



Kjos Band News

NEWS AND INFORMATION FOR BAND EDUCATORS

Welcome to the Kjos Band News

Welcome to Volume 9 of the *Kjos Band News*, a biannual publication from the Neil A. Kjos Music Company. We are dedicated to supporting quality music education by providing our readers with articles, suggestions, and teaching tips from leading educators, composers, and conductors from around the world. Each issue contains selected and varied articles regarding woodwind, brass, and percussion pedagogy. Additional topics include rehearsal technique, composer interviews, and instrument repair.

We hope our readers will find this edition of *Kjos Band News* helpful in accomplishing

a successful conclusion to the school year.

If you have specific topics you would like to suggest we address, or wish to receive back issues, please contact:

Kjos Band News
Neil A. Kjos Music Company
4380 Jutland Drive
San Diego, CA 92117

Past issues of the *Kjos Band News* can also be viewed on our website at www.kjos.com. From the "Band" link, click on "What's New," then on "Kjos Band News."

Tuning the Band: The Process

by Bruce Pearson

There is nothing wrong with playing out of tune — as long as no one has to hear it. This comment was made in the last issue of the *Kjos Band News*. That article, the first in the two-part series, focused on the "principles" of playing in tune. This article will focus on the "process" of tuning the band and playing in tune.

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, knowing how to make the necessary adjustments and knowing the effect of dynamics (volume) on intonation. Good intonation is an issue of judgment based on aural and musical perception.

Before focusing on the process of tuning the band, a few principles of good intonation need to be restated:

- The art of playing in tune requires good *tone production* and *good listening*. You can't tune a poor tone, either individual or ensemble.

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

While it is the student's responsibility to play in tune, it is the director's task to teach the students how to play in tune. Students need to understand the concept of *intonation beats* and how to eliminate them. To that end, select two trombone players to assist in demonstrating this concept. Have one trombone player attempt to match the pitch of the other by moving the slide in or out until all intonation beats are eliminated. Repeat the demonstration and have the band members raise their hands to indicate when the intonation beats have been eliminated. When the intonation beats are eliminated, the two musicians are playing in tune. The use of trombones and trombone players allows the other band members to see and hear the effect of the adjustments. This is also a good way to demonstrate the effect of lengthening and shortening the instruments.

Once students understand this concept,

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and when the instruments and musicians are warmed up, the band is ready to begin the tuning process.

It is recommended to tune the band both vertically and horizontally. To tune vertically, band members must understand if their instrument belongs to the Soprano, Alto, Tenor, or Bass group. See the chart below.

The Process of Tuning the Band

Vertical (Bottom to Top) Tuning

1. Provide the principal tuba player with an electronic tuner and ask him/her to slur up to a second line (bass clef) B \flat playing the notes F-G-A-B \flat . Sustain the B \flat .

2. Instruct the rest of the band to sing the syllable “MO,” matching the pitch of the tuba player. Have them sustain their singing until it is their turn to play their instrument.

3. Have the rest of the bass section tune to the tuba player eliminating all intonation beats. This is followed by the tenor, alto, and soprano sections. Give each section ample time to tune accurately.

Horizontal Tuning

1. Provide the principal tuba player with an electronic tuner and ask him/her to slur up to a second line (bass clef) B \flat playing the notes F-G-A-B \flat . Sustain the B \flat .

2. Instruct the rest of the band to sing the syllable “MO,” matching the pitch of the tuba player. Have them sustain their singing until it is their turn to play their instrument.

3. Have the principal players of each section tune to the tuba player eliminating all intonation beats. This is followed by the 2nd, 3rd, etc. chair player tuning to the tuba player.

4. Finally, have each band member *tune their trio* (the student and those on both sides) which eventually links the entire ensemble.

