

Consulting + Mentoring = Satisfaction

Adan Salazar

I will try to explain the reasons that, after retiring from teaching, I decided to continue to share my knowledge of music and experience the satisfaction which all band directors seek. I will also share my experience and approach in helping young band directors as a mentor and consultant.

In 1952 I organized the first high school band in San Isidro, Texas. San Isidro is located in Starr County. This school is in a very remote area in our state, but is rich in oil, gas and minerals. I had no experience in teaching and a student's-only knowledge I gained while serving as a bandsman in an Army Field Band and playing in a dance band. So I decided to seek the knowledge from experienced band directors and these became my mentors at this early stage of my musical career. They never visited my band hall, but I visited their schools and observed their teaching methods. These mentors include Bryce Taylor at Three Rivers and Alice, James Murphy at Brownsville, Eddie Galvan at Corpus Christi, L.M Snavelly at McAllen, Marion Busby at Weslaco, and Ralph Burford at Edinburg. Whenever possible, I would make it a point to hear and see them rehearse

their band, attend their concerts and UIL contests. I give credit to my mentors for giving me help and inspiration to continue in my career.

Through the years that followed my bands were successful in UIL events and younger band directors started visiting my band hall as I had done in the beginning of my career.

After teaching 33 years in the public schools, I retired in 1985 from the Northeast ISD in San Antonio. I started to substitute for other band directors and to serve as a tape clinician. I also got involved in teaching and organizing bands in several of the parochial schools in San Antonio.

While visiting various schools across the area, I began to notice that some school districts had more advantages than others. Some had better instruments, parental backing, accessories, budget and private tutoring. At this point in my career, I realized

that I wanted to help all directors and students achieve higher goals regardless of their available resources. I wanted to carry the baton and help other band

directors improve their teaching methods and develop outstanding music programs.

I realize now that I feel a great deal of satisfaction from the mentoring work I have done over the past 22 years. The experience has been fulfilling and I have have developed some good ways to successfully consult in music programs.

There are some basic fundamentals in music that must be stressed to young band directors from the beginning but a mentor must be careful how these changes are presented. Any change or suggestion of new organization must be introduced very tactfully and include examples and reasons for the change. When working with students, a mentor must get to their level and use whatever method they can to get the point across.

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The Fundamentals

Physical Requirements

- Sitting position (posture) and proper way to hold the instrument.
- Position of the stand so student and director make eye contact.
- Embouchure in playing the instrument.

Playing

Emphasize how important it is to know scales since all music comes from scales. Stress the importance of being able to play scales and to play them in different patterns. This will check the articulation of how students start and end a note. See Diagram I below.

Tone

Consider tone to be the most important element in music for a musician to have and develop. If the tone or the sound is not pleasing to you, it will not be pleasing to the listener. The only way to develop a good tone is to practice long tones using a crescendo and diminuendo style soft to full < > in volume.

To attain this, students must have proper breathing, taking a deep breath to the lower diaphragm. I always tell my private lesson students to practice playing to the corner of a room so they can hear the production of their tone. There is no end to developing a good tone. If you develop a good tone, you will also have a good vibrato.

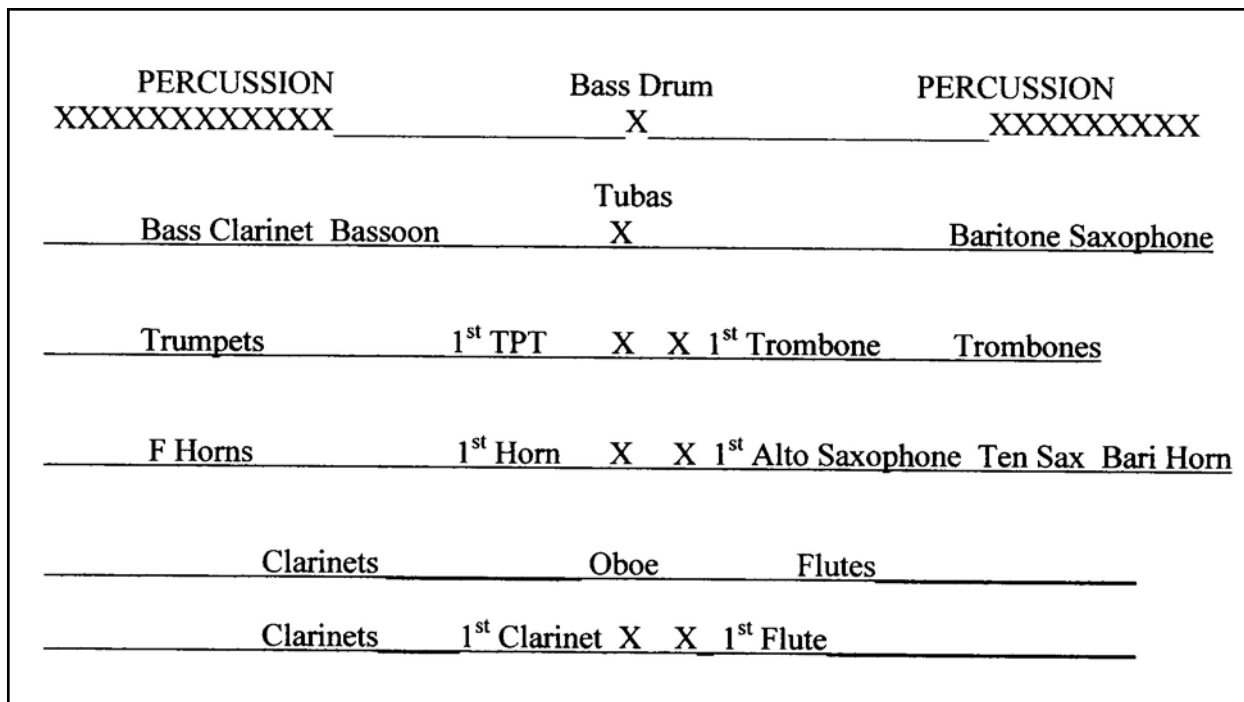
Diagram I

Handwritten musical notation on four staves, all in 4/4 time and B-flat major (two flats). The notation includes:

