



Basic Fundamentals for a Successful Band

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DEMONSTRATION GROUP:

Johnson and Reagan HS Bands

Texas Bandmasters Association 2014 Convention/Clinic



2014 Patron Sponsor

JULY 27-30, 2014

HENRY B. GONZALEZ CONVENTION CENTER

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

DON'T JUST WARM-UP!

USE THIS TIME FOR ENSEMBLE SKILL DEVELOPMENT AS WELL

TWO CLINIC SESSIONS DEALING WITH GRADUATED ENSEMBLE SKILL DEVELOPMENT EXERCISES FROM BEGINNING THROUGH ADVANCED HIGH SCHOOL ENSEMBLES

Session 1 - Fundamental concepts for ensemble skill development for the beginner through second or third year of band

The initial part of any rehearsal should be much more than merely a daily warm-up period. Although the warm-up purpose is served, this portion of time should also contribute to the overall conceptual growth of the director and the ensemble. The exercises that will be presented in these sessions can be used to help achieve any ensemble tonal concept desired by director and students. There are a few elements, however, which are generally accepted no matter what 'wind ensemble/symphonic band' sound one is working toward:

- 1) An emphasis should be placed on breathing and breath control. The purpose is to develop a heightened sense of awareness on the part of the student relating to tension in the body and efficient use/control of air. In rehearsal students should not breathe **to live**, but **breathe to play**.
- 2) Notes should be square, be still, should respond instantly, and be started and stopped as much together as possible. They should also be the correct notes.
- 3) Each note should have good core and body (solidity) to it, and the **sound should be as even as possible moving from note to note**.
- 4) Different types of articulation should be explored and should match within and between individuals and sections.
- 5) Matching pitch is possible to the extent that concepts 1, 2, & 3 are successful.
- 6) An emphasis should be made on making each exercise have as much musical sense as possible.
- 7) There should be constant reinforcement promoting the transfer of these ideas/concepts into the body of the rehearsal. **Does our music sound like our fundamentals or a lawn mower?** (Assuming you are not working on the traditional **lawn mower** concept of ensemble sound.)
- 8) Balance is critically important and can be taught and worked on conceptually. Good balance will help alleviate many tuning problems.
- 9) These concepts will be successful only to the degree that both student and **director** are actively involved both mentally and physically.
- 10) Patience and persistence are absolutely essential for long-term progress. Procedure is very important but not as important as appropriate reaction by director and student.

THREE 10/12-MINUTE EXAMPLES OF BEGINNING ENSEMBLE TECHNIQUE EXERCISES

A 45-minute period is assumed.

All exercises involve procedure as well as goals/desired outcomes – Make sure procedure is always secure before asking them to concentrate on goals! As procedure becomes less of an issue begin talking about the goal or outcome that you want. Begin encouraging students to respond to what they hear as an ensemble. As soon as practical, don't use music on the exercises.

Example 1 – As soon as students make an acceptable sound on several notes and are relatively comfortable with the physical aspect of playing their instrument

- 1) Breathing – breathe through the nose in for four & out for four at a moderately slow tempo first standing and then sitting.
 - a) How does body feel both standing and sitting?
 - b) The air should never stop and be constant in volume as well as speed.
 - c) Keep the tongue down in front of the mouth.
 - d) Breath in through the mouth and feel the same as you did breathing through the nose.
- 2) Breathe in for one or two counts and play a concert F.
 - a) How **do I want to sound?**
 - b) How **loud do I intend to play?**
 - c) What **do I think we should sound like playing together?**
 - d) These **three items should be a constant from this point forward.**
- 3) Sing a concert F (remember to breathe), and **TRY** to sound pleasant.
- 4) F around the room (remember to breathe)
 - a) Play from the lowest to highest instrument group.
 - b) Add four counts in between groups.
 - c) Add breathing responsibilities between groups if the exercise is doing well.
- 5) F descending/ascending follow through exercise (remember to breathe)
 - a) Play F down to Bb in half or whole notes as a two-note exercise.
 - b) Play F up to C as a two-note exercise.

Example 2 – Second semester of first year into early second year—REMEMBER TO BREATHE

- 1) Breathing – breath through mouth for 4 counts in and out and use arm and hand as a visual reference.
 - a) This has the same emphasis as example 1.
 - b) The movement of the arm and hand reveals concepts of time and spatial awareness.
- 2) Sing a concert F.
- 3) Remington exercise in whole or half notes going down to Bb and up to C from concert F
 - a) Put a rest in between each three-note sequence – F-E-F – whole rest.
 - b) Try to achieve an even quality of sound, volume and smooth, instant movement.
 - c) The exercise may be articulated or slurred.
 - d) Pay attention to tuning adjustments – 5th positions, etc.
- 4) Articulation exercise
 - a) Start with whole note and go through touching eighth notes with rests in between.
 - b) Don't space notes until the students are able to make a consistent, even sound on touching notes.
 - c) Add breathing responsibilities.
- 5) Simple interval exercise
 - a) Divide band into 2 groups and half play F or Bb then add the other half F or C.
 - b) Play in whole notes, then a whole rest, then switch notes. Keep the sound the same.

