



Concert Band Techniques for the Small School

**CLINICIAN:
Jim Rhodes**

**DEMONSTRATION GROUP:
Forsan High School Band**

Texas Bandmasters Association 2014 Convention/Clinic



2014 Patron Sponsor

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

Concert Band Techniques for the Small School

Texas Bandmasters Association Convention

2014

Forsan High School Band

Jim Rhodes – Misty Moellendorf

Directors

8:15 a.m. – 9:15 a.m.

Monday, July 28

CC Room – 217ABC

The Transition:

1. Changing from Marching Band to Concert Band is not a smooth transition at first.
2. A Seating Chart has to be made that also includes Color Guard and Drum Majors.
3. Several marching instruments have to be stored away and Concert horns/percussion equipment set up. Many Concert horns may need repair/maintenance to function at first.
4. Everyone wants to know where to sit. You may also have additional instruments in the Concert Band that are not in the Marching Band that require special seating in the set-up. It generally takes about a week to get the students comfortable in the Concert Band world with seating, instruments, and the sound concept a band strives for every day.

The Chair Test:

1. Even though our Marching Band ranges from 120-130 students each year, we do not split into two Concert Bands. We have one Giant Concert Band. Some reasons include scheduling, space, Staff, and instrumentation.
2. We generally pick a small technical section of music to chair test the students. I always pick something that fits each student's level of playing and gives everyone a fighting chance to have success on the chair test. I tell all the students to perform the music at a tempo they can handle. I challenge the top players to perform the music at a faster tempo.
3. The day of the chair test, all students perform one at a time to a tape recorder set-up in the ensemble room. This takes several days. My Assistant monitors the tryout. I listen to the tapes and assign a chair order to each section. This is a big deal to the students as to what chair they receive.

The Warm-up:

1. I found a warm-up many years ago called "Daily Warm Ups for Young Bands" by Don Hannah, and published by Harold Gore Publishing Co. We use parts of it every day to start our rehearsal. There are many sections that help with tone, tuning, slurring, tonguing, and technical areas.
2. We use "F Around the Room" all the time. Everyone plays concert F and then each section plays it alone, starting with the lowest voices and working up to the highest voices. We end it with everyone playing all together again. The snare drum taps on the rim to set the tempo throughout.
3. Other ideas we do for a warm-up are: Brass players buzz on their mouthpieces, while the woodwinds play the Bb scale in half notes; Sizzle fast air through the teeth; Play concert F and then sing it; Find a nice Chorale to play.

The Music Folder:

1. We fill our folders with lots of Christmas music and several Marches. We normally play seven Christmas tunes on our Concert and if possible, a March we are considering for U.I.L. Contest.
2. After the Christmas Concert, the U.I.L. process begins with what to play for Contest. Picking music for a large band is an art in itself. I always look for arrangements with multiple percussion parts, and moments where a big band can play exciting and full. I also look for tunes that feature strong sections in my band and maybe a soloist or two.
3. As the weeks go by, I can tell if a song fits the band. We narrow down our options and finally pick our two Contest pieces. If we pick a slow melodious song, it has to be the right one. Remember, we are a big band and I agonize and agonize over what we perform at U.I.L. We do not have weekly Sectionals set-up. It is all done during the class period.
4. Sight-Reading music is added to our folders at some point. We read lots of music. I always tell my students when sight-reading to "Count and play with Confidence". Every section has to have leaders.

Surgery and the end:

1. All of our students get to play the music for U.I.L. until the very end. They know what it means when I step on the podium and say, "Today we start surgery on the music". Surgery means everyone can't play in certain sections of the music. I have taught the students to understand this concept and to not take it personally. Some spots don't call for 30 flutes or 27 trumpets. We are usually doing surgery