



# Kjos Band News

NEWS AND INFORMATION FOR BAND EDUCATORS

## The Attributes of A Servant/Leader

by Bruce Pearson

**H**ow can a leader both lead and serve? It appears to be an oxymoron! The answer to this question is at the center of whether a band director is going to be successful or not. More importantly, it will determine whether a band director's students are successful as band members and whether or not they have fond memories of their years in band.

A definition of a good leader is one who provides "inspired influence." A band director's leadership and influence can be positive or negative. We can influence our students to love music and learning or we can influence them to feel exactly the opposite. A *servant/leader* not only leads but serves and in this way brings the best out in his or her students. This requires great wisdom and sensitivity to student needs. To be an effective *servant/leader* one must have both a vision and a plan.

Over the years, I have known many *artist/painters*. In the lower right-hand corner of most paintings is the signature of the artist. By putting their name on the work, they let the world know that they are proud of their work, but it is the art itself which defines them. The artist's talent, style and unique view of the world show through in every brush stroke. Anyone who looks closely at the artist's painting learns something about the artist.

Artists, though, aren't the only ones who put their name on their work. We, who are privileged to be *musician/band directors* and *servant/leaders*, also affix our names to our work. We are identified in programs and on materials sent to our students and their parents. But, like the artist's signature, it does not tell people much about who we are. Our art does that. Art is our music and our students. Anyone who looks closely at our art learns a great deal about us. Do we love good music and do we love our students?

With this in mind, what is the goal for our art? A wise sailor once said, "Unless one knows

to which port they are sailing, no wind is the right wind." This thought underscores the need for an overarching vision for our band and our students. It is safe to say that all *musician/band directors* want to lead their students through musical masterpieces. We introduce students to masterpieces by playing masterpieces — and they exist on every level of difficulty. But in order to begin playing these pieces, the *musician/band director* must recognize that learning these pieces requires great attention to detail — and the best bands are masters of these fundamental details. They concentrate on *tone quality* in every section and at every rehearsal. By focusing on such minute details, great bands make every rehearsal and every concert a *high quality experience*.

The effective *servant/leader* has a plan regarding how to implement his or her *vision*. All activities that are a part of your plan should be driven by your vision. If your vision is to have your students know great musical masterpieces, then your plan would have your band play, listen to and study great masterpieces. If your vision is to have your band play with great sensitivity, then your plan would have you play repertoire that allows for musical sensitivity. If your vision is to have your band be able to express themselves musically, then your plan would have them play music worthy of expression. This vision creates a "big picture" perspective.

This "big picture" perspective also encompasses what is in the best interest of your students. The *musician/band director* thus implements a plan that achieves these "big picture" goals through fundamental exercises drawn from great music and taught in a loving, caring and nurturing environment. The *musician/band director* or *servant/leader's* decisions will not always be popular with students for they rarely have the maturity or patience to see the "big picture," but the results

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will be such that these decision will be respected. *Servant/leaders* lead because they have the maturity, experience, authority, wisdom and sensitivity to provide inspired influence in order that their students will love music, love learning and love each other.

Our name is on our work—but it is our actions and vision which define us. Anyone who looks closely at our students will see this and judge whether we have fulfilled our roles as *servant/leaders*.

## The Perfect Tempo

by Dr. James M. Bankhead

The “right” tempo is said to account for 85% of the effective performance of any piece of music. The “wrong” tempo can destroy music as quickly as anything a conductor can do. So how does one go about finding that “perfect” tempo?

First of all, there is no such thing as the “perfect tempo.” *Get over it!* You will never find it. Your goal should be to find the most appropriate tempo for the music. So let’s examine the wide range of considerations in choosing a tempo and how to make the important decisions that ultimately impact the musical performance.

There are actually two aspects to tempo:

1. The speed or rate of the main pulse of the music. This is usually given in terms of a tempo marking (quarter note = 120,

*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.*

etc.) or a term that gives an approximation of tempo (Andante, Presto, etc.).

2. The other aspect is the speed or rate of the internal pulse and rhythms of the music. Speed here means how many notes are inside the main pulse/beat of the music. Obviously, music with a tempo marking of quarter note = 120 with lots of 16<sup>th</sup> notes will feel faster and busier than the same tempo with nothing but whole notes and half notes.

