

# Lessons Learned

**Dr. Gary Garner**

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I received an email message today from Mike Brashear, asking me to write an article for the June issue, previewing my clinics for the upcoming TBA. First, let me say how honored I am to be invited by President Richard Herrera to be the featured clinician. I hope I'm up to the task.

In his message, Mike mentioned I'd written an article for the magazine several years ago. I'm a bit embarrassed to admit I don't remember it (encroaching Alzheimer's, perhaps?). So, I did a little digging around on the computer and found it. I'm happy to report I'm in complete agreement with everything in it. But one thing I found especially interesting was something I'd appended at the end that didn't appear in the original article. At the risk of offending a lot of people, not to mention further exposing my antiquarian ways, I offer it to you now.

*I just stumbled across this article, which I'd written a couple of years or more ago, and while I know it's unlikely it'll ever be seen by other eyes, I nevertheless feel compelled to exorcise one more curmudgeonly thought that weighs heavily on me. What's wrong with the word "band"? It strikes me as the height of irony that so many highfalutin professional orchestra conductors routinely refer to their ensembles as "the band," yet a great many of us who actually conduct (gasp!) bands avoid the use of that dreaded word at all costs. Does the use of term wind ensemble (the first to leave the reservation) or wind orchestra, or wind symphony, or (insert your own choice from the many others available) really confer more musical respectability than that time-honored word "band"? I think not, and I'm proud to claim the title. I'll shout it from the rooftops: I'm a BAND DIRECTOR! And oh yeah, if you*

*absolutely must use the word, be sure and put "wind" in front of it. That way we eliminate any chance of confusing it with, say, a rock band, a rubber band, or maybe a wedding band. So many possibilities.*

The only thing I would add to that is, there's at least one thing to say for having reached my current superannuated state: you don't feel much constraint about speaking your mind.

Now that we have that out of the way, on to the clinic. I'm indebted to Mike for allowing me to use the prosaic title, "Lessons Learned in 50 Years of Band Directing"—Sessions 1, 2 and 3. I truly did try to come up with something catchy but, alas, that was the best I could do.

Truth be told, the title's not altogether accurate. I only spent 48 years in the classroom but I continue to remain active with and passionate about — hold on, here it comes — band. So I'm not sure if that number 50 overstates or understates the facts.

I've got four Powerpoint (actually, Keynote) presentations dealing with things I've learned and have come to believe over these past 50+ years. There are a number of video clips of real kids that I hope will enhance the presentation and make some of the points I attempt to make a little more meaningful.

You can expect to hear about the typical stuff: tone production, pitch, balance, rhythm, expressive playing, and all the other usual suspects. Part of it will relate to what has fairly recently become matters of

**Dr. Gary Garner,  
2014 TBA Featured Clinician,  
will present  
"Lessons Learned in  
50 Years of Band Directing"  
Monday, July 28 at 8:15 a.m.  
Tuesday, July 29 at 9:30 a.m.  
Tuesday, July 29 at 4:00 p.m.**

## Lessons Learned

great interest to me. It stems from hearing an interview a while back with the late Russell Ackoff of the U. of Pennsylvania in which he made a couple of statements that really caught my ear. “What is the worst way to learn?” he asked. The answer: putting a bunch of people in a room and having someone stand up in front and talk to them. Then he asked, “What’s the best way to learn?” By teaching someone else. “Of course,” I thought. Who among us hasn’t felt, especially in the early years that we learned more than the students?

I’ve tried with various groups in various ways to put this idea into practice. My conclusion? It works! And the kids have great fun doing it.

I hope this is enough. I’d first thought I should offer a little biographical information, but decided against it because it smacks a bit too much of narcissism. (Let it be known that I go to great lengths never to even come close to a reflecting pool.)

See you in San Antonio!