somebody, you're taking a crack out of your own life, whether you realize that or not. That's what happens to you. You never criticize anybody because if you do, you're destroying yourself.

BT: When a band director is teaching their students, how do you recommend that they instill a practice routine in them?

WA: Well when you first start out, everything is kind of a basic routine thing. When I was a kid, before I went to school in the morning, I always practiced for a half an hour or forty-five minutes. And once you get in a routine, things are easy and they become pretty natural. But if you have to tell yourself, "you have to do that," that's counterproductive.

Note: In the fall of 2003, Mr. William Adam will receive a lifetime achievement award from the International Trumpet Guild.

#### Footnotes

1. Allen, James. *As a Man Thinketh*. Putnam Publishing Groups, 1984.
2. Herrigel, Eugen. *Zen in the Art of Archery*. Random Publishing, 1974.
3. Maltz, Maxwell. *Pscho-Cybernectics*. AMS Pocket, 1974.
4. Murphy, Michael. *Golf in the Kingdom (An Esalem Book)*. Penguin Publishing, 1997.

*Bob Baca currently serves as Associate Professor of Trumpet and Director of Jazz Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. He has performed with the Buddy Rich Big Band, Frank Sinatra, Mel Torme, Tony Bennett, and Andy Williams, as well as the Cincinnati Pops Orchestra, Philip Brunelle "Plymouth Music" Orchestra, and the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra. He also freelances in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area. Baca is in demand throughout the United States and Canada as a brass clinician.*

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## Playing In Tune

by Bruce Pearson

There is nothing wrong with playing out of tune—as long as no one has to hear it.

Many otherwise great performances have been compromised by poor intonation. Playing in tune for a band is often problematic, for it is not an isolated skill, but requires good tone production, good listening skills, knowing the instrument and its pitch tendencies, and knowing how to make the necessary adjustments. Intonation is essentially an issue of judgment based upon aural and musical perception.

Some teachers feel that it is a waste to spend much time teaching good intonation for they feel it is too difficult to teach or that their students will not make the required effort to play in tune. Students will want to play in tune if they are taught pitch awareness and how to tune their instruments from the beginning. The more students hear good intonation, the less they will accept poor intonation.

This two-part series, **Playing In Tune**, will include:

1. The principles of playing in tune
2. The process of tuning the band

The article in this volume will focus on the principles of playing in tune. The next volume of *Kjos Band News* will focus on the process of tuning the band.

### Principles of Playing In Tune

• The art of playing in tune requires good *tone production* and *good listening*. You can't tune a poor tone, either individual or ensemble. Before asking, "are you *in tune*?" ask, "are you *in tone*?"

• It is the student's responsibility to play in tune. It is the director's task to teach them how to play in tune. Teach the students what *in tune* and *out of tune* sound like.

• Tune only after the instruments and musicians are warmed up.

• Be sure students know the pitch tendencies of their instruments and how to make the necessary adjustments.

• Tune the chords from the bass voices in root position.

• Teach students to match sounds. Inform them as to who is playing the same pitch or musical line and have them match those pitches.

• Good ensemble intonation is inextricably linked to good ensemble balance. Have the ensemble play with a good "pyramid of sound."

• Tune the ensemble by having students be responsible for tuning both the vertical and horizontal tuning process.

• Ask players to "*tune their trio*" (one student and those on either side), which eventually links the entire ensemble.

• Students need to know what note of the chord they are playing and should become aware of some of the standard harmonic intonation adjustments:

- |                             |                       |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| A. Major triad              | Tune the third down   |
| B. Minor triad              | Tune the third up     |
| C. Dominant 7 <sup>th</sup> | Tune the seventh down |

• Teach students the effect of dynamics (volume) on intonation.

• When tuning a Perfect 5<sup>th</sup>, if the note wants to drift upward, it is sharp. If the note wants to drift downward, it is flat.

• Good intonation requires good instruments that are well-adjusted and good mouthpieces.

If both teachers and students are aware of these principles of playing in tune and put them into practice, there will be dramatic improvement in performance.

## The Guitar – All the Right Grooves

by Dean Sorenson

This is the fourth in a series of articles about the rhythm section. Past discussions have centered on the bass, drums, and piano. The focus here is on the guitar. The guitar is often the forgotten stepchild of the jazz rhythm section. While it is the backbone of rock and roll, its role in jazz is much harder to define. This article will look at some ways that you as a director can familiarize yourself with some general issues concerning the instrument, and how you can help young guitarists sound better and contribute more to your rhythm section. As always, no amount of reading can take the place of listening to great artists. Take advantage of the discographies found in the **Standard of Excellence Jazz Ensemble Method** or the **Standard of Excellence Jazz Combo Session Director Scores**.