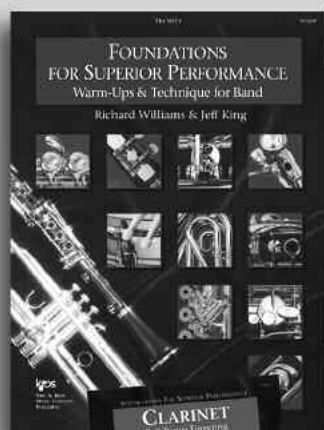
We need to consider both of these important elements of tempo or speed if we are to reach the goal of an appropriate tempo for our music. So how do we accomplish this?

The answer is very simple — it all comes down to these three issues:

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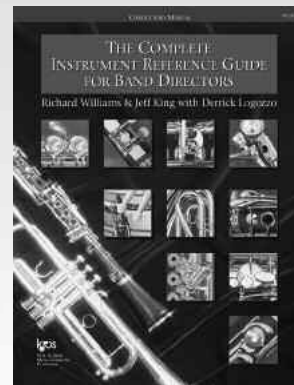
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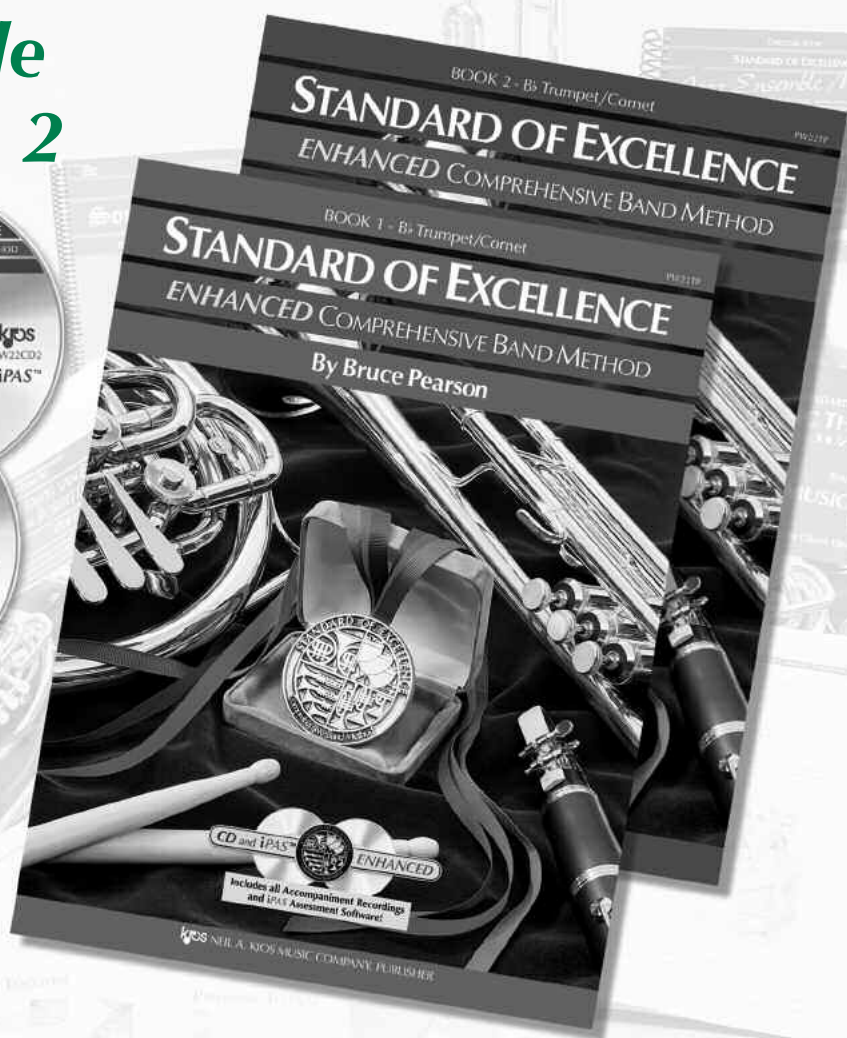
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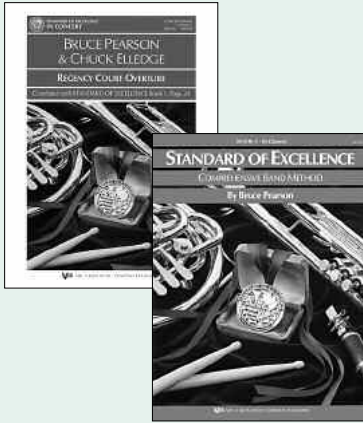
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Since its release with **Book 1** in 1993, **Standard of Excellence** has led the way in addressing the National Standards for Music Education. While using the “draft standards,” the **Standard of Excellence Comprehensive Band Method** was carefully 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 seventy 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.