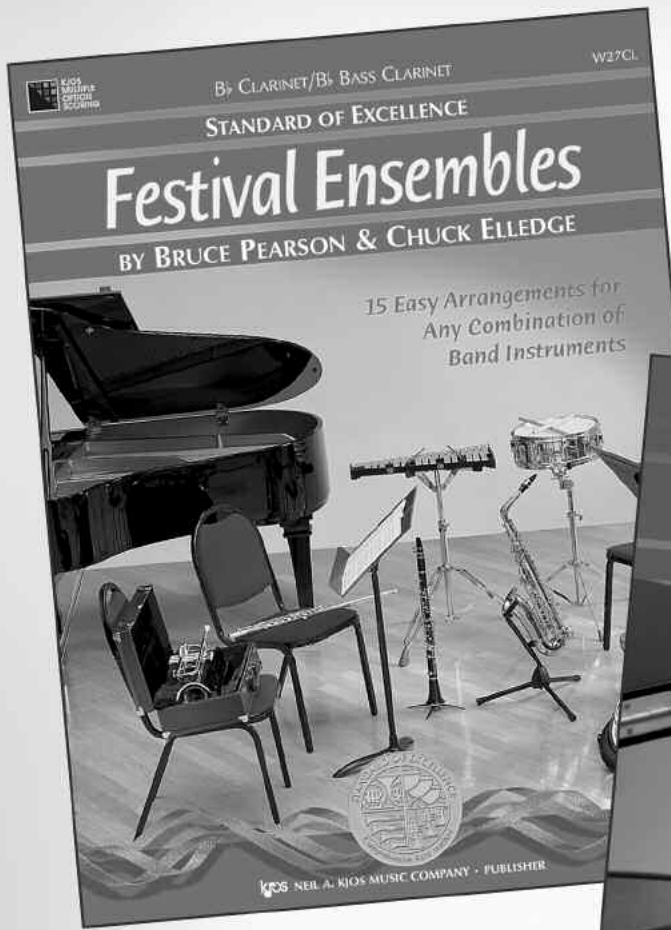
Using both the vertical and horizontal tuning process will assist the students to rely more on their ears than their eyes for good tuning. Electronic tuners may play an important role in assisting the tuning process but should never replace the student’s ability to tune “by ear.”

If both teachers and students are aware of the principles of playing in tune and apply the process of tuning the band, there will be a dramatic improvement in the band’s intonation.

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.

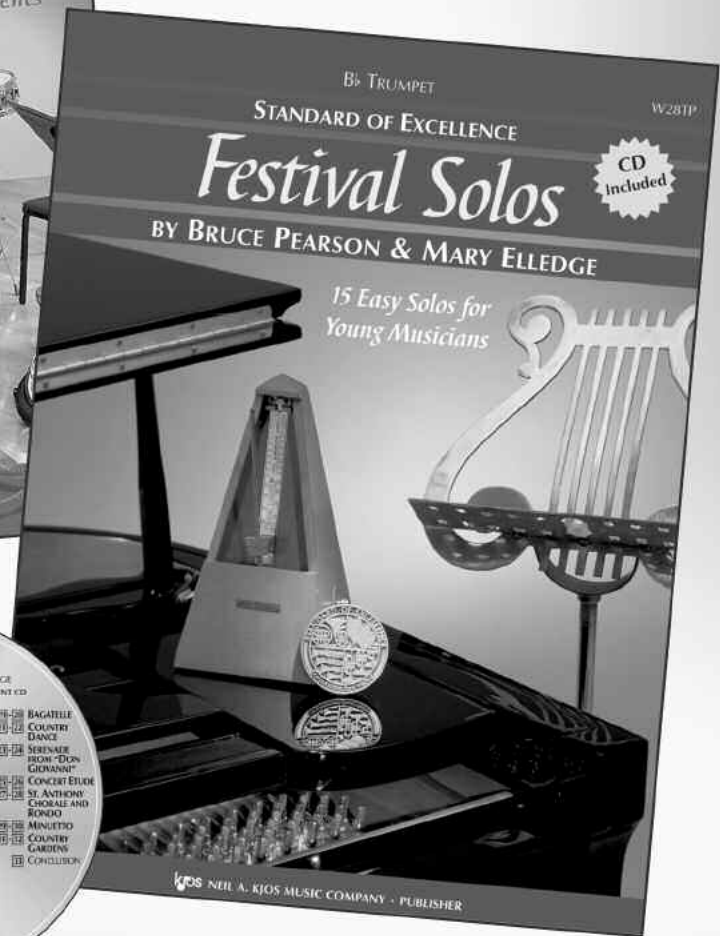
Soprano Voices			
<u>Woodwinds</u>	<u>Brass</u>	<u>Percussion</u>	
Piccolo	1 st Trumpet	Bells	
Flute		Xylophone	
Oboe		Snare Drum	
1 st Clarinet		Triangle	
		Cymbals	
Alto Voices			
<u>Woodwinds</u>	<u>Brass</u>	<u>Percussion</u>	
2 nd Clarinet	2 nd Trumpet	Marimba	
3 rd Clarinet	3 rd Trumpet	Chimes	
1 st Alto Saxophone		Wood Block	
		Tambourine	
Tenor Voices			
<u>Woodwinds</u>	<u>Brass</u>	<u>Percussion</u>	
Alto Clarinet	Horn	Tenor Drum	
2 nd Alto Saxophone	1 st Trombone	Tom-Tom	
Tenor Saxophone	2 nd Trombone		
Bass Voices			
<u>Woodwinds</u>	<u>Brass</u>	<u>Percussion</u>	
Bass Clarinet	Baritone	Timpani	
Bassoon	3 rd Trombone	Bass Drum	
Bari. Saxophone	Tuba		

