



# Laying the Foundation for Stronger Fundamentals and Ensemble Skills

**CLINICIAN:**

**Jeff King**

**DEMONSTRATION GROUP:**

**NEISD Driscoll MS Band, Richard Gonzalez-Director**

**SPONSOR: KJOS MUSIC**

## Texas Bandmasters Association 2010 Convention/Clinic



**JULY 25-28, 2010**

**HENRY B. GONZALEZ CONVENTION CENTER  
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS**

# Laying the Foundations for Stronger Fundamentals and Ensemble Skills

*JEFF KING, PRESENTER*

*DRISCOLL MS BAND  
RICHARD GONZALEZ, DIRECTOR  
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July 2010  
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San Antonio, Texas

# Laying the Foundations for Stronger Fundamentals and Ensemble Skills

From the 1<sup>st</sup> note of rehearsal to the working of literature, the exercises & studies in your daily drill should allow the students to warm-up both physically & mentally. Ideally, these studies should build playing skills, listening skills & other musical concepts, which will transfer to any performance setting.

## Clinic Goals:

Through discussion and demonstration from the Driscoll MS Band, we will explore some of the many different ways to utilize the book, Foundations for Superior Performance, for a more effective & efficient daily routine.

## Considerations:

Level of band  
Time considerations (time of year, length of class, attention) 25% or more on daily drill  
Goals & expectations defined for each exercise (director & student)  
Cafeteria Plan – balanced diet/daily drill/concepts

Plan/design your warm-ups and daily drill to your band's needs  
Don't put too much on your tray – balance drill & music  
Prioritize what you want/need to work on

Set up – room environment

## Importance of Tone:

*“An idiomatic appropriate tone color is very important. Most of what I define as sub-musical is linked by what I would call the ‘quality of sound.’ Whenever I stop in rehearsal, because of concerns below the musical level, it is usually to remind students of work we already have done in developing the quality of tone or the sound. This becomes a consistent underlying theme in my teaching; maybe it is the cause for which one should stop a group”.*



Donald Casey, Dean of the School of Music DePaul University

Developing characteristic tone qualities in your ear  
Role models of good tone – live demonstrations, recordings (iTunes, Pandora, YouTube ...)  
Define the kind of sound you want for your students & continue to develop – be diligent in this area  
Goal is to have at least one good ‘tone model’ in each section of the band  
The most important part of warming up is listening to your sound & then developing it

*“When a note sounds beautiful, it is in tune (and vice versa)” Adolph Herseth*

*“The sound you have in your mind is the sound you will make.”*



John Paynter  
Former Director of Bands  
Northwestern University ('53 – '96)

## **Air**

### **Breathing Devices**

PVC Pipe, air bags, straw pin-wheel device, breathing gym, wind master...



Will Strider  
Professor of Music at Texas Tech University

## **Posture**

Establish correct posture as it relates to their instrument & music stand  
Set a standard & demand it  
Correct posture is important for all players at all levels

## **Inhalation & Exhalation Process**

Establish syllable for inhalation – as simple as HOW TO  
Check air speeds on hand – cold fast air, warm/hot air  
Check air on paper

## **Breathing Exercises**

1. In 4 out 8, in 2 out 8, in 1 out 8
2. Mario Guarneri (BERP) paper in front of face 6", TOE syllable for low brass
3. James Stamp: Sit in chair, knees together & bend head as far down as possible, then inhale full capacity, repeat several times, develops inter-costal area

Demonstration:

1. full band, instruments in lap, air only then instruments in playing position
2. woodwinds play concert F - brass air through mouthpiece only, then instrument
3. woodwinds play concert F - brass buzz simultaneously or follow the leader

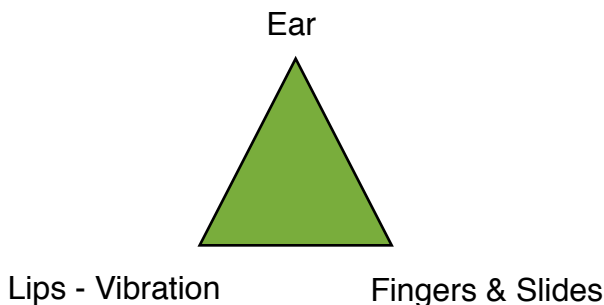
Starting a rehearsal with breathing exercises on a daily basis reminds students that breathing is the foundation for tone, which affects all of the other musical fundamentals.