1. **Does your tempo obscure the complexity of the rhythms, scales, arpeggios, etc.?** Musical clarity must not be sacrificed for the sake of a fast (or slow) tempo. Playing a piece of music at a fast tempo (even if indicated) that destroys musical clarity (clean and exact rhythms) is unacceptable. The conductor must make some adjustment so that the composer’s *ideas* are clearly transmitted. This clarity often requires a slower main pulse/beat than indicated. Following this is the internal speed. The rapid notes or complex rhythms that fill the spaces between the pulses also need to be heard. Fast is not always better and playing too slowly can just as easily kill the music. But watch out, as a seasoned conductor once noted, “Young conductors have a lot to say, they just take too long to say it.”

2. **Can your players play the music at the appropriate tempo?** This is a simple question with a complex answer. Ideally, your tempo will push the first chair players and drag or pull the ones at the back of the sections. The conductor must offer challenges to the players while not destroying confidence and musicality. Knowing what your players are capable of doing is a start. Now, dare to think about what they can do if properly trained and motivated (your job as a conductor). Be honest and realistic. What you are left with is the most appropriate tempo.

3. **Can you (the conductor) control yourself and your ensemble at a given tempo/speed?** Here’s key #1: *To conduct faster tempos you must conduct less, that is to say, you must use fewer and less movements.* As an example, for a very bright/fast  $\frac{4}{4}$  you need only give a down beat and count three because 2 and 4 will happen by themselves (try it). That way you can make good use of your other movements to give cues and help the ensemble as needed. As well, remain mindful of your own strengths and weaknesses. Doing mixed meter and other complex music will be a lot of fun if you have the skills needed to put it together. If you have not yet developed

those skills, don’t punish yourself and your players (and probably your audience) by attempting a piece you cannot play. And key #2: *Avoid subdividing unless it is absolutely, positively required in the music.* Most conductors will slow down too much when they subdivide. Unless there’s no way to avoid it, don’t do it. By subdividing, you are not being clear or helping, in fact, you are probably confusing your players. Consider what it’s like sitting in the ensemble as a player and watching some conductor double-pumping a march or making large, sweeping gestures in a slow movement all the while telling you to play more softly.

Paying attention to these three areas will help you arrive at the most appropriate tempo. It may sound overly simple but it is where you must start. There is just one other thing that I’d strongly recommend. At the first rehearsal of a new selection give the tempos where you’d like to have them performed. The first impression players get of the music sticks with them. Starting slower and then working “up” to tempo is counterproductive. The players will always work better if they know upfront what the performance tempo is. By introducing your students to the appropriate tempo at the first reading, you will give your players a boost and will be well on your way to a great performance!

*Dr. James M. Bankhead is Chairman of the Department of Music at the California State University, Chico — a position he has held for more than 10 years. He is involved with all aspects of the artistic, academic and administrative life of this outstanding institution. Prior to his appointment at CSU, Chico, Dr. Bankhead was Executive Director of the Green Bay Symphony Orchestra and Producer at the Weidner Center for the Performing Arts. He served as Commander/Conductor of the United States Air Force Band in Washington DC 1985–1991 and Deputy Commander/Assistant Conductor of that organization from 1976–1985.*

## *In Loving Memory*



### Robert Elledge 1928 – 2005

Robert Elledge, composer, teacher, husband, and father, passed away on June 29, 2005 at the age of 77. His life began in rural Iowa and music was always a part of his life. After high school, he served in the United States Army where he was a member and assistant conductor of the 74th Army Band. After retiring from the military, he received his Bachelor of Music and Master of Arts degrees from the University of Iowa. He served as Director of Bands for the Rockford, Iowa public schools before moving to Edina, Minnesota, where he taught music at all levels for 28 years. He retired to San Diego, California in 2001 to be near his son's family.

Robert was known for his sense of humor and endless energy. An exemplary educator and musician, his students considered him to be tough but fair, and always willing to give support and encouragement. Robert authored **Band Technique Step by Step** with Donald Haddad in the early 1990s, and thus continued to share his knowledge and joy of music with other teachers and students around the country.

Robert is survived by his wife Mary, his son Charles, his granddaughter Nicole, and his sisters Mary Rumreich and Betty Barnhill.