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Cymbals, Cymbals, Cymbals

by Dave Hagedorn

The selection and care of cymbals in jazz and concert situations should be given the same attention as woodwind, brass, and string players give to their instruments.

With a wide selection of cymbals available from reputable manufacturers, the choice of cymbals can become more difficult. What is a basic selection and what should you buy to augment your collection of cymbals? What kind of stands should you use? What is the difference between concert cymbals and drum set cymbals? These are but a few questions that need to be answered.

Crash cymbals have been designated in three weights: French, Viennese, and German. If you are buying a pair of crash cymbals (hand held cymbals) for the first time, the best overall weight to get is a Viennese weight. The Viennese is an all-purpose, mid-weight cymbal that you can use in all situations, especially when you want the cymbal crashes to blend with your group. If you are buying for the high school level, purchase an 18" pair. For middle school or younger percussionists, a pair of 16" cymbals is preferable. Cymbals that are too large for smaller people are difficult to control. When I play with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra and other orchestras, I frequently use 16" Viennese cymbals.

If you already own a pair of Viennese cymbals, I recommend purchasing a pair of Germanic weight (heavy) crash cymbals.

These are especially useful for marches and big crashes where the desired sound is to be heard over the group, rather than to blend with the rest of the ensemble. Get a size that is either slightly larger or smaller than what you already have. For instance if you have 18" Viennese cymbals, then get a pair of 17" or 16" Germanic. If you really have a large budget, try a large (20" or larger) pair of either Viennese or Germanic cymbals to use when you want a huge crash that dominates everything, such as in the last movement of Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony.

The suspended cymbal is an instrument that virtually all band and orchestra composers use. A variety of different sizes and weights are needed, but the most versatile one and perhaps the first one that should be purchased is an 18" thin crash cymbal. I prefer a thinner cymbal, because it is easier to control at both loud and soft dynamics. Another good choice is one that the manufacturer has labeled as a "suspended cymbal." Very thin, small cymbals (such as 14") can be used in delicate moments for cymbal crashes with sticks or mallets at low dynamics. Avoid using a large suspended cymbal when you want the sound to speak quickly and have a short or fast decay.

Drum set cymbals should be a completely separate collection, and used solely for the drum set. The basic cymbal collection for the drum set should be a 20" medium ride

SNARE DRUM ETUDES

by Joe Holmquist

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cymbal, a 16" crash cymbal, and a pair of 14" hi-hat cymbals. While there are many cymbals, all with specific purposes, I feel that a 20" medium ride cymbal is the most versatile for school jazz bands. Rock ride cymbals are not good for jazz, but a jazz ride cymbal will work fine for rock and Latin grooves. The flat ride cymbal, that is, a cymbal without a bell on it, is used effectively for contemporary straight eighth note tunes and Brazilian beats, but is not as good for swing tunes. Do not use a ride cymbal as a suspended cymbal for concert band or orchestra use for it is too thick for soft rolls and the sound won't "blossom" if played in a crash cymbal situation.