**Embouchure Development** (Air + Embouchure = Sound) Always lead with your air.

We don't really 'set' an embouchure; rather we 'start' embouchures – constantly developing.

**Mouthpiece Buzzing (lip vibrations)** – B.E.R.P. (acronym for **B**uzz **E**xtension & **R**esistance **P**iece) – buzz training device – Use the B.E.R.P. or mouthpiece vibrations in daily drill and/or isolate problem areas in music and correct. Isolate certain brass sections (trumpets only), divide into A/B sections, or one at a time, down the line. Mario Guarneri, inventor of the BERP, studied with James Stamp.

The B.E.R.P. allows the performer to make the 3 way connection between the **lips (vibrations/buzz)**, **ear**, and the **fingering or slide**. All 3 areas must occur for brass players to fully understand their responsibility to produce great characteristic sounds that change pitch in a controlled manner.



### **Instrument & Equipment**

Mouthpiece most important part of instrument

Reeds, ligatures, & proper reed placement – reeds too soft, not placed on mouthpiece correctly & ligature screws not tight enough are some of the common mistakes

Oil valves, take care of all slides, mallets... Make sure your instrument is clean

Do periodic checks on all instruments & record – condition & models - at least 2 times per year

### **Hand, Body and Playing Position**

1. Always bring instrument to the player – tuba tamer, euphonium ‘dude’
2. Do not allow music stands to dictate placement
3. Elbows should not touch the body
4. Correct angle of instruments – bells out or up enough, angle of head & aperture
5. Set up room to allow for correct hand, body & playing position

### **Rules of Sound** – David Brandon

1. Make one note sound the same from beginning to end with a mature sound.
2. Make two or more notes sound the same for a mature individual sound.
3. Match tone, pitch, & energy with others in your section to produce a mature section sound (side to side listening).
4. Match section to section for a mature ensemble sound.
5. Balance to the most important part. Listen for/to \_\_\_\_\_??

*“It is possible for middle school musicians to not sound like middle school musicians if you have a clear concept and plan of action in your own head. At the beginning of the year, students will need constant feedback from the director but they should gradually require less and less, as these concepts become second nature.”*

David Brandon

### **Three Levels of Listening**

1. Listen to *yourself*
2. Listen to *section*
3. Listen to *the entire ensemble*

## Parts of a note:

### Attack (Start)

1. Set playing and hand positions with the first note fingered – maintain a relaxed playing position.
2. Breathe together with all of the other members of the ensemble-keeping the body still and relaxed (no head or shoulder movement).
3. “Air in to “air out” with no hold in between.
4. Create instant vibration as the tongue releases air into the instrument with the proper articulation syllable. The embouchure (hand position for percussion) must be properly set for ‘instant sound’ to occur. Breath attacks are sometimes helpful to demonstrate this point.
5. Establish a syllable to be used for the start of the note: Examples: TA, TU or DA

### Sustain

1. Think of the sound (air) going past the embouchure. Too many times, air explodes on the attack and then fails to carry through.
2. Students must know and maintain a consistent vowel sound (controlled by the back of the tongue) and maintain a consistent tongue position (this affects the air speed) throughout the note or exercise.
3. To maintain a resonant sound, the lips or reeds must be free to vibrate.
4. Keep the embouchure set, the body tension free, and the instrument still.
5. Visualize a target for the air stream and keep it moving forward. To avoid a dull sound in the brass, have them think air through the center of the mouthpiece.
6. Use the same vocabulary to describe the desired tone: resonant, vibrant, and centered. Also describe what to avoid i.e. tight, fuzzy, airy, dull
7. Flutter tongue to demonstrate consistent air flow.
8. For soft playing – pick a target further away in the room for a more focused, supported tone. Conversely, for louder playing, think closer to you for a more controlled sound.

### Release

1. Keep still! Any movement of the embouchure, instrument, or body may affect the sound or the pitch.
2. The air should travel “full speed” to the silence. Many times students anticipate the release by slowing down the air.
3. Maintain the tongue position and the vowel sound at the point of release.
4. Keep all of the chambers open on the release. This includes the teeth/oral cavity and the throat. Also keep the rib cage up and the posture elevated.
5. Line up releases! Use this rule: A note, followed by a rest, is always held until the first beat of silence. Subdivide to clearly define the release point. ( 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 + off )

“*Good* bands start notes together. *Great* bands end notes together.”