### Charles E. Forque 1930 – 2005

Charles Eugene Forque, former director of bands Robert E. Lee High School, Baytown, Texas (1952–1978) and Plano Senior High School, Plano, Texas (1987–1990) passed away on July 30, 2005 at the age of 75. Charles was born to Lillian Davis Forque and Asa Lee Forque on June 26, 1930 at Cedar Bayou, Texas. He was raised by his maternal grandparents, Martha Peveto Forque and Seymour Lee Forque. Charles held a Bachelor of Science and a Master of Arts in Music Education from Sam Houston State University. Charles' bands earned 34 Sweepstakes Awards in 36 years of U.I.L. competitions, numerous other awards and championships, and were privileged to have "Doc" Severinson perform 43 concerts with the bands over the years. Joining with authors Bruce Pearson and Gerald Anderson, Charles served as co-author for the **Best in Class** and **Encore for Band** instruction series.

In 1994, Charles and James Thornton developed **Harmonized Rhythms** for band and orchestra, a progressive melodic rhythm study.

Charles is survived by his wife of 53 years, Ednajo, his sister, his only child, Cheryl, her husband Samuel, and his grandchildren, Patrick and Colleen.

## Developing A Well-Balanced Band

by Bruce Pearson

Wherever my travels take me, I hear band directors lamenting their band's limited or unbalanced instrumentation. That is, they would like to have all instrumental parts covered and to have the instruments in their proper proportion. Needless to say, a well-balanced band will sound better and give the band members a more satisfying musical experience. Some bands are well-balanced year after year while others struggle to achieve good instrumental balance. Having a well-balanced band is not an accident. It takes work — lots of it.

The three areas that require attention in order to achieve a well-balanced band are: *recruiting*, *switching instruments* and *retaining*.

### Recruiting

1. Evaluate each child's preference and compatibility in an attempt to give the child the instrument of his or her choice. However, when more than one choice is possible, make every attempt to persuade the child to play the less popular instruments thus promoting balanced instrumentation. "A balanced instrumentation should be the focus of recruiting."<sup>1</sup> A Suggested Instrumentation Form is provided on page 642 of the **Standard of Excellence Book 1, Conductor Score**.

2. Make every effort possible to meet with prospective band students along with their parents/guardians to discuss the benefits and liabilities of choosing any given instrument.

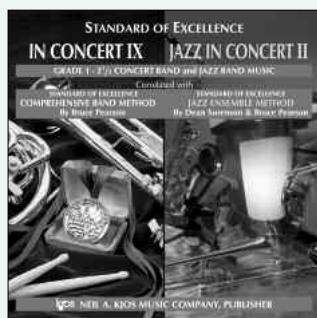
3. Recruit "leaders" to play the less-popular instruments. Leaders are leaders because people follow them. Some of the greatest allies a band director can have are the classroom teachers. Learn from them who the natural leaders in their classrooms are and recruit them to play the less-popular instruments. With student leaders playing less popular instruments you will find it considerably easier to influence other students to play these instruments.

4. Make students and parents aware of the special opportunities afforded to students playing the less-popular instruments. This can best be communicated in an appointment or interview with the parents/guardians and beginning band students prior to the selection of instruments.

5. Raise the visibility of the less-popular instruments. There are, of course, many reasons why students select the instrument they want to play. The more visible instruments (flute, clarinet, trumpet, saxophone and drums) tend to be the more popular ones because of the familiarity students have with them. Try to raise the visibility of the less popular instruments by bringing

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in a featured soloist to play with the high school band. Have the featured soloist “tour” with the high school band to all of the elementary/primary and middle schools and give a “talk” to the students about that instrument.

6. Instrument size often deters players from choosing instruments like the tuba. Many band directors start their future tuba players on smaller “tenor tubas” (baritones or euphoniums) and use the tuba book as their method book. This allows for future tuba players to learn tuba fingerings and to read in the tuba tessitura. Playing a “tenor tuba” will, of course, sound an octave higher than the “bass tuba.” Once students grow in stature they can easily switch to the “bass tuba” (BB $\flat$  tuba).

7. Find ways to transport the larger instruments. Provide or issue luggage carts for instruments such as tenor and baritone saxophones, baritones and euphoniums, and tubas.