A variety of stands exist that are available today for cymbals. I prefer the use of a "gooseneck" stand for suspended cymbals. This means that you will need to have leather straps for all of your suspended cymbals, not just the crash cymbals. The use of leather straps allows the cymbal to vibrate freely, because the cymbal is hanging freely, not resting on a stand. The goosenecks also eliminate any chance of loose wing nuts or parts of the stands rattling, since the cymbal is not in direct contact with the stand. When using regular cymbal stands, make sure that you have a supply of extra felt washers to eliminate any unwanted and extraneous sounds. When transporting suspended cymbals make certain that all of the wing nuts are tight, so you won't lose any of the parts. A cymbal stand with missing parts is useless because the cymbal can be damaged or it can produce unwanted sounds. Gum rubber is preferred over plastic tubing on the cymbal stand posts. Plastic is more durable, but can produce unwanted rattles when the cymbal is struck. You can get tubes of gum rubber from scientific supply houses (ask your science teachers for a source). Boom stands are very useful and often preferred by professional percussionists due to their versatility, but are also more expensive.

I strongly recommend that you use leather straps for crash cymbals, and I discourage the use of wooden handles. Wooden

handles that are tightened too much, can cause cracks in the cymbal and render the cymbal useless. This cannot happen with leather. Learn how to tie a cymbal knot (check method books like **Standard of Excellence** or literature from cymbal companies), or you can also purchase a strap that holds the cymbal with a metal ball in a pouch. It is also recommended to use a cymbal bag or case when transporting your cymbals. Scratches and cracks on cymbals can alter the sound, so you want the cymbals to be protected when you move them from place to place.

There are a number of cymbals that have special effects. Sizzle cymbals have rivets in them and allow the rivets to vibrate after the cymbal is struck. You can hear this sound on recordings by drummers such as Elvin Jones, Mel Lewis, and Art Blakey. The cymbal has holes drilled into it at the factory and rivets are inserted. Later, if you decide you don't want the rivets, you are left with holes in the cymbal. Not a bad thing necessarily, but something to be aware of. If you want a sizzle sound without the drilling, you can buy commercially available sizzlers that attach to the cymbal stand.

The splash cymbal is a special variety of cymbal that has a very fast crash and instant decay. They come in different sizes, usually in smaller diameters, often between 6" to 10". Splash cymbals are used in special concert situations and also if you want your jazz drummer to have a crash sound from the very early swing era.

If you purchase a variety of cymbals over the years and care for them, all of your ensembles will have a range of cymbal colors that will enhance each performance. Once you get a basic collection, purchasing more specific sizes and weights will allow you to have the proper cymbal for each performance occasion.

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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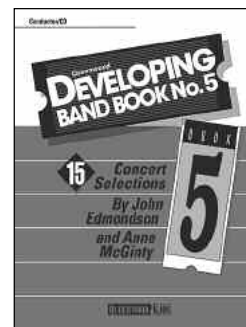
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Teaching Through Conducting

by David Newell

In the Fall 2003 issue of *Kjos Band News* we discussed the importance of establishing meaningful visual communication between conductors and performers. Among other things we concluded that, “*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.*”

One of the things we must do to get our students to watch us on concert nights is **condition them to watch us** during rehearsals. How can we achieve this? By seizing every opportunity that presents itself during rehearsals to *conduct* a correction rather than *discuss* a correction. We overwhelmingly make rehearsal corrections and suggestions *verbally*. We stop the band and we *tell* our students that they are too loud, that they need to play this section in a more legato style, that they need to listen to the horn and alto sax line here, and so forth. The students make the requested adjustments and the rehearsal moves on. There is no need for the students to look at us. They receive everything they need “by word of mouth,” and the performance of the piece improves. All is well.