Bruce Pearson, Educator, Author

## Sound Check – Concert F

- Vibrato choices
- Optional notes (Concert C-Horns)
- Optional octaves
- Ways to play
  - Set number of beats – 4, 8, 12 beats - subdivide start and release undetermined time – start & end with conductor
  - Full band or by families – woodwinds then brass/percussion
  - By individual player through each section in the band
  - Alternate 1 section or player with full band
  - Lip vibrations
- Other considerations
  - Allow time for adjustments – reeds, empty water, tuning, balance...
  - Ask questions to make sure they are listening (3 levels of listening)
  - Ultimate goal when playing a unison concert F, concert C will also be heard

## Long Tones

Importance of unison playing – ‘HD’ Tone – Clear, balanced & focused sound = resonant quality sound

*“The benefit of playing music in unison is the 1st step in producing a mature sound that will help match tone qualities, intonation, volume, etc. across your ensemble. Playing in unison is one of the most efficient ways to improve the overall quality of an ensemble’s sound and is the foundation of playing in-tune. When a band plays a unison note, they are producing several different octaves simultaneously. Learning to play in-tune octaves is the basis for superior intonation.”*



David Newell, Educator, Author

## Concert F Descending OR Ascending ( F – E – D – C – Bb – A – G – F )

- Woodwinds lead by 2 notes, 4, and then the entire scale – brass follow on horns or mp
- Less advanced players, only play down to concert Bb
- Practice slurred & tongued – prefer to slur 1<sup>st</sup> when buzzing on mouthpieces, then tongue
- Practice with air pattern and fingering/slide
- Advanced: Horns 8vb on the full scale and woodwinds vary octaves
- With mutes
- Other scales (Army of the Nile) – incorporate exercises that will improve weaknesses
- Teaching intervals, tetra chords, awareness of change across harmonic series
- Notes move forward

### **Remington type long tones (1a, 1b, 1c, 1d)**

- In time or out
- Vary articulation
- Vary rhythm
- Sustain repeated note
- Woodwinds play, then brass/percussion
- Sustain repeated note with A/B split
- Adding rhythms – playing rhythms against long tones promotes air flow independence
- Brass- optional mouthpiece buzzing, simultaneous or call & response
- Bring awareness of what intervals in tune sound like
- Learn in sections

*“These exercises should be played comfortably, not forced or underplayed, but with a feeling of the resonance in the sound from the beginning – so that the sound “lives”.*



Emory Remington  
Former Trombone Professor  
Eastman School of Music

### **Chromatic long tone (#2)**

- Building embouchure strength
- Vary rhythm with possible A/B split
- Sustain repeated note with A/B split
- Stop when students are not making their best sound - younger players stop at concert Bb
- Focuses on interval of a ½ step – smaller intervals hard to hear/play in tune-buzz

### **Expanding interval long tones (3A & 3B)**

- Learning intervals up to a perfect 5<sup>th</sup> – teach students what correct intervals sound like
- Students should be successful on unison interval exercise (3A) before attempting the combination long tone (3B)

### **UIL Comment Sheet on Tone**

- + - Centered, focused tone quality
- + - Balance within sections
- + - Balance between sections
- + - Intonation within sections
- + - Intonation between sections
- + - Dynamic contrast without distortion

It is important to note that incorporating some soft playing in your daily drill is essential.

*“When a band tries to play soft, the resonance and the tone quality often go “down the tubes.”  
Students often associate softness with a lack of intensity.”*  
Gregory Bimm, former director Marian Catholic HS

All of the skills developed in your daily drill lead to better music making.



## Articulation

Importance – must do daily!