- Staff 1: A scale starting on G4, labeled "Use CONCERT Bb SCALE". The notes are G, A, Bb, C, D, E, F, G, A, Bb, C, D, E, F, G. The word "ARTICULATION" is written at the end of the staff.
- Staff 2: A scale starting on G4, labeled "PATTERNS". The notes are G, A, Bb, C, D, E, F, G, A, Bb, C, D, E, F, G.
- Staff 3: A scale starting on G4, labeled "etc.". The notes are G, A, Bb, C, D, E, F, G, A, Bb, C, D, E, F, G.
- Staff 4: A scale starting on G4, labeled "SINGLE", "DOUBLE", "TRIPLE", and "Quadruple". The notes are G, A, Bb, C, D, E, F, G, A, Bb, C, D, E, F, G.

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Diagram II - Seating Position of Band



Seating Position of the Band

The placement of instruments in concert and marching formation is very important in performing. I learned this while serving in the Army Band. In Diagram II you will notice that all the first chair players are sitting in the center, directly in front of the director. The bass drum player is also aligned in front of the director. It is easier to tune all first chair section leaders and then have sections tune to the section leader.

Students should learn to use their ears and to listen to one another while playing.

I always teach my beginners to count while their foot goes down on the beat and up on the off-beat. I let the student put his foot on top of mine and we pat the rhythm together.

Tuning

I always tune to my first chair clarinet player. During the first meeting with the band, I demonstrate how to do this with two clarinet players—pulling barrel out on one of the players and then having the other play an open G at the same time. Students should hear how bad this sounds played together. Then I gradually push the barrel on one clarinet player as they play together again. I instruct the students to listen as the two clarinet sounds gradually come together to sound like one. Students should learn to use their ears and to listen to one another while playing.

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Diagram III

Handwritten musical notation for a Bb concert scale, slow, for various instruments. The notation is written on five staves. The first staff is for Bb CLARINETS and TUNING BASS CLARINETS. The second staff is for Flute - oboe and FLUTES. The third staff is for (ALTO-BARITONE SAX) TENDR SAX and Bb TRUMPETS. The fourth staff is for F-HORN and TROMBONE - BARITONE - TUBA - BASSOON. The fifth staff is empty. Below the staves, the text reads: CRIS-CROSS (1st chairs) PLAYING Concert Bb SCALE SLOW.

Tuning (continued)

They should learn to never play out, but to blend and balance with the entire section.

Diagram III shows how to tune the rest of the instruments. I never tune to one note because students can start to favor a note. This will work if you teach students to play scales correctly and to remember that a Bb concert scale sounds the same in any band room.

I never use the strobe tuner for tuning. We as band directors must teach students to use the tuner God gave them: their ears! We don't take a tuner to the stage or marching field when performing. Orchestras tune to an oboe or violin while jazz musicians tune to piano; neither use an electric strobe tuner.

Counting - Rhythm

Here again I have to convince students and band directors of my concept of this aspect of teaching music—do not use the electric metronome. I always teach my beginners to count while their foot goes down on the beat and up on the off-beat. I let the student put his foot on top of mine and we pat the rhythm together.

I believe that God gave us a metronome—our foot. Some conductors pat their foot while conducting. Professional jazz musicians pat their feet. I believe that musicians *might* develop correct rhythm and pulse when using the electric metronome, but I find that it is too strict. Music should have expression, feeling, interpretation and must flow. An electric metronome restricts a musician's liberty. Personally, I do not enjoy a band that sounds like a machine.

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We all also know that the three basic elements of music are rhythm, melodic pitch and harmonic pitch. We can teach students with the metronome to be on correct pitch at correct time, but we must also teach students where the rhythm is going and when to hear the next beat. I repeat that we should teach rhythm in such a way that students will be able to interpret music with a flow.

Selection of Music and Tempo Marking

The mistakes young band directors make in selecting music are the following:

1. Selecting music that does not fit the ability of their band. I suggest directors base their selection according to the strong and weak sections of the band.
2. Selecting music that they hear on CDs performed by professional players.
3. Selecting music that they hear other bands play.

In selecting music, it is not what you play, but how you play it.

Tempo markings are a suggested tempo marked in music. I suggest young directors *not* stress tempo markings in music. The melody should determine the tempo.

I have been a member of TMEA and TBA for 56 years. During these years I have heard many bands and I have gained respect for many fine directors.

I have written an approach that has helped me mentor other band directors and students. I feel a great deal of personal satisfaction when I see that musicians who have been members of my band are successful or that band directors' bands that I consulted have

received their first Division I rating or Sweepstakes Award. I hope to continue to mentor and to feel this satisfaction.

The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." We should have faith in the students we teach and we will have the satisfaction of being successful.

In closing, as the saying goes, "Band directors don't die, they just blow away." I am close to that blowing and I can hear the Crescendo, Vivace, Presto and Accelerando coming. I am just hoping that God will make a Ritenuto.

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