The problem with this scenario is that rehearsals are preparing students for an event in which absolutely no corrections or adjustments can be made verbally. We cannot stop a piece in the middle of a concert to tell the students that they are playing too loudly. We must *tell them* this by employing a special sign language that we call conducting. If this unique language is to be correctly interpreted and implemented on concert nights, it must be an integral part of the daily rehearsal routine. In every sense, concerts are reflections of rehearsals. What we see and hear on a daily basis in the rehearsal room is what our audiences will see and hear on concert nights. If we want our students to exhibit excellent posture on concert nights, excellent posture must become second nature to them, because it is an integral part of every minute of every rehearsal. It cannot be added the day before the concert. Likewise, if we want our students to watch us on concert nights, we must structure our teaching in such a way that students consistently watch us during rehearsals.

Imagine if the baseball coach at your school put the team through their entire spring training period by telling the players everything that he wanted them to do. With a runner on first and one out, he shouts across the diamond from the third base coaching box that he wants the runner to attempt to steal second base on the next pitch. This practice regimen is excellent in many ways. The base runner gets to practice his slide, the second baseman is reminded that it his responsibility to cover second base, the catcher gets to practice his low throw to the first

base side of the bag, and so forth. The team improves with each practice. Unfortunately, this particular coach waits until the final practice before the first league game to explain to the players that he will not be able to shout his instructions to them the next day. He will have to signal what he wants by way of a set of special signs from the coaching box. He then quickly describes the signals. He first touches his left elbow with his right hand, followed by a tug on his baseball cap and a swipe of his belt buckle. But it is the fourth sign that matters. If he pulls on his right ear, it means bunt; if he pulls on his left ear, it means to swing away, and so forth.

The chances of this team having a completely successful first game seem rather minimal. First of all, most of the players on the team probably wouldn't even think to look at the coach for a sign. They never had to do that during practice. They were always told verbally when to bunt, when to steal, when to take a pitch, or when to swing away. Those players who did remember to look for a sign would probably not be able to recall what all of those special gyrations meant. The signs are far too complicated and unusual to be learned the day before the first game. Because they were not a regular part of the practice regimen, the signs are basically meaningless to the players. The coach obviously needed to start conditioning his players to look at him for the signs much sooner than he did.

As band “coaches,” we need to do the same. We need to run our practices (rehearsals) more under actual game conditions (concert settings). From the earliest rehearsals we need to use **conducting as a means to understanding** what is needed. In so far as possible, we need to stop exclusively teaching students verbally for a non-verbal event. We need to spend some time during every rehearsal teaching through conducting.

Less Talk; More Conducting

Talking is not teaching. Students learn the things they actually do much more profoundly than they learn what we tell them to do. **The learning is in the doing!** If we want our students to watch us and to interpret what we are visually trying to tell them during concerts, then we need to give them ample, daily opportunities to practice reading this special language. When we are presented with a choice of making a correction either verbally or visually during a rehearsal, we need to make the correction visually much more often than we currently do. We need to conduct it!

The band is playing the expressive, sustained, legato middle section of the piece in an inappropriate, separated style. The director stops the rehearsal and, without saying a word, conducts a couple of silent measures with a decidedly stilted, marcato beat pattern, after which he simply shakes his head “*no*.” He next demonstrates a couple measures of a very legato, fluid pattern

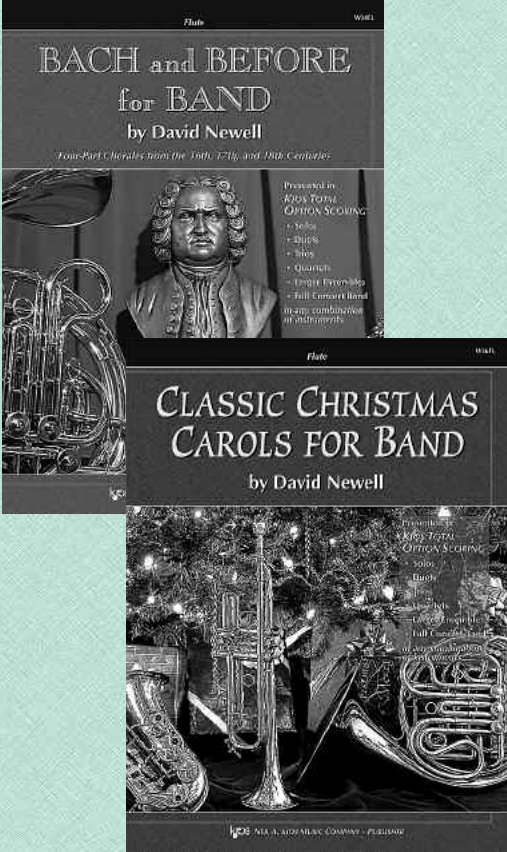
completely devoid of any sudden movements or sharp points. He silently indicates that this is the desired style and simply says, “*Measure 37 again.*” The students play the passage, this time in a more musically fitting style. If they don’t, he repeats the above process until he is satisfied that the students are getting the message. Repetition is an important part of learning any language, spoken or unspoken. Through this process the students are learning that conducting patterns model the desired sound, that the signs the director is sending out have musical meaning. **Conducted corrections**, done on a daily basis, are much more likely to produce performers who check with their conductors to confirm that they are performing in the correct style, at the appropriate dynamic level, with good balance, and so forth.