8. Have your alto saxophone players play tenor and/or baritone saxophone for a “concert season.”

9. Have your clarinet players play alto and/or bass clarinet for a “concert season.”

### Switching Instruments

Although it is generally better to start students on the instruments they select initially rather than switching them to less-popular instruments, this practice is often required in order to establish and maintain a well-balanced band. While some switches are easy (alto saxophone to tenor or baritone saxophone, and B $\flat$  clarinet to alto and bass clarinet), others such as switching a student from cornet or trumpet to french horn are more difficult and less desirable. The following instrument switches may prove to be necessary in order to achieve good instrumental balance:

Oboe	former clarinet and flute players
Bassoon	former saxophone players
Alto Clarinet	former clarinet or saxophone players
Bass Clarinet	former clarinet or saxophone players
Tenor Saxophone	former alto saxophone or clarinet players
Baritone Saxophone	former alto saxophone or clarinet players
French Horn	former cornet or trumpet players

Baritone/Euphonium	former cornet or trumpet players
Trombone	former cornet or trumpet or euphonium players
Tuba	former cornet or trumpet or euphonium players
Percussion	former flute players

### Retaining Students

All bands experience some dropouts. While some are unavoidable, such as when families move, others can be averted with a little TLC (Tender Loving Care). Dropouts can wreak havoc with the establishment and maintenance of a well-balanced band for many are unpredictable and rarely provide adequate time to adjust.

Many band directors have found it helpful to use The Student Enrollment Record, located on page 641 of the **Standard of Excellence Book 1, Conductor’s Score**, to track student enrollment on every instrument for every grade in school. By using this document, one can easily see where abundance and shortages occur.

Because many of the less-popular instruments are also less visible, special and additional attention to those students playing those instruments may be required and advised. The band director should consider starting ensembles using the less popular instruments. These ensembles may include French horn duets, trios and quartets; double reed ensembles, low brass and low woodwind ensembles. For less experienced students, **Standard of Excellence Festive Ensembles** may be a valuable resource to provide repertoire for these groups. Feature these ensembles at your concerts.

Another event that has helped retain baritone, euphonium and tuba players is the Merry Tuba Christmas. You can find the time and location of the event near you on-line.

While this may sound like a lot of work, the rewards and benefits far outweigh the extra effort because a well-balanced band will sound better and give your band members a more satisfying musical experience.

1. Dvorak, Thomas. *Teaching Music Through Performance in Beginning Band* (Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc. 2001) 28–29.

*For a complete listing of Kjos band publications  
please visit our website: [www.kjos.com](http://www.kjos.com)*



# Beginning Jazz Drumming

by Dave Hagedorn

Here are some basic suggestions that any director can give their beginning jazz drummers that will help them gain the skills necessary for playing with the jazz ensemble. Have them listen to great jazz drummers for ideas and sounds to help develop their own sound. I have provided a small list of great jazz drummers at the end of this article. There is no better way to train a new drummer than to give them access to as many recordings as possible, as their ears are often the best teachers. Also, encourage them to listen to the sounds they are producing. This may sound basic, but most young musicians are so overcome with the excitement (or fear) of playing with the ensemble that they do not take the time to listen to the sounds they are producing. A few questions you might pose to your new drummers include: Is one instrument dominating over the others? Are the sticks and bass drum pedal rebounding freely off the drum heads and cymbals to produce a full tone? Jazz drumming is, for the most part, done with acoustic drums, thus necessitating that drummers develop an awareness of not only their own sound, but how that sound balances with the ensemble as a whole. Have your drummer listen to a live recording of the band and have them analyze how their sound meshes with the band as a whole.

Aside from issues of sound and balance, I have provided below some basic rhythms and techniques that you can use to put your drummer on the road to success.

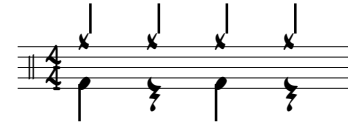
To begin, we will examine the basic swing pattern. First, have your student play quarter notes with their right foot on the bass drum as *softly* as possible with their heel down on the pedal:



Make sure that they feel the pedal rebound freely off the drum head just as if they were playing it with the sticks in their hands. For rock and funk beats, it is permissible to play the pedal directly into the head without rebound, but as they become more accomplished, they should try to always let it rebound.