Air (wind) patterns – Instrument in lap or in playing position

Modify to fit your needs & level

Practice different styles of articulation - normal articulation, marcato, & legato

Shorter notes - think more sound on them, they must have sonority & resonance

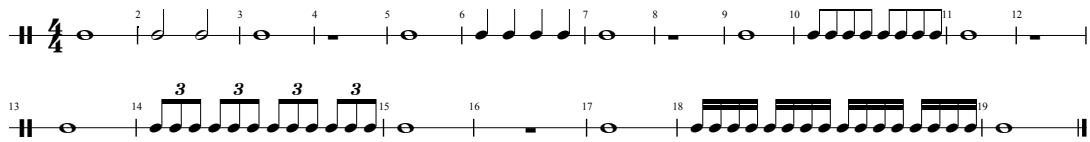
*“Don’t play it on the horn, but play it on your air-pattern and say tu,tu,tu on air only in the correct style.”*



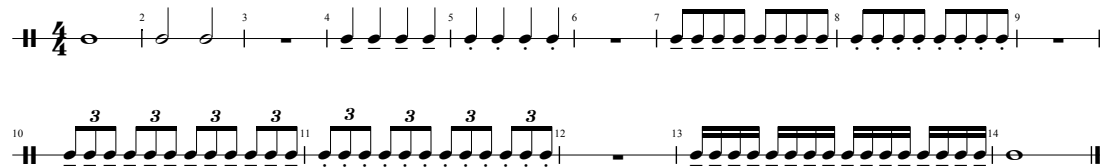
Vincent Chicowitz  
Former member of Chicago Symphony Orchestra

## Variations on the Articulation Exercise

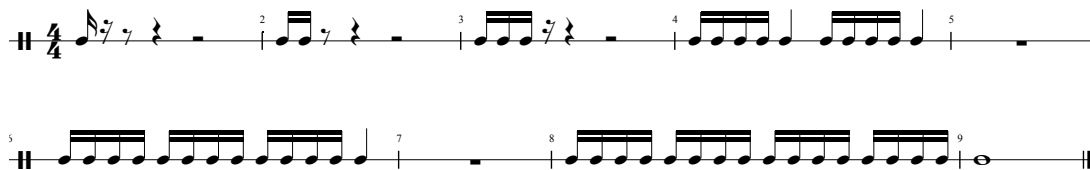
Return to concert F whole note for tone reinforcement - add tenuto, staccato and lifted styles



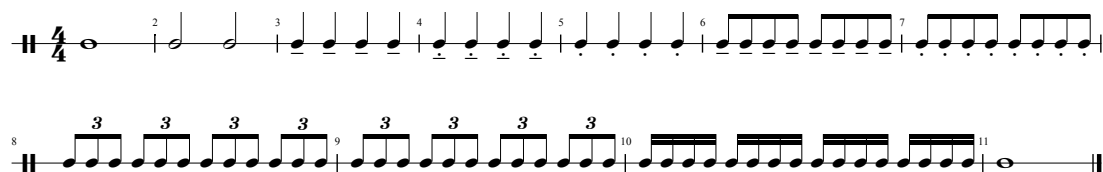
Modified version isolates tenuto and staccato notes



16<sup>th</sup> note patterns



And finally the entire articulation exercise with or without rest



Eighth note & sixteenth note matching exercises

Musical score for three staves (1, 2, 3) showing eighth and sixteenth note matching exercises. Staff 1 has a 'Fine' section and a 'D.C. al Fine' section. Staff 2 has a 'match articulation' annotation. Staff 3 has a 'match pitch' annotation.

Musical score for three staves (1, 2, 3) showing an 'Air - O' exercise. Staff 1 has an upward arrow pointing to a sixteenth note. Staff 2 has an upward arrow pointing to a quarter note.

Relevance to music (Mock Morris)

Musical score for Clarinet in 2, showing three staves (1, 2, 3) with eighth and sixteenth notes.

*“Players neglect clarity in performance too often. As teachers of wind players, we neglect spending time thinking about articulation, particularly compared with the time string players think about bowing... I don’t think we spend nearly enough time producing clarity in our groups through work on articulation, the primary component of clarity.”*



Eugene Corporon  
Director of Band University of North Texas

## Warm-up Sets (1-4)

Components: Lip slurs, harmonics, register studies, octave slurs, technique, & rudiments

Assign as objectives

How to use – variations on warm-up sets

Learn in sections/parts - always sound good

WW- Brass use call and response technique on lip slurs - isolate section or individuals

Include your percussion in your daily warm-ups/daily drill

Modify warm-up sets to fit the level of your band - pick your favorite options

Version of flute harmonics

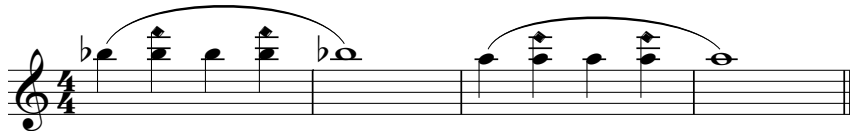
### Basic

(Simplify starting on regular note & slurring up to harmonic in half notes)