This is not to suggest that all learning during the band rehearsal can or should be non-verbal. On the contrary, talking is a very necessary part of the daily rehearsal, but it is often most beneficial when **the talking follows the experience**. Because the above correction was conducted, the students were forced to figure it out on their own. They had to think! Had their director

simply told them to play more legato, they would only have had to react — no thinking required. To make certain that all of the students understood the self-learned “lesson” however, it is important that the experience be summed up verbally. A question such as, “*Amanda, what have we just learned?*” would bring important closure to the learning for the students.

Students need to know that, because it is a sign language, conducting must be seen if the message is to be understood. Like any language, conducting is best learned when it is used on a daily basis. It is our responsibility to give our students daily experience interpreting and translating that language into appropriate sounds. We need to do more of our teaching by conducting, less by talking.

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.



BACH and BEFORE for BAND and CLASSIC CHRISTMAS CAROLS FOR BAND by David Newell

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Soundcheck 101: Sound Reinforcement for the Jazz Ensemble

by Dean Sorenson

Sound reinforcement is a fact of life when directing a jazz ensemble. Many different variables affect sound, and each situation is unique. Ideally, sound reinforcement should be “invisible” to the ear. A jazz ensemble is an acoustic ensemble, even though some instruments (commonly guitar, bass, and piano) use electronics to create or at least amplify their sound. The goal is to use sound reinforcement tools (microphones and amps) to enhance the overall acoustic sound, balancing the different elements properly. The soundcheck is the time to get these issues ironed out. Organized and productive soundchecks will help any performance go more smoothly and will showcase the band in its most positive light.

Most of us perform in a different space than we rehearse, and a new space takes time for the ensemble to get used to. A drummer friend of mine likes to say, “The hardest instrument to play is the room,” and he is absolutely right. The room where we are playing affects not only how we sound, but also how the ensemble hears. Allow yourself plenty of time in a soundcheck. Ideally, schedule rehearsal time in the performance space separate from the performance day. When soundchecks happen the day of the concert they are often hurried affairs. There is little time to make any adjustments, and the brass players are taking it easy to save their chops for the show. When players are not playing “full” the balance and blend is destroyed. If you must soundcheck on the day of the concert, designate one chart that brass players will not hold back on. This is the only way to get an accurate balance.

Start with the rhythm section, making certain everything is balanced and the players can all hear each other comfortably. Make sure the overall rhythm section volume is modest. Amps and drums can drown out trumpets, saxes, and trombones with little effort, wreaking havoc on the ensemble sound. Choose a segment from one of the charts that the band is playing where the rhythm section is just “playing time.” Solo choruses are good for this. Have the rhythm section play this chorus several times (with no soloist playing), and do most of your listening with the entire section playing. Listen first to the bass. If the bass volume is too loud, the drummer will play louder to compensate, forcing the winds to overblow. The bass sound should be clear and not muddy. It is often necessary to roll back low and mid frequencies, especially in a larger room or one with many hard surfaces.

Listen to the drums next, and balance the bass and drums. Since the drummer cannot control the volume with a knob (unfortunately!), it is imperative that he or she be aware of the effect of the drums on ensemble volume. The dynamic range of the ensemble is directly related to the dynamic range of the drums. If a drummer cannot play at soft or moderate volumes, the ensemble will not be able to either.