Example 3 – Second semester of first year (advanced) into second year – **REMEMBER TO BREATHE**

- 1) Breathing – the same as example 2 but shorten the number of counts (for inhale).
 - a) Emphasize body posture both breathing and playing.
 - b) Absence of any sound when inhaling is critical.
- 2) Sing the first five notes of the F scale.
- 3) F around the room in articulated quarter notes
 - a) This is the same procedure as above with the addition of articulation responsibilities.
 - b) If students are advanced, try the exercise seamless with breathing responsibilities.
 - c) Also play on lifted quarters as ready.
- 4) F descending/ascending follow through exercise
 - a) Play the full octave down to low F using the two note exercise followed by scale in half notes.
 - b) Start extending the range up from F but within reason, perhaps to the octave for most instruments.
- 5) Lip vibrations on a single note – ww's to brass
 - a) WW's play whole note F for 4 then brass answer for four.
 - b) Incorporate whole note Remington as they become more advanced.
 - c) Brass should hum the pitch for 2 counts as ww's play.
 - d) This should be carefully monitored for quality of sound and pitch accuracy.
- 6) Simple chorale – one or two phrases
 - a) This begins the transfer of fundamentals to music.
 - b) Begin working on balance between multiple lines.
 - c) Try one person on an instrument then all trying to fit into soloists

TWO 15/20-MINUTE EXAMPLES OF INTERMEDIATE 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 3 or 4 without listening skills & focus)
- 3) Use of tools
- 4) Unified concept of goals/outcomes
- 5) An increased emphasis on ensemble balance, texture, and color

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

- 1) Breathing – standing and sitting
 - a) Breathe through the nose for relaxation then through the mouth for practical application.
 - b) Place more emphasis on quicker breathing for fast tempos. Vary the speed and counts for the inhale.
 - c) Begin talking about a breathing plan if you have not already done so.
- 2) Singing
 - a) Sing concert F and then a simple scale pattern or Remington.
 - b) Work up to the interval of a 5th and perhaps a major triad.
 - c) Split the band in half and sing 5ths.
 - c) Be creative and ask your choir teacher for help.
- 3) Concert F
 - a) Use different kinds of models: one on an instrument / section / individual addition.
 - b) Try not to be noisier as you add.
 - c) Play four counts on with model(s) then everyone for four counts.
- 4) Lip vibrations on Remington exercise - they must practice these at home or don't work on this
 - a) Play on whole notes alternating between brass and woodwinds. Play down a fifth and up a fifth.
 - b) Brass should hum while woodwinds play.
 - c) Execute the exercise together on instruments.
- 5) F descending/ascending exercise
 - a) Play as in previous examples but extending more into upper register, i.e. clarinets to D or E; horns to high G; oboes to C, etc.
 - b) Do the two-note drill each way then in half notes without rests.
 - c) Play the bottom octave down and up in half notes without stopping.
- 6) Simple chorale
 - a) Subdivide into 8th notes.
 - b) Sing the chorale.
 - c) Hear the individual lines and sing the individual lines.

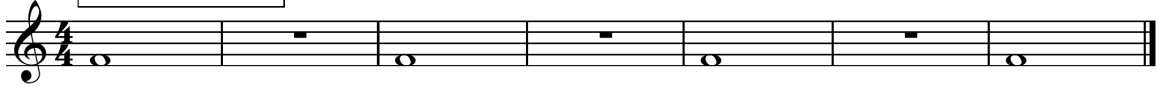
Example 2 – Same level (give or take) as example 1 – just a variation of exercises

- 1) Breathing – just sitting
 - a) This is essentially as example 1 leaving 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) Play on notes other than F.
- 3) Remington
 - a) Play in a half-half-whole pattern. Add a whole rest then continue.
 - b) Play down & up to 5th or more.
 - c) Use models.
 - d) Add articulation.
 - e) Sing.
- 4) Volume exercise
 - a) Play concert F for 16 counts. Crescendo from PP to FF in 8 counts then back to PP.
 - b) Do the same exercise on different notes or several notes of mid-register scale.
- 5) Articulation series
 - a) Play a whole note through 16ths with notes touching then lifted.
 - b) Put a whole rest in between each measure then perform the exercise without rests.
 - c) Play on a different note.
 - d) Do the exercise with crescendo and diminuendo responsibilities.
- 6) Interval exercises
 - a) Execute the pass-through interval exercise in the key of F.
 - b) Play the divided interval exercise with or without exchange.

MUSICAL EXAMPLES – SESSION 1

EXAMPLE 1

Exercise #2 - Block F



Exercise #5a - F Descending



Exercise #5b - F Ascending



EXAMPLE 2

Exercise #3a - Remington (down to B flat)



Exercise #3b - Remington (up to C)



continue to C

Exercise #4a - Articulation Exercise



Exercise 4b - Articulation Exercise (with spaces)



Exercise #5 - Intervals



All

*1's play F
2's play B flat*

*1's play B flat
2's play F*

*1's play F
2's play B flat*

*1's play B flat
2's play F*

Advanced seventh grade into ninth grade depending on ability

EXAMPLE 3

Exercise #3a - F around (in quarters)

tubas euphoniums trombones, etc.

Exercise #3b - F around (seamless)

tubas euphoniums trombones horns, etc.

Exercise #4a - F Descending (full octave)

F Descending (full octave)

Exercise #4b - F Ascending (full octave)

F Ascending (full octave)

Exercise #5a - Lip Vibrations (woodwinds play, brass answer on mouthpiece)

wvs brass wvs brass wvs brass wvs brass

Advanced seventh grade into ninth grade depending on ability

EXAMPLE 2

Exercise #3 - More advanced Remington (vary articulation)



Exercise #4a - Volume control exercise



Exercise #6a - Interval pass-through (Key of F)



Exercise #6b - Divided interval exercise