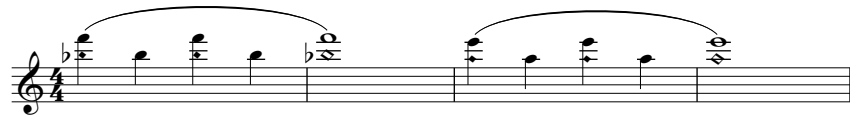
### More advanced

(Starting on regular note & slurring up to harmonic in quarter notes)



### Most advanced

(Starting on harmonic & slurring in quarter note rhythm)



## Technique

One concept in 12 keys

Series of exercises in one key

“Play arpeggios to get all ranges to sound good by being in tune and listening to the sound.” Adolph ‘Bud’ Herseth

Assigning objectives to scales - assignments to each section out of the fingering chart  
Circle of 5<sup>th</sup>s

“Know the importance of TONE, even in technical passages.” Adolph Herseth

## Building Listening Skills

Building listening skills is one of the hardest but most rewarding skills we can teach our students.

*“The most important thing is to put your ear on the end of the bell and really listen to what you play. The human body will do the rest.”*



Rolf Smedvig

Empire Brass Quintet & former principal trumpet Boston Symphony Orchestra

Teach our students what we are listening for - then transfer listening responsibility

*“When you really think about it, we conductors are in complete control of surprisingly few things. ... I believe in shifting responsibility to the students. Their list (producing a good sound, counting, playing in tune, etc.) is a long one, as opposed to ours.”*



Jerry Junkin, Director of Bands  
Univ. of Texas & Dallas Wind Symphony

When ever possible, put the listening responsibility back on the students. Don't tell them to play softer, rather tell them who to listen too.

### Concert F Around the Band Drill

- Divide up your band into sections
- Define concept or drill that you are going to pass around the band
- Keep students mentally active by asking questions
- Continually make reference to music – how does our daily drill apply to our music?

### Interval Tuning

- Individual instrument tuning
- Intervals (3rds, 4ths, 5ths and octaves) - basic intervals for all tertiary chords
- Practice around band

*“Players have to match each other and stop the beats: then an interval will sound in tune, even though the tuner may indicate that one note is out of tune. For example, we intentionally lower the third to get major chords to sound right; and students are very adept at differentiating between this “vertical” tuning and the “horizontal” type. When the last thing you want to do is play a flat interval when moving from the tonic to the third in a major key. A melodic line demands true intervals. The choices depend on understanding that the player's role in the musical process will change, according to the function-melodic or harmonic.”*

Eugene Corporon

## Major Chords

Establish root (tonic) or 1, and then add the 5<sup>th</sup> (4<sup>th</sup> below) for balance – stretch, then finally add the 3<sup>rd</sup> – balancing and tuning  
Lower the 3<sup>rd</sup> approximately 14 cents for a major chord – fit in  
Smartmusic uses *just tuning* for the chord tuning section in the Foundation series

*“When we play the full B-flat chord, it might seem out of tune, but it could be a balance or blend problem. Students sometime mistake poor intonation for what is actually a balance or blend problem. If they listen and solve this, they solve intonation problems.”*



Michael Golemo  
Director of Bands Iowa State University

## Minor Chords

Raise the 3<sup>rd</sup> in a minor chord approximately 16 cents  
Less experienced bands don't give as much information – listen for root, balance the 5<sup>th</sup> and fit the 3<sup>rd</sup> into the chord

## Chorales

Build/stack 1st chord, 1-5-3  
Balance & stack chords at cadence points  
Isolate soprano, alto, tenor and bass parts  
Practice combinations of each part (soprano & alto, alto & tenor etc.)  
Subdivided  
Bopped  
Play chorale against tonic

On a sign hanging in the  
Cleveland Institute of Music Recital Hall

***“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act - but a habit.”***

Aristotle

## References:

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The Complete Instrument Reference Guide for Band Directors – Neal A. Kjos Music Company

Teaching Techniques and Insights for Instrumental Music Educators – GIA Publications

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