Piano and/or guitar should be audible, but not as “present”

as bass and drums. Since the piano is often amplified through the house sound system (and not through an amp on stage), that volume must be set at the main soundboard. Guitar should occupy a similar “acoustic space” as the piano. Guitar should be more present on rock tunes, and less present on swing tunes.

When the rhythm section is set, add the rest of the ensemble. Now is a good time for the brass players to play full out, and not hold back. It is important that you get a good idea of what the ensemble will sound like, and it is important for the ensemble to test what they can hear on stage when they are playing full volume.

Listen for balance between different sections. The same elements that hold true in concert band hold true here. A good sound, played in tune, will carry and will make the ensemble sound full. A common issue is brass overbalancing saxes. Saxes are usually outnumbered, and the brass have the added advantage of often sitting or standing on risers. Take some basic steps first. Make sure the players are filling their horns with air and producing as full a sound as possible. Also make sure their bells are clear of any music stands. This can be a larger problem if you use band fronts. Be sure the players are playing off to the side of the stands. It is often difficult to ask the brasses to “play down” to the sax dynamic as the parts (especially lead parts) are in a tessitura that is difficult to play softly.

Put mics on the saxes only if the above remedies do not solve the problem. Unless the room is unusually large, the ideal situation is NO mics in the winds (except for solos). The saxophone section is a common exception to this rule, and it is often necessary to mic the saxes in order to achieve a good balance between the saxes and brass. Make sure the sax mics are far enough away that they amplify the section, and individual parts do not stick out. Turn them up just enough so the saxes and brass balance. The opposite problem will be created if the sax mics are too hot.

Once levels have been set, leave them alone. Nothing is more frustrating to listen to than an ensemble whose sound is trying to change “on the fly.” The only exception to this is solo mics. These should ideally be off unless they are being used. If the mics themselves do not have switches on them, someone should be at the soundboard turning them up just before the beginning of a solo and back down once the solo is over. A list of soloists for each tune is very helpful to the person running the soundboard. Spend some time at soundcheck giving your soloists a chance to play into the mics. They need to adjust to the new acoustic setting and you need to make sure the solo mic levels are set properly.

Solo mics can be set up in front of the ensemble or in the sections. If they are in front of the ensemble, it is not as important that they be switched off when they are not in use. Music

stands can be placed near solo mics out front if players need to read music when they are up front, although ideally the players will have the changes or melody memorized. Solo mics in the sections must be turned down when they are not used. The exception to this would again be sax section mics that are used for ensemble purposes also. Sax soloists can stand in place and move closer to the mic for solos.

Following these basic steps will make your soundcheck time

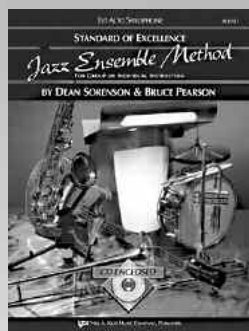
more productive, will help your students feel more confident on stage, and will help the overall sound of your jazz ensemble.

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.

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Music Assessment: Why and How —and Who Benefits?

by Tony Pietricola

Schools have dedicated considerable time and resources to developing assessments of student performance. Many of us in the arts, in an effort to assert the equity between arts and other subjects, have spent more than a decade applying the same rigor to arts assessment as those who created assessments for the other core academic subjects.

In our sharp focus on creating the assessment tools themselves, however, we have almost overlooked an obvious larger question: “Why assess music—or any of the arts—in the first place?”

Why Assess Music?

Accountability to the Public

Schools clearly need to make sure the public sees that taxpayer money is spent wisely. The public is paying for an academic “product” by investing in education. It only makes sense to have some way to see if that money is invested well.

Thus the creation of national and state standardized tests that allow schools, districts, and the state to demonstrate their students’ progress to the public and to the students themselves.

For the music and the other arts to survive and flourish in public education, the public and the arts students themselves need to see progress against a standard.

Standards for Clarity

Key to accountability in music, as in any discipline, is assessment—but assessment of what? One positive result of our earliest focus on arts assessment was the realization that we obviously needed to establish standards—the “what”—before we could assess the quality of the art.