Next, have them add quarter notes on the ride cymbal with

their right hand. Be sure that they maintain an intense drive while always allowing the stick to rebound naturally off the cymbal:



The student should then add light strokes on the snare drum on beats two and four. This is a basic beat that serves as the main template for everything they will play in the future:



The next step is crucial to developing a swinging jazz feel. Together with the left hand on the snare drum, have the student add their left foot on the hi-hat, playing on beats two and four:



There are two ways to accomplish this. One is by rocking the left foot in an up-and-down, heel-toe action and the other is by keeping the left heel raised slightly off the pedal. For a jazz feel that will blend with acoustic instruments, the heel-toe action is important for your student to learn. For driving rock and ethnic grooves, the student can lift their heel off the pedal. To successfully do the heel-toe movement, have the student pick the heel up slightly (one or two inches) before playing and then have it down on beat one, up on beat two, as the toe depresses the pedal, creating a tight 'chick' sound on beat two. Repeat this pattern on beats three and four. The toe should always be in contact with the pedal. **Note: This is not easy and will require much practice!**

Have your student practice the above four-limb pattern along with recordings of great jazz musicians. I would suggest

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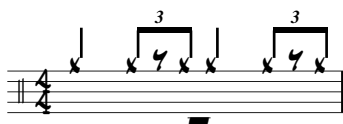
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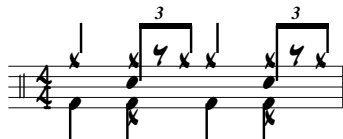


slow to medium tempos of big bands such as Count Basie's, Duke Ellington's, Woody Herman's and Glenn Miller's bands, and for small groups, start with "Kind of Blue", by Miles Davis. Have your drummer listen to what the drummers on the recordings are doing in addition to what they are playing. Have them try to emulate these patterns. They will soon discover that the ride pattern in the right hand and rhythms on the snare drum can be quite a bit more complicated than what they started with.

The basic swing pattern on the ride cymbal sounds like 'ding, ding-a-ding, ding, ding-a-ding' and consists of a quarter note followed by two swung eighth notes played over and over again:



This rhythm is the most important rhythm in jazz music and should be practiced until your student is comfortable with it. Here is the entire, four-limb pattern updated to include the swung eighths on the ride:



Be sure that your student always includes their feet in the above pattern. As stated earlier, your student drummers should listen to master jazz drummers to hear the most common variations on the above patterns. They should practice what they hear, and then try to understand how these rhythms will look when written (an exercise which is an effective homework assignment). They can work more patterns out by using any of the snare exercises (played only with the left hand) from their **Standard of Excellence** books. As always, these patterns should be integrated with the feet and ride patterns. Students can begin their drum set instruction by playing the snare drum patterns in **Standard of Excellence** while playing the bass drum with their foot pedal. Have them start with exercises using only quarter notes and rests, and then add eighth note rhythms later. Make sure your new

drummers are aware that in printed jazz music, if it says 'swing' at the beginning of the piece, all of the eighth notes are supposed to be swung. When explaining the 'swing' rhythm a concise definition is: to play two eighth-notes as if they were the first and third notes of a triplet.

As regards the bass drum, have your students keep in mind that the bass drum should be keeping a steady four-beat pattern and should also be softer dynamically than the other elements of the drum set. The bass drum should be felt more than heard in jazz timekeeping. In rock and some ethnic rhythm patterns, the bass drum is at the forefront, but for playing jazz grooves, they should keep it very soft, just 'feathering' the pedal on the head. The ride cymbal and hi-hat are what drive a jazz group. The snare drum is used primarily for adding accents and punctuations to keep the groove interesting and exciting.

When your students do directed listening exercises have them research who the drummers are on the tunes. Then have them look for other recordings and transcriptions of those artists' work. Drummers such as Jo Jones with Count Basie, Sonny Greer with Duke Ellington, and Philly Joe Jones with Miles Davis make great drumming role models. As your students becomes more comfortable with the basics, encourage them to check out Kenny Clarke and Art Blakey. For even more advanced concepts, have them listen to drummers such as Mel Lewis, Peter Erskine, and John Riley.

Though it may seem daunting to guide a drummer from beginner to rhythm section stalwart, the rewards are many. First, have them learn the basic patterns described in this article. While working on these fundamentals be sure to have them listening (guided and on their own) to recordings of great jazz drummers and recordings of their own playing (with and without the band). As the basic techniques become second nature, have them start incorporating ideas gleaned from their listening experiences and soon you will find your students developing a style and sensibility all their own.

*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.*

## Improvisation: Learning Chords


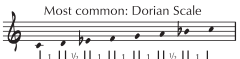


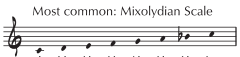

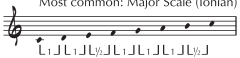

by Dean Sorenson

**H**ow does a student learn to "play the changes?" Once a player is comfortable playing a single scale over an entire progression, how does he or she take the next step? Learning the chords is the first step in the process of becoming a more mature improviser. Learning the chords is defined as understanding how all of the chords in a given progression are constructed, and also being able to hear when the chord changes happen during the solo chorus. Students will take a dramatic leap forward in their soloing ability when they understand how chords are

constructed, and when they learn to hear when chords change in a progression.

