Ensemble Skill Development—
Bands 1 to 3 Years Experience

CLINICIAN:

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DEMONSTRATION GROUP FROM NEISD:

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MARCHING SHOW CONCEPTS

JULY 25-28, 2010

HENRY B. GONZALEZ CONVENTION CENTER

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

DON'T JUST WARM-UP!

USE THIS TIME FOR ENSEMBLE SKILL DEVELOPMENT AS WELL

IT'S NOT JUST CONCERT F ANYMORE!

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

A few personal opinions based on many years of observation (most of them lately), and lots of mistakes (mine). Think about the following non-playing concepts to teach. These are directly related to a student's individual and ensemble performance success. Emphasize these concepts not as student choices but as learned skills.

1) Listening skills
   a) How frequently does someone play the wrong exercise after instructions?
   b) Try to limit bits of instruction to no more than two pieces of information.
   c) Ask students to repeat back to you at least the concept of your instructions if not verbatim.
   d) Try **not** to say pay attention.
   e) Try to develop some method of rewarding good listening skills.

2) Eye contact as a skill
   a) Ask students to look up at you or a central point after a fundamental is learned well.
   b) Practice looking up in music.
      1) Look up until uncomfortable.
      2) Look up in a set amount of measures.
   c) Be aware when not looking at instructor/conductor might be a cultural issue.

3) Mental focus as a skill
   a) Occasionally do an exercise/musical excerpt where the students stop when his/her mind wanders.
   b) Help students be aware when they don't know what they are doing – **STOP PLAYING AT THAT POINT.**

Tools --- Procedures --- Goals – Outcomes

1) Tools – Breathing / Posture / Hand Position / Body Texture / Articulation / Vowel sound / Be still
   a) These items are all essential for highest quality, efficient tone production.
   b) Exaggerate these items.

2) Procedure – Students should exhibit exact knowledge of the structure and execution of each exercise.

3) Goals – What are we trying to accomplish as individuals and as an ensemble?

4) Outcomes -- Was our goal(s) achieved? Input is important. from both director and students.

TWO 15/20-MINUTE EXAMPLES OF BEGINNING ENSEMBLE TECHNIQUE EXERCISES

A 45 to 55 minute period is assumed. There should be a major emphasis on several things at this point:

1) Clear understanding of procedure (can't really do anything else without this)

2) Listening skills – Eye contact – Mental focus (can't do 2 or 3 without listening skills & focus)

3) Use of tools

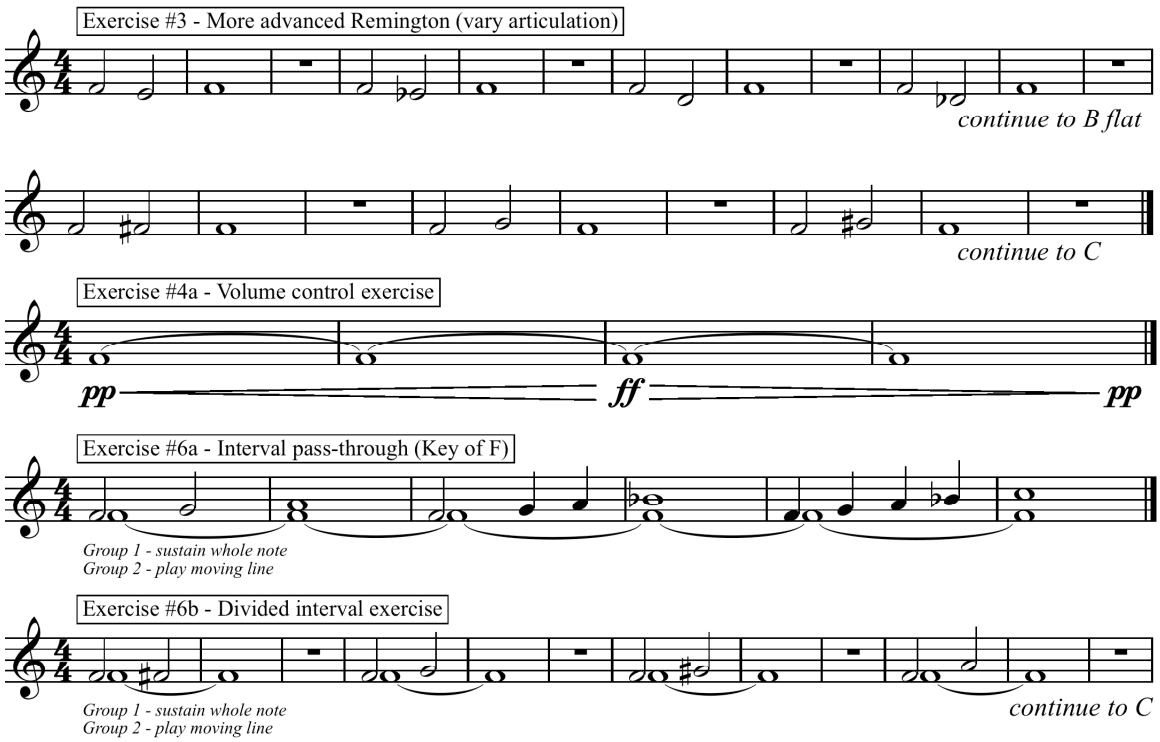
4) Unified concept of goals/outcomes

Example 1 – Advanced seventh grade into ninth grade depending on ability level

1) Breathing – standing and sitting
    a) Through the nose for relaxation – through the mouth for practical application
    b) More emphasis on quicker breathing for fast tempos – vary speed and counts for inhale
    c) Begin talking about a breathing plan if you have not already done so
2) Singing
    a) Concert F – scale pattern
    b) Interval of a 5th and perhaps major triad – split for 5ths
    c) Be creative
3) Concert F
    a) Models – one on an instrument / section / individual addition
    b) Try not to be noisier as you add
    c) Four counts on with model then everyone for four counts
4) Lip vibrations on Remington exercise - they must practice these at home or don't work on this
    a) Whole notes back and fourth between brass and woodwind / down a fifth and up a fifth
    b) Brass hum while ww's play
    c) Play exercise together on instruments
5) F descending/ascending exercise
    a) As in pervious examples but extending more into upper register, i.e. – clarinets to D or E; horns to High G; oboes to C etc.
    b) Do two-note drill each way, then in half notes without rest
    c) Do bottom octave down and up in half notes without stopping
6) Simple chorale
    a) Subdivide
    b) Sing
    c) Individual lines

Example 2 – Same level (give or take) as example 1 – just a variation of exercises

1) Breathing – just sitting
    a) Essentially as example 1 – leave out breathing through the nose
    b) Add articulation
2) Concert F four counts on and off – models for balance
    a) Add four touching notes or other articulations
    b) Notes other than F
3) Remington
    a) Half-Half-Whole-Whole rest then continue
    b) Down & up to 5th or more
    c) Do models
    d) Add articulation
    e) Sing
4) Volume exercise
    a) Concert F for 16 counts – crescendo from PP to FF in 8 counts then back to PP
    b) Do same exercise on different notes or several notes of mid-register scale
5) Articulation series
    a) Whole note through 16ths, touching and lifted with whole rest in between
    b) Exercise without rests
    c) Play on a different note
    d) Do with crescendo and diminuendo
6) Interval exercises
    a) Pass through intervals in key of F
    b) Divided interval exercise with or without exchange

MUSICAL EXAMPLES – SESSION 2

EXAMPLE 2