I learned this dramatically when I participated in a S.C.A.S.S. (States Collaborative on Assessment of Student Standards) Arts Assessment task force workshop run by the C.C.S.S.O. (Council of Chief State School

Officers). One of the first exercises in which we participated required us to form groups of four, create a work of art from a pile of scrap material, and assess each group’s work.

It soon became apparent that we could not assess the groups’ creations because we had no common ground for comparison. We clearly needed standards that described what we should know and be able to do with our scraps so that we’d end up with something other than a new scrap heap! The assessment of how well we achieved those standards would give us—and informed observers—a consistent measure of our work and our progress should we ever again create art from scraps or other media.

Measurement for Student Learning

Once we have standards, we need to measure progress through assessment. While the public may want assessment for comparison of states, districts, and schools, assessment primarily allows teachers of music to do some substantive work toward really helping each student meet reasonable goals that lead to a quality music education.

Sometimes assessment can be used to measure the effectiveness of a particular program or teacher. Although this process, if handled carefully, can be meaningful, assessment against standards exists to benefit students. It helps foster the development of students’ brains, and it gives students a better understanding of themselves and how to cope with the world around them.

It also helps students, teachers, and parents become better partners in the educational process by giving them a common language for talking about music. Of highest importance, however, is the fact that good assessment practices in music can help students learn and grow as musicians/people.

How Do We Assess Music?

Keeping the goal of helping students to learn in the forefront, we need to have some essential items in place before we begin to assess students' musical progress on a day-to-day basis.

No Secrets Any Longer

Some teachers still play this game when it comes to assessment: "I've got a secret and you have to figure it out to get an A." Those students who decipher the teacher's methods and secret assessment practices are successful and too bad for those who don't.

Hopefully, most of us are now committed to the fact that all children can learn if we make clear to them what it is we want them to know and be able to do, what that looks like, how we'll assess it, and how they'll proceed in order to learn what they need to learn.

Thus, you start by clearly stating what it is you want them to know and be able to do. For this you may use national, state or local standards. These are readily available and you should post them in your room in a prominent location.

Explain orally and in writing, referring to rubrics and other scoring methods, how students will show that they meet the standards. This is called "evidence" in some areas of the country and "achievement standards" in the National Arts Standards in particular.

The evidences or achievement standards should be carefully cross-referenced to the standard to make sure it measures what you want it to measure.

Play and show students examples of student work. The work should clearly exemplify what it sounds and looks like to meet the standard. These examples are known as "benchmarks." (The term "benchmark" has been defined in different ways, but I am using it to mean examples of student work, which demonstrate the levels of proficiency that students need to achieve to meet the standard.)

Just as we tied the evidence or achievement standards to the standards, it is important to connect the assessment directly to what is taught and what goals have been declared. This meets the criteria of "validity." Does the assessment really indicate movement toward the standards, or does it include criteria that were omitted in the teaching or were not thoroughly covered? A quick review of what you want students to know and be able to do will help your assessment be valid.

An assessment must be "reliable." Reliability means the assessment measures progress against the standard no matter who administers it and no matter where or under what circumstances it is given. We're particularly fortunate in music to have a time-tested reliable "authentic assessment," the same

one used at Lincoln Center, and thousands of other venues around the world: a music performance!

It's All for the Students

Standards and assessment benefit music students. When students can hear and see what's expected and are helped to achieve it, their improving assessments will satisfy them—as well as the public's need for accountability.

As always, the "devil is in the details," so look forward to the next article that will spell out some specific techniques you can use in order to effectively use standards and assessment to help you to teach—and your students to learn—the craft and art of music.

Tony Pietricola has been teaching music grades K–Graduate School, since 1969. His present position is at Charlotte Central School in Charlotte, VT, where he teaches grades 5–8. He was voted "Vermont Music Educator of the Year" for 2003–2004.

Tony has been part of the Vermont Arts Assessment Project, the Vermont Music Performance Benchmarking Project, coordinator for revisions in the arts standards for the Vermont Department of Education, and served as President of the Vermont Music Educators' Association.

Tony performs regularly with the Vermont Jazz Ensemble.

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