



Advanced Ensemble Skill Development for a Successful Band

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SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS**

DON'T JUST WARM-UP!

USE THIS TIME FOR ENSEMBLE SKILL DEVELOPMENT AS WELL

Session 2 – Conceptual ensemble skill development for groups with three or more years experience working on ensemble fundamentals as well as examples of advanced and very advanced variations of the exercises.

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.**

4) Vary process

- a) Use metronome only.
- b) Conduct without metronome.
- c) Ensemble plays without conductor or metronome.

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.

Concepts and ensemble fundamentals for the advanced band and patient and persistent teacher

These are generally advanced and very advanced variations of exercises based on the process begun in middle school.

New keys and challenging balance concepts will be explored. Performance of these exercises requires a number of years of consistent work.

At this level several assumptions should be made

- 1) There are continuous reminders of the concepts/tools that have been worked on from the beginning.
- 2) A renewed emphasis is placed on the musical aspect of the fundamentals.
 - a) All lines move forward.
 - b) Individual notes have energy throughout.
 - c) Every fundamental is treated as music as well as a technical/ensemble exercise.
- 3) Students see the exercises as a demonstration of both individual and ensemble skills.
- 4) The fundamental period should be as error free as possible and be treated as a performance.
- 5) Students have developed a good ability to think before they play and while they play.

Have students put a list of tools on their stand as a reminder. Start (if you haven't before) emphasizing maintenance of a floating posture as the ensemble performs the fundamentals. **EXAGGERATE THE THINGS THAT MAKE YOU SUCCESSFUL – primarily breathing and posture.**

The following fundamental exercises and their variations provide a large number of choices. Working with them on some sort of rotating weekly basis is the ideal. Balance concepts using soloists, sections (individual, brass/ww's.), small ensembles, as well as the full ensemble should be emphasized and integrated into each exercise.

Exercises and variations:

- 1) Breathing
 - a) More emphasis on breathing quickly without tension – releasing stale air at fast tempos
 - b) Integrate playing
- 2) Singing
 - a) 5ths with random exchange
 - b) Intervals on demand
 - c) Chords
- 3) Remington exercise
 - a) Normal and rotating
 - b) New keys depending on music to be performed
 - c) Use of sections/soloists as models
 - d) In parallel 5ths (***very advanced***)
 - e) Soloists with varying articulations changing soloist each repetition – full band answers (***very advanced***)
- 4) Lip vibrations – they must practice these at home or don't work on this
 - a) Anything performed on Remington – including at the 5th (***extremely advanced***)
 - b) Add articulation

- 5) F around the room
 - a) Seamless with breathing responsibilities
 - b) Dovetail – best in sectionals
 - c) Play with various articulations
 - d) In 5ths
 - e) Different rhythms
 - f) In half, quarter, and eighth notes
- 6) Articulation exercise
 - a) Through 16ths seamlessly – whole/half/quarters (stylized lifts/spaced)/eights/triplets/16ths
Touching first then lifted – Stylized lifts only on quarters – Reverse (**very advanced**)
 - b) Dynamic contour – crescendo to center of measure – decrescendo to end (rest between sequences)
 - c) Changing notes on each beat (**extremely advanced**)
- 7) Dynamic control
 - a) Practice any exercise at extreme dynamics trying to maintain centered sound with good core & body
 - b) Long tone exercise from session two in more extreme registers
- 8) F descending/ascending exercise
 - a) Different keys
 - b) Into extreme upper register – two note drill then in half notes from top to bottom and return
 - c) With articulations – two note drill – randomly selected before each first note
 - d) Use articulation series and change each note (**very advanced**)
- 9) Interval control
 - a) Pass through in different keys
 - b) Stationary interval exercise
 - c) Interval exchange exercise (**advanced**)
- 10) Rhythmic emphasis drill (**advanced**)
 - a) Single note drill
 - b) Pickup note drill (**very advanced**)
 - c) Pickup note drill changing diatonically on second note (**super advanced**)
- 11) Five count release (**advanced because of control aspect**)
 - a) Notes other than F
 - b) 5ths
- 12) Chorale
 - a) Sing
 - b) Brass on mouthpiece
 - c) Dynamic variations
 - d) Subdivided – trade off
 - e) Transposed (**extremely advanced**)

MUSICAL EXAMPLES – SESSION 2

Exercise #3a - Rotating remington (up or down)

Exercise #3a consists of two staves of music in 4/4 time. The first staff contains a sequence of quarter notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The second staff contains a sequence of quarter notes: C4, B3, A3, G3, F3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2, G2, F2, E2, D2, C2.

Exercise #3d - Rotating remington in parallel fifths (up or down)

Exercise #3d consists of two staves of music in 4/4 time. The first staff contains a sequence of chords: C4-E4, D4-F4, E4-G4, F4-A4, G4-B4, A4-C5, B4-A4, A4-G4, G4-F4, F4-E4, E4-D4, D4-C4. The second staff contains a sequence of chords: C4-G2, B3-F3, A3-E3, G3-D3, F3-C3, E3-A2, D3-G2, C3-F2, B2-E2, A2-D2, G2-C2.

Exercise #6 - Articulation Exercise

Exercise #6 consists of three staves of music in 4/4 time. The first staff contains a sequence of quarter notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The second staff contains a sequence of eighth notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The third staff contains a sequence of eighth notes: C4, B3, A3, G3, F3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2, G2, F2, E2, D2, C2. The word "reverse" is written below the third staff.

Exercise #6b - Articulation Exercise (with dynamic contour)

Exercise #6b consists of one staff of music in 4/4 time. It contains a sequence of quarter notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. Dynamic contour markings (wedges) are placed below the notes, indicating a crescendo from C4 to B4 and a decrescendo from B4 to C4. The text "continue articulation sequence" is written below the staff.

Exercise #6c - Articulation Exercise (with changing notes)

Exercise #6c consists of one staff of music in 4/4 time. It contains a sequence of quarter notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. Articulation markings (wedges) are placed below the notes. The text "continue articulation sequence" is written below the staff.

Exercise #8c - F Descending (with randomly selected articulations)

Exercise #8c consists of two staves of music in 4/4 time. The first staff contains a sequence of quarter notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The second staff contains a sequence of eighth notes: C4, B3, A3, G3, F3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2, G2, F2, E2, D2, C2. The word "continue to F" is written below the second staff.

Exercise #8d - Articulation series with F descending

Musical notation for Exercise #8d, consisting of three staves. The first staff is in 4/4 time and starts with a whole note followed by a descending eighth-note scale. The second and third staves continue the scale with triplets of eighth notes.

Exercise #10a - Rhythmic emphasis drill (single note)

Musical notation for Exercise #10a, consisting of two staves in 2/4 time. The first staff shows a sequence of eighth notes with accents, and the second staff shows a sequence of quarter notes with accents.

Exercise #10b - Rhythmic emphasis drill (pick-up note)

Musical notation for Exercise #10b, consisting of one staff in 2/4 time showing eighth notes with pick-up notes and accents.

etc.

Exercise #10c - Rhythmic emphasis drill (pick-up note - within sequence)

Musical notation for Exercise #10c, consisting of two staves in 2/4 time. The first staff shows eighth notes with pick-up notes and accents, and the second staff shows eighth notes with pick-up notes and accents.