



## **Lessons Learned in 50 Years of Band Directing Session 2**

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# **Texas Bandmasters Association 2014 Convention/Clinic**



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## Texas Bandmasters Association, 2014, Session 2

Gary Garner, WTAMU (ret.)

### Building Technique

- Correct hand position, keeping fingers close to "home" and relaxed are critical.
- Chromatic scale (full range)
- Major scales (full range)
- Major, minor, dominant 7th, diminished 7th arpeggios (full range)
- Later: Minor scales, scales in thirds, whole tone scales, octotonic scales

### General Rehearsal Considerations

- The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. From first reading to performance, the preparation follows an arc. Work gradually from the entire work down to the fine details and gradually back to the complete piece.
- Good rehearsals don't just happen. They are planned.
- When starting again, first identify the rehearsal letter or number, then count aloud. Even better, have measures numbered correctly.
- Admit your mistakes.
- Keep them engaged when they're not involved; boredom is your enemy!
- Involve students in making collective musical decisions, especially regarding phrasing, pitch, and style.
- Set high standards and be uncompromising in your insistence they be met (but if they are, the standards may be too low). Robert Browning got it right: "A man's reach must exceed his grasp." (Robert Browning wasn't very PC).
- Musical triage: You can't solve every problem every day; often, you have to be satisfied with making a little progress, then go on and return to it the next day.
- The director is constantly making decisions — is this worth stopping for at this point and, if so, for how long?
- One of the main hallmarks of a good teacher is knowing when something is not working. Beating dead horses is not part of the job description.
- Once a problem is "solved," never assume it will stay solved.
- Avoid the typical beginner mistake. Your job hasn't ended when you've delivered the correct information. It's just begun.
- Be vigilant in ensuring that all instruments are in good working condition.
- Record your rehearsals frequently, listen many times over, and take copious notes.
- The competent director knows all the fingerings for all the instruments, including standard alternate fingerings.
- The director must be able to immediately make the conversion from written to concert pitch and vice-versa.
- Is the metronome your friend or your enemy? Can be both. Don't allow it to become a crutch.
- If the group is having difficulty maintaining the tempo (either rushing or dragging), try setting the accent on the Harmony Director to beat every 8 beats or so. It can be a revealing (and humbling) experience.
- Keep practicing. Your instrument is your most valuable teaching tool. And think of the subliminal message you're sending your students when you don't play your instrument.

### The "Perfect" Rehearsal

- The room is set up and everything is orderly and in place.
- Students enter the room quietly with little or no talking, possibly with a recording of an artist musician playing. The director is clearly visible.
- If the band is allowed to warm up individually before rehearsal begins, they do so professionally and intelligently.
- The rehearsal order is on clear display.
- The rehearsal begins precisely on time; announcements are kept to a minimum. When rehearsal is under way, no one speaks unless called upon.
- Roll-check is done in a way that consumes no rehearsal time.
- The director has planned every stage of the rehearsal carefully, but is flexible enough to depart

from the plan as the situation dictates.

- The director is firmly in control, but always respectful of the students.
- The pace of the rehearsal is fast and intense, punctuated by a few brief moments of relaxation or levity. Remember, enthusiasm is contagious. If you don't have it, fake it (it eventually becomes real).
- Avoid predictability; boredom is deadly.
- When the director stops, the students stop instantly, listen intently to the director's comments (always clear and succinct), instruments at the ready to start again. Stops rarely exceed 30 seconds.
- The director is unfailingly positive in attitude and demeanor, offering praise when merited and taking care not to make criticism seem personal.
- The director has anticipated possible problems and has formulated strategies for solving them; quickly recognizing when a strategy is not succeeding, the director either goes to a backup strategy or moves on with plans to attack the problem from a different angle at the next rehearsal.
- The director is not tethered to the podium, frequently physically going to the source of a problem.
- Knowing they may be called upon at any time to render musical judgements, students remain actively engaged, even when not directly involved.
- Ever-mindful of the time, the director ends the rehearsal with something the band enjoys and plays well, allowing sufficient time for students to clean their instruments (and insisting that they do). The students leave the room in a quiet, orderly manner and with a sense of accomplishment, eagerly looking forward to the next rehearsal.