Many guitarists have little or no jazz ensemble experience. The ensembles that they are more likely to have played in are pickup rock bands. I want to be perfectly clear that there is no reason to discourage this kind of performance (unless you live next door!) but it is important that the player realize that the role of the guitar is much different in a jazz band than it is in a rock band. This holds true in a big band and a combo setting. In a rock band, the guitar is center stage, providing rhythmic drive as well as lead and solo lines. In a jazz band, the guitar's role varies depending upon the style of the chart, but it is much more a supporting player than a lead or solo player. Too often, young guitarists fail to make the necessary adjustment. As a director, it is necessary that you understand how the guitar needs to function in different styles, and help steer young players in the right direction.

Swing charts pose the biggest challenge for young guitarists, primarily because their role is more in the background than in other styles. The gold standard for jazz guitar in this context was **Freddie Green** (1911–1987), who held the guitar chair in the Count Basie Orchestra for over 50 years. Green pioneered a style of guitar that offered a subtle drive to the rhythm section while staying out of the way of the bass and piano. Green strummed straight quarter notes, four to the bar, using primarily three or four note chord voicings. He never used an amp, but can be heard clearly on just about every recording that Basie made.

To mimic this style the player must understand some basic ideas that are somewhat contrary to tendencies of rock players. Stress to students the importance of learning different styles and becoming more well rounded players. The volume of the amp must be turned down, especially if there is a piano present. The main rhythmic drive comes from the bass and drums while piano and guitar add color on top of that. A guitar strumming four to the bar will not interfere with a comping piano (see my previous *Kjos Band News* article for more information on piano comping). If there is not a piano, the guitar should play at a more prominent volume, but still below the bass and drums.

The chord voicings are of utmost importance. Most young players, especially those with rock backgrounds or experience playing three-chord tunes around the campfire, use all six strings whenever possible. In swing this technique creates a very heavy and plodding sound. Swing style voicings should be very “lean” using only three or four notes to convey the sound of the chord. Most jazz ensemble charts do not write out guitar voicings but many younger level charts, including the **Standard of Excellence Jazz In Concert** series, include a sheet of fingerboard diagrams separate from the part. Fingerboard charts are also included in the **Standard of Excellence Jazz Ensemble Method** and the **Standard of Excellence Jazz Combo Session** guitar books.

The chords should be played entirely with downstrokes. This is another technique that is hard to teach players from the rock or folk worlds. Many inexperienced swing players will play downstroke quarter notes, but catch the strings on the upstroke, creating a country swing or boogie-woogie feel. Implore your player to refrain from catching the strings on the upstroke. They can use their thumb or a pick, so long as they avoid upstrokes.

Sound is also critical. A hollow body electric guitar is best for achieving a quality jazz sound (especially in swing) but most students play solid body instruments. Take advantage of the tone controls to compensate as well as possible for the more rock oriented sound of solid body guitars. Many young players have their amps and guitars set far too bright. This results in a very “twangy” sound. Set all tone controls flat and work toward as warm a tone as possible. This will often mean increasing the midrange and low frequencies, and possibly rolling back the upper frequencies.

The above thoughts on sound hold true for all styles, including rock and Latin. In rock and funk charts, the guitarist's experience can be used to your advantage. Let him or her explore different riffs and patterns to find the one that grooves the hardest. Written out rhythm patterns are almost always a suggestion and players are free to experiment, so long as musical integrity is maintained. Bass and drums still drive the band, but guitar should take a front seat to piano. Since this is often the strength of the player, use it to your full advantage. Just be careful of volume, as young players tend to get excited and let the volume get out of hand. An overdriven guitar can easily drown out the entire band. Also, be sure that the rhythm your guitarist is playing is in good time. Young players tend to rush and this can kill a groove. Rock and funk charts are also excellent vehicles for players to experiment with different distortion pedals and sound processors. Let them have fun and play what they want, but make sure it is in the context of the rest of the rhythm section and the rest of the band.

The role of guitar in the rhythm section of Latin charts is a little more difficult to pin down. Bass and drums are still the

centerpiece, but the emphasis on guitar or piano can vary. In general, Brazilian styles like samba or bossa use more guitar than piano. On the other hand, styles like salsa or cha-cha favor more piano than guitar. Charts often include rhythm patterns, and these can be experimented with as well. Universal ideas of good time and balance should always be considered.

A strong guitar player can add a great deal to a rhythm section, while a weak one can drag an entire band down. When choosing your guitarist, make sure they have the proper attitude and ensemble concept, especially if his or her jazz experience is

limited. Some extra attention may need to be paid to the guitar chair at first, but the work will pay off with a much harder grooving rhythm section.

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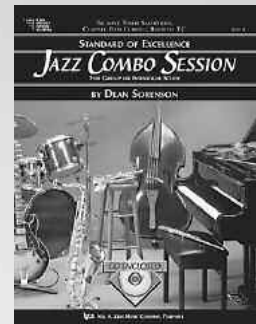
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