The first step for the student is to gain a thorough understanding of how each chord in a given progression is constructed. In order to do this it is necessary to understand the meaning of the various chord symbols and to translate the chord tones into arpeggios that can be played on the instrument. These chords must then be committed to memory and become a part of the "improviser's tool box" that can be drawn upon at any time during a solo.

When most of us studied harmony in music school, the basic harmonic element was the triad. While triads certainly exist in jazz, the vast majority of jazz harmony is based on seventh chords. These seventh chords are represented in a form of shorthand known as chord symbols. Understanding the meaning of the chord symbols is the first step in truly understanding a given chord progression. While there are many texts available that offer exhaustive listings of the various symbols, there is a table on the inside back cover of the **Standard of Excellence Advanced Jazz Ensemble Method** that lists the three most

Chord Example (C root)	Scales Used with This Chord	Compared to Major Scale with Same Tonic Note
	<p>Most common: Dorian Scale</p>  <p>Alternate: Natural Minor Scale (Aeolian)</p>  <p>► Blues scales are sometimes used when soloing over minor seventh chords.</p>	<p>3rd scale degree down a half step 7th scale degree down a half step</p> <p>3rd scale degree down a half step 6th scale degree down a half step 7th scale degree down a half step</p>
	<p>Most common: Mixolydian Scale</p>  <p>► Blues scales are sometimes used when soloing over dominant seventh chords.</p>	<p>7th scale degree down a half step</p>
	<p>Most common: Major Scale (Ionian)</p>  <p>Alternate: Lydian Scale</p> 	<p>4th scale degree up a half step</p>

common seventh chords, their construction, and also the scales most commonly associated with them. Many times, different chord symbols can mean the same thing. Many of these chordal homophones are also listed on this table.

Students should begin their study of chords by arpeggiating each of the chords in a given progression. These arpeggios can begin with simple half notes and quarter notes, and it is easiest to begin them in root position. If necessary, make certain the arpeggios are transposed properly for a given instrument. For example, a concert B $\flat$ 7 chord is a C7 chord on a tenor sax or trumpet, and a G7 chord on alto or baritone saxophone. Students should practice these arpeggios along with a metronome or recorded accompaniment to make certain that the tempo stays consistent. If necessary, slow the tempo down considerably in order to keep it consistent. A *consistent* slower tempo is far preferable to an *inconsistent* faster tempo. Increased tempo will come soon enough provided there is sufficient discipline at slower tempos.

Unlike practicing arpeggios as a part of an instrumental technique exercise, the purpose here is to have students memorize the pitches that make up each chord, and to internalize them to a point where they can be drawn upon instantly when improvising. In order to do this, it is imperative that the arpeggios be applied directly to the chord progression of the tune. Practicing arpeggios within the context of a tune is the most direct way to begin teaching students to play chord changes. There are numerous ways students can practice arpeggios within the context of a tune. When doing this sort of practice, students will

ideally be playing along with an accompaniment groove of the chord progression.

Begin by having your students play the arpeggios using very simple rhythms (half notes and quarter notes) over the progression. Be sure the students recognize that the chord tones change as the chords themselves are changing. Encourage students to keep the rhythm as consistent as possible, memorize the available chord tones, and have them work on being able to *hear* where the chords change. Let their ears tell them when the changes happen, not their eyes.

Up until now, students have done very little actual improvising. They are familiarizing themselves with a set of pitches which can then be applied to the changes when they *do* begin to improvise. In order to further their comfort level with the chord tones, as well as introduce some level of improvisation into their practice, begin having them improvise over the chord progression, but limit them to using chord tones only. This sort of restriction will help to further enforce the available chord tones in their minds and will help develop rhythmic creativity, as they will have a limited number of available pitches.

When first improvising, have the students use solely roots over the entire progression. This exercise makes it very clear where the chord changes happen, and helps to instill the harmonic rhythm in the their ear. Next, have students add the third to each chord. Improvising over the entire progression using only roots and thirds still puts the harmonic rhythm at the forefront, but gives the student a few more pitches to work with. As their comfort level rises, add the fifths, and then finally the sevenths of each chord. By adding the different chord tones in this way you further internalize the construction of each chord in the student's ear and increase their understanding of how each chord fits in the context of the larger progression.