### **Trills**

- A wrong trill is a wrong note.
- Trill to the next higher note in the key unless there's an accidental inflection indicated.
- Long trills usually start slower; if the trill fingering is different from the regular fingering, use the regular one for the first turn on longer trills because the tone quality of the upper auxiliary in a trill fingering is always inferior to that of the regular fingering.
- Trill fingerings are often used to facilitate the execution of technical passages.

### **Transpositions**

- Mezzo-soprano clef for F instruments.
- Tenor clef for Bb instruments.
- Bass clef for Eb instruments.
- Calculate the interval of transposition from the key of the transposing instrument up to the key of the instrument part being transposed and make the appropriate key signature change. If fluent in both treble and bass clefs, there will never be a transposition of more than a third.

# Woodwind Venting

Disclaimer: 1) This list is far from exhaustive; and 2) It by no means assures that the note in question will be "in tune," only that the pitch will differ in some degree from the regular fingering.

## FLUTE

1 2 # 3 e 4 o 5 # 6 e 7 # 8 e 9 o

1: +3,5,6 to lower 2: remove pinky or overblow Ab to lower 3: -pinky to lower 4: +6 to lower 5: sub.5 for 6 to lower 6: finger 1,3,5,6 (no pinky) to lower 7: +5,6 (no pinky) to lower 8: th,1,3, both tr keys (no pinky) to lower 9: 1,2,3,4,5,6 & gizmo (available only flute w/low B OR +thumb or half-hole 5 or 1,3, tr 2 (no pinky) to lower (doesn't speak easily; best for loud passages)

## OBOE

1 2 3 4

1: +low B to lower 2: +6 to lower 3: +C (6) to lower 4: +5 to lower

## CLARINET

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 e 9 # 10 e o # 11 e

1: +F/C to lower 2: +RH bottom side key to raise 3: +C#/G# to raise 4: +3,4,(5) to lower; 5: +thumb ring or 2,3,4,6,C/F to lower 6: +2,3,4,6,C/F to lower 7: +A key to raise 8: +3, LH G# to lower 9: TR, bottom 2 RH side keys or TR,1, LH side Ab or 1,R (don't close th hole) to lower 10: RH sliver to raise all; for E, R & A key or add LH side Ab, 1, RH sliver or add LH side Ab to G fingering to raise; for F, "long" fingering (like 4th-line D + LH C#/G#), or overblow Bb above the staff + RH Ab/Eb or TR,1,2,3,LH side Ab, RH Ab/Eb to raise; for F#, "long" fingering (TR,1,2,4,5,6,RH Ab/Eb) or TR,2, LH C#/G# or TR,1,2,bottom RH side key, RH Ab/Eb to raise 11: Overblow B or TR,2,3,LH C#/G#4,5,AB/Eb or TR,1,3,4,6,Ab/Eb to lower

## SAXOPHONE

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 # 9 o 10 # 11 e 12 o

1: +C# key to raise 2: #C# or Eb to raise 3: +side F# to raise 4: OK,3(4)(5)(6) to raise 5: +low B to lower; 6:+low C to lower 7: +4 or 5 or 6 to lower 8: +4(5)(6) to lower 9: +2, side Bb to lower 10: +2 or -PK1 to lower 11: +2 or -PK1 to lower 12: -PK1 or PK 2 or +2 to lower

## BASSOON

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
10 11 12 13 14 15 16 b

1: +low B to lower 2: +low Bb to lower 3: +low Bb to lower 4: +low C# to lower 5: use both F#s+pancake to lower; 6: +pancake to lower 7: +pancake (F#) to lower 8: +5or4 & Bb to lower 9: +pancake to lower; if E is flat, add 6; 10: +LH Eb or Db to lower 11: +Ab to lower 12: +5,6,F key to raise 13: -4 to raise 14: -3 to raise 15: +6 to lower 16: +5 to lower

**NOTE:** Left-hand fingers are 1,2,3; right-hand fingers are 4,5,6. Fingers or keys in parentheses are to be used on an "if needed" basis.