

# Featured Clinician

Tom Bennett, 2010 TBA Convention/Clinic

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## *Don't Just Warm-up*

*Use this time for Ensemble Skill Development as well. It's not just Concert F anymore!*

There is little argument, at least among Texas band directors, that there are more outstanding public school bands in Texas than anywhere else on the planet. Whether this fact can be substantiated or not does not deny the reality that we really do have a lot of great band programs. The reasons for so many premier programs throughout our state include everything from teaching excellence to great district and parental support. The performance outcomes of both our marching and concert ensembles also detail a pattern of outstanding rehearsal organization and ensemble teaching techniques on the part of the director. One of the consistent patterns that I observe as I visit a number of our state's exemplary concert band programs is a commitment to working on ensemble skill concepts during the initial part of the rehearsal.

I am honored to have been asked by TBA to do a series of presentations on ensemble skill development at our July 2010 Convention/Clinic. These sessions will approach this initial part of our band rehearsal from the belief that many tonal, musical, ensemble, and some technical requirements of our programs can

be addressed conceptually. These concepts, through use of various exercises, can be practiced at the beginning of each rehearsal and then transferred to the rehearsal of our performance literature.

The three sessions that will be presented are graduated in difficulty relating to both tonal control and mental focus. Each clinic builds on the first and would be most beneficial in programs with good vertical alignment. The first two presentations, however, can stand alone depending on the age and development of the ensemble. The third and final session gives examples of exercises and mental demands that would be difficult to achieve without some previous experience.

Here is a brief description of each clinic session:

**Session 1 – Fundamental concepts for ensemble skill development for the young band (So easy a Caveman can do it.)**

*Description:* A brief overview of the relevance of exercises that might

be employed in the development of skillful ensemble playing during a student's early years in band.

The session will include discussion on the values of a conceptual approach to ensemble playing as well as examples of various exercises that might be used over an extended period of rehearsals. Three 10 - 12 minute examples of possible variations of exercises will be presented.

**Session 2 – Conceptual ensemble skill development for groups with one to three years experience working on ensemble fundamentals (This can be habit forming, you might want to stop now.)**

*Description:* More advanced exercises and advanced variations that are a logical continuation from session one. Two fifteen minute examples of ensemble skill development exercises for use in daily rehearsal will be performed and discussed. The beginnings of more advanced tools for conceptual development will be introduced.

*(continued)*



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### **Session 3 - Concepts and ensemble fundamentals for the advanced band and patient yet persistent teacher (An acceptable way to torture your students—don't try this at home.)**

*Description:* Very advanced exercises that are both new and variations of the exercises and concepts introduced earlier sessions. The difficulty factor and student responsibility are noticeably increased, as



**Ensemble Skill Development sessions are based on the belief that many tonal, musical, ensemble, and some technical requirements of our programs can be addressed conceptually.**

**Tom Bennett will present his clinics on Monday at 10:45 am & 4:00 pm and Tuesday at 2:45 pm**

well as the overall conceptual use and benefits of the various fundamentals.

Members of the NEISD Reagan and Johnson High School bands will assist at all three sessions. I would like to thank the students involved as well as their directors, Levi Chavis and Jarrett Lipman, for the time and energy that they are dedicating to help prepare for these presentations.

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### **TBA 2010 Featured Composer and Featured Clinician are sponsored by The Foundation for Music Education and Music Across Texas**

*Tom Bennett retired recently after eight years as Director of Bands and Associate Professor of Music in the Moores School of Music at the University of Houston. He holds degrees from Texas Tech University and Southern Methodist University. Prior to his appointment at the University of Houston, Mr. Bennett taught in the Spring, Lubbock, Round Rock, LaMarque, Plano, Spring Branch and Richardson school districts. From 1988 to 1994, he was Director of Bands at East Texas State University.*

*The J. J. Pearce and Spring high school bands under Mr. Bennett's directorship were honored with appearances at the Midwest Clinic in Chicago in 1986 and 1996 respectively. While director at J. J. Pearce High School, his band was named the Texas Class 5A Honor Band. His Spring High School Symphonic Band was named runner-up for Texas 5A Honor Band in 1994. Mr. Bennett is the recipient of the Leadership and Achievement award from the Texas Music Educators Association and the Ross Perot Outstanding Teacher Award from the Richardson Independent School District. In 2005, the Texas Bandmasters Association named Mr. Bennett the Texas Bandmaster of the Year.*

*During his tenure at the University of Houston, Mr. Bennett's ensembles performed at the Texas Music Educator's Convention and the Southwest Regional Convention of the College Band Director's National Association. In 2003 the International Grainger Society awarded him the Grainger Medallion for Distinctive Contribution for his work on a CD of transcriptions done by Percy Grainger. This CD was the fourth in a series begun by Mr. Eddie Green and the Moores School of Music Wind Ensemble. This fourth volume was honored with a prestigious Grammy List Nomination in 2004. In February of 2006, a CD of Vittorio Giannini's band works performed by the Moores School of Music Wind Ensemble was released internationally by the Naxos Recording Company.*

*Professional affiliations the Texas Bandmasters Association, College Band Directors National Association, Texas Music Educators Association, and Phi Beta Mu, honorary band fraternity. Mr. Bennett is active nationally as a clinician and adjudicator for both marching and concert band. He and his wife, Suzanna, reside in Friendswood, Texas. Their two children, Tommy and Teresa, are business professionals, and both reside in Dallas, Texas.*