Although this teaching technique can be applied to any tune, there are certain kinds of tunes that work better than others, especially for those students that are at the beginning stages of improvisation. Tunes with fewer chord changes work best, or tunes that have few chords making up the entire progression. Fewer chords means fewer arpeggios to learn and a quick transition to the actual act of improvisation. A slower harmonic rhythm, especially one where chords last two to four bars, allow students a bit more time to find the correct notes.

A step-by-step method for teaching chord-based improvisation, as described above, will help students create a foundation for successful improvisation without burdening them with too much material too quickly. It will lead to more varied and interesting solos and a more complete musician.

*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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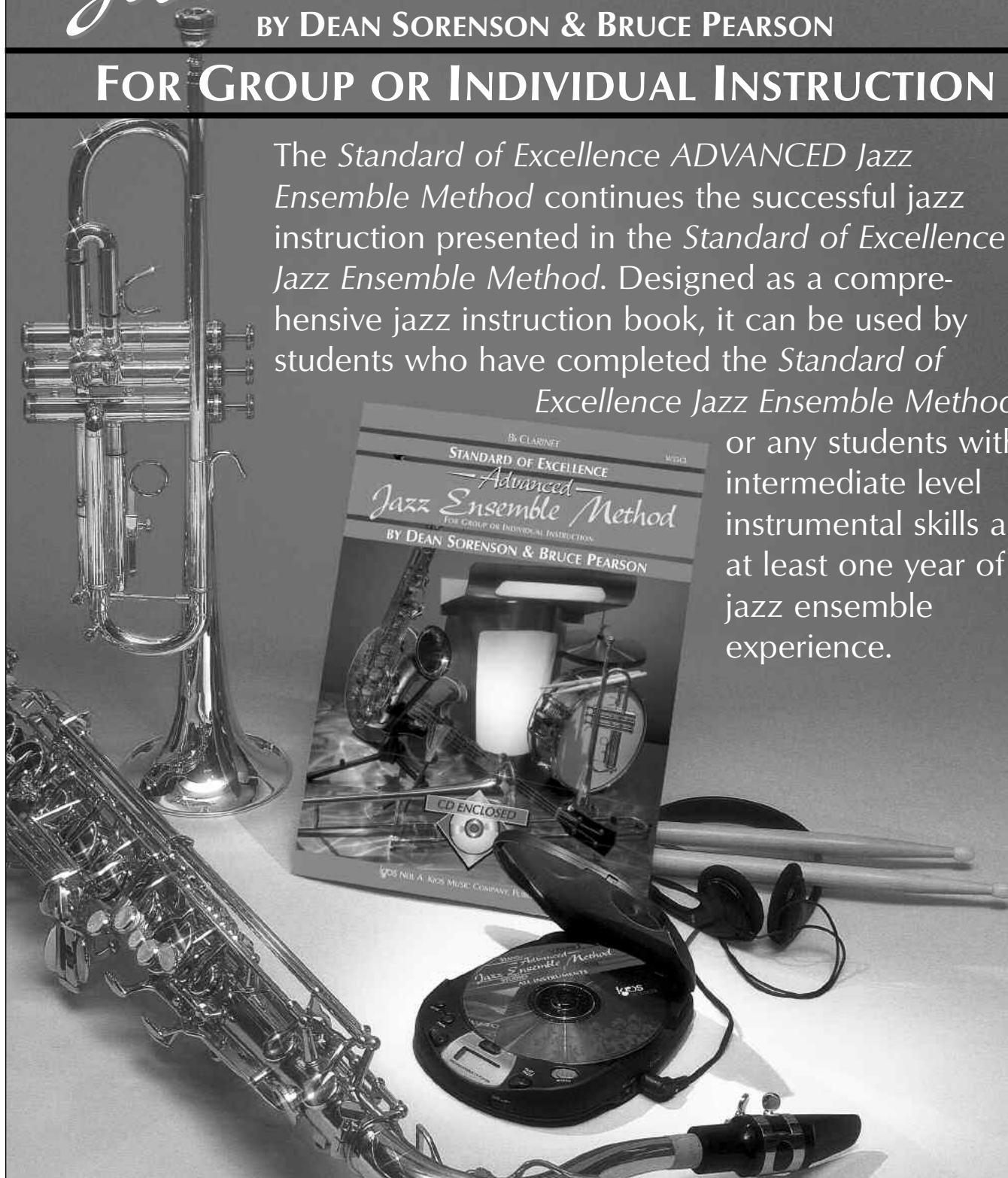
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