



Programming for Your Young Band

CLINICIAN:
Carl Idlebird

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Texas Bandmasters Association 2014 Convention/Clinic



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JULY 27-30, 2014
HENRY B. GONZALEZ CONVENTION CENTER
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

Texas Bandmasters Association Convention
July 27 – 30, 2014
Programming For Your Young Band
(A Panel Discussion)

Clinician: Carl Idlebird
Date: Tuesday, July 29, 2014
Time: 5:15 p.m. – 6:15 p.m.
Place: CC214CD

This clinic is a panel discussion which is primarily designed for young and / or new band directors. Panelists will share ideas on choosing appropriate literature for your band to maximize success at UIL.

It is a privilege to be a band director in the great State of Texas, where a successful music education is a priority and is, in many ways, expected. While several things contribute to Texas being second to none, one of the main reasons for the continued success is the freedom Texas Music Educators have to expose great students to quality literature. The University Interscholastic League (UIL) Music Division has implemented, is improving, and constantly expanding the Prescribed Music List (PML). It is a wonderful tool for directors to prepare, improve, and evaluate the progress of their bands in all classifications.

The PML offers an abundance of band selections in all classifications at different levels. In other words, some grade I selections (for instance) are harder than others in the same grade. This is why directors must take care to listen to recordings and study scores of the selections they are considering. It is important to remember that it is not what you play, but, “how well you play what you play” that will render the desired results of the adjudicated experience. Unfortunately, not everything is “cut and dry” in the preparations. Directors must make decisions based on the playing level of the kids and the available instrumentation. This can be a complicated issue if the band consists of students from grades 7 through 12. A new director may also inherit a program that has a history of making three’s and four’s. There may also be concerns about eligibility. Or, there may be concerns about the ability level of a certain section in the band while the others are fairly strong. Whatever the case may be, the director has to “set the band up for success.” This may mean “under” programming until a level of success is achieved. The director and students can certainly feel good about making a “two” or “three” if the program has historically made “fours” and “fives”. But, the ultimate goal should be to make a “one” and to maintain that level of achievement. This is a pretty good indication that the students are receiving the type of instruction that they deserve.

The ultimate measure of a successful performance at Contest is the UIL Standards. Are the students playing with good characteristic tone qualities? Do the students miss notes? Is there consistency in the intonation of the band? Are dynamic contrasts made effectively and without distortion? Is the band handling the selections technically well (rhythm, precision, articulation)? Does the band play with a mature level of musicianship? These are just some of the questions that must be addressed as you prepare your selections.

The following tips are suggestions to perhaps make the director’s decision and preparation process a little easier:

1. The director needs to know what the playing levels of the kids are:

- a. Listen to your kids play (individually) – the idea is to be sure everyone can play their part.
- b. Work fundamentals to find out where the playing levels are.
- c. Challenge your kids by reading different levels of literature.

2. Do your homework.

- a. Start early in your selection process (use last year's results).
- b. Listen to several recordings / get familiar with the PML / play the choices for the kids.
- c. Study scores before you select, and then really study the ones you select.
- d. Watch out for 'spots' in the selection ("Ghost Fleet" and "La Madre" come to mind) that could be a potential nightmare.
- e. Take note of what selections other bands are having success with at contest.
- f. Keep time constraints in mind.
- g. Do your kids like the selections?
- h. Do you like the selections? Do they fit the band?
- i. What is the educational value of the pieces (give your kids as much information as possible)?
- j. What will you do if things change (eligibility, kids move, someone gets sick on the day of contest, you make a bad choice in the selections and have to make a change right before the point of no return)?

3. Make wise choices (Classes A – AAAA). You do have choices.

a. Be aware of what is required by UIL:

<u>Varsity</u>	<u>1st Selection</u>	<u>2nd Selection</u>	<u>March</u>
AAAA	Gr. III, IV, or V list	Gr. II, III, IV, or V list	Director's Choice
AAA	II, III, IV or V	I through V	Director's Choice
A/AA	I through V	I through V	Director's Choice

b. There are Grade 1 pieces which, for the majority of the selection, have 1 flute part/1 clarinet part /1 alto sax part /1 trumpet part / French Horn unison with alto sax / one low brass part in unison octaves. Examples include:

Elizabethan Dance by Mark Williams
Exhortation by Gary Gazlay
Fortis by Gary Gazlay
Ghost Ship by Michael Story
Gymnopedie #1 by Satie / Jack Bullock
Lux Prima by Ralph Ford
Majestica by Gary Gazlay

(The idea is to have everyone in the section playing the same part, thus building the confidence level of the individual players. This also works well for large bands and bands with limited instrumentation.)

- c. The director may need to avoid selections which quite often expose sections of your band. You may consider selections which are more chordal in texture and / or more band tutti than section features. Examples include:

Atlantis (grade 1) by McGinty
Glen Canyon Overture (grade 1) by Edmondson
Song of Hope (grade 1) by Swearingen
Stratosphere (grade 1) by Beckman
Accolade (grade 2) by Himes
Shepherds Hey (grade 2) by Roszell
Sparks (grade 2) by Balmages
Westridge Overture (grade 2) by Barnes
American Riversongs (grade 3) by LaPlant
Polly Oliver (grade 3) by Root
Summer Resounding (grade 3) by Balmages
Tudor Sketches (grade 3) by Owens

- d. It is okay to have favorite composers. You may find that you and the kids like the writing of particular composers. Consider playing one of their selections each year, as long as you can. Many of them also write selections for more than one grade level. Examples include:

Brian Balmages: Moscow, 1941 (gr. 2), Sparks (2), Colliding Visions (2), Hypnotic Fireflies (2), Arabian Dances (3), Summer Resounding (3), Kindred Spirits (3), Summer Dances (4), Sound Prisms (4), Three Celtic Dances (4), Metal (4)

Ann McGinty: All The Pretty Little Horses (1), Atlantis (1), Chorale Prelude (1), Madrigal For Band (1), Sea Song Trilogy (1), Kingstree Overture (1), The Red Balloon (2), The Wexford Carol (2), Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silent (2), Wolsey Wilde (1)

Robert Sheldon: Big Sky Round-up (1), A Joyful Journey (1), Pevensey Castle (1), A Longford Legend (2, 3, & 4), Crest of Nobility (2), West Highland Sojourn (2 & 3), Appalachian Morning (2), As Twilight Falls (2), Black is the Color Of My True Love's Hair (2), In the Shining of the Stars (3), Chanteys (3), Ghost Fleet (3), Choreography (3), Fantasy on an Early American Marching Tune (3).

(The rationale - directors and students can settle into a particular composer's style, tonalities, texture changes, composition techniques, etc. These composers have produced selections which are well written and make it easier for the director and students to have a positive experience.)

- e. Consider selections which incorporate folk idioms. These pieces tend to have a cohesiveness which captivates the performer and the listener. Examples include:

Folk Trilogy (gr. 1) by Bartok / McGinty
English Folk Suite (1) by Del Borgo
Korean Folk Rhapsody (1) by Mark Williams

Little Brazil Suite (1) by Balent
Bosnian Folk Songs (2) by Alan
Kenya Contrasts (2) by Himes
Steppes of Russia (2) by Del Borgo
Yorkshire Ballade (2) by Grainger / Barnes
2 Irish Sketches (3) by Black
3 Folk Miniatures (3) by Jutras
American Folk Rhapsody # 1 (3) by Grundman
Brook Green Suite (3) by Holst / Curnow

- f. Perhaps your students would enjoy working on and performing selections from Style Periods. These are works which are indicated in the title or are transcriptions of a composer's works from a particular time period. Examples include:

Bach Chorale & Variations (1) arr. by McGinty
La Volta (1) by William Byrd / arr. by Katheryn Fenske
Baroque Celebration (2) by Forsblad
Fanfare, Ode, and Festival (2) by Margolis
Renaissance Dances (2) by Meyers
Blessed Are They From a German Requiem (3) by Brahms / Buehlmann
Canzona #1 (3) by Giovanni Gabrieli / arr. Bob Margolis
Fughetta (3) by W.F. Bach / arr. by Balent

- g. Maybe your students have a "knack" for Programmatic Music. This is great because historical and / or object information can give the kids extra motivation to perform at a level that relays the meaning of the piece. Examples include:

Ghost Ship (1) by Michael Story
Pevensey Castle (1) by Sheldon
Barbarossa (2) by Himes
Moscow 1941 (2) by Balmages
Old Churches (2) by Colgrass
Song For Hope (3) by Sweeney

- h. Do not neglect the slow selections. The PML is full of beautiful pieces that will give your band an opportunity to be expressive. You may be surprised to find out that these computer savvy kids enjoy expressing themselves through music (thank you Twilight Movies). Examples include:

Azure Hills (1) by Steve Hodges
Canticle (1) by Douglas Wagner
In the Bleak Midwinter (1) by Jack Bullock
Maesong (1) by William Owens
Air for Band (2) by Erickson
Childhood Hymn (2) by Holsinger
Crescent Meadow (2) by Romeyn
Wexford Carol (2) by McGinty
Adagio Cantabile (3) by Beethoven / Daehn
Amazing Grace (3) arr. by Ticheli

Cradle Song (3) by Barton
Ye Banks and Braes O' Bonnie Doon (3) by Grainger

- i. Pick a complimentary set of contrasting selections, including the march:

Scenario 1 – Program for a 1A or 2A band that has no history or has a negative history:

March: Apollo March by John Kinyon (simple melody, harmony, rhythm)
1st Selection Lux Prima (1) by Ralph Ford (Slow and Stately / Limited Instrumentation)
2nd Selection Ming Court (1) by Pitter (Nice Contrast / Simple piece but exciting)

Scenario 2 – Program for a 3A band that wants to play a grade II & II selections (II & I last year)

March Union March by Mekel Rogers (great energy from quarter and eighth notes)
1st Selection Shepherd's Hey (2) by Roszell (played 2 English Dances by O'Reilly last year)
2nd Selection Cumberland Cross (2) by Strommen (success with Storm Mountain Jubilee last year)

Scenario 3 Program for a 4A band that wants to play a grade II & III (II & II last year)

March Circus Days
1st Selection Childhood Hymn (2) by Holsinger (success with Azure Hills by Hodges last year)
2nd Selection Ghost Fleet (3) by Sheldon (success with West Highland, Mvts 2 & 3 last year)

Keep in mind that you may have to play down as well.

Closing Thoughts

Take time to listen for selections which will feature the strengths of your band. The PML is rather large and chances are you will find what you need.

Avoid selecting a piece that you do not have time to detail.

Be sure to play through your program as many times as possible before contest. Try to schedule a pre-UIL.

Do not hesitate to change the order of the selections for the performance for the sake of flow and endurance.

****Be sure the kids can play all of the selection well.

Enjoy yourself!



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Stephen Krupicka - Shiner High School

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A few thoughts on selecting the appropriate UIL program...

The trophy looks the same! It doesn't matter if you play off the grade 1 list or the grade 4 list. When you finally achieve that first division at UIL, the trophy will look the same no matter what you perform. If you (or your program) have not seen the success of winning one of these trophies, then start off with the basics and allow your students to get a taste of that success. They will want to come back for more allowing you to increase the level of difficulty in the future. Remember: Play what you can play "perfect" for UIL. Play what you can play "good" for a spring concert. Play whatever you want in your band hall! *Over-programming is the number 1 mistake!*

Will all involved enjoy the music? Will you enjoy teaching and listening to this selection for the next 8 weeks? Will your students enjoy playing this selection for the next 8 weeks? Will your audience connect? Will the selection bring out the band's strengths to the UIL judges? Will everyone have a fun, positive, and memorable experience working on the program while such life lessons as the importance of hard work are accomplished?

Can your band "sightread" the selection? If your band can't basically get through the piece of music on the first try or two... or three... then put it aside for another time. It's probably not "UIL worthy."

What are your band's strengths and weaknesses? Know what your band can handle. Always be realistic. If you have weak trumpets, then don't select a song with a trumpet feature! If you have outstanding clarinets, then find something that could feature them! As a wise director once told me, "Sometimes it's all about hiding your weaknesses."

How mature is your band? If your band lacks focus and discipline, then teach it to them! However, until you've accomplished that, be cautious of what you select making sure the music won't go right over their heads.

You don't have to play a "slow" tune! The common misconception when selecting UIL music is the *requirement* to perform a slow tune. If you do not feel your band can accept the challenge of a lyrical piece of music, then don't select one! Slow or lyrical selections (even the easiest looking ones) require a great amount of maturity and can expose many fundamental weaknesses in your band. Consider an overture type piece instead!

How much time do you actually have to teach? Know the schedules of your students and when you can schedule practices, sectionals, etc. Very busy students may cause you to program less challenging material for UIL.

Stay within your comfort zone! If you don't feel comfortable teaching a certain piece of music, then don't! Don't succumb to peer pressure.

Can parts be rewritten or doubled for other instruments? YES!!! Those with small bands are constantly challenged by a lack of instrumentation. While you should take into account your instrumentation when selecting music, know it is okay to double parts between instruments within reason. Crank up that Finale program and write it out!

What's your philosophy on excluding students? Are you willing to play a selection that only a quarter of your band can perform? Once again, know your band's abilities! Nothing discourages a child more than a feeling of worthlessness.

How "eligible" are your students? Don't forget to take into account your "all-state" tuba player (remember...he's also your ONLY tuba player) that's going to fail the week before you go to contest! Have a back-up plan in place for those students you can't always count on and avoid involving them in a feature. Keep up with your students' grades!

Possible "safe bets" for grade 1 & 2

While so many are always in search of that "easy" selection for UIL, please remember it all depends on your band. However, here is a list of a few composers which (in my opinion) have done an outstanding job in scoring music for bands with "interesting" instrumentation allowing even the smallest of bands to maintain a full sound.

Brian Balmages
John Edmondson
Anne McGinty
John O'Reilly
William Owens
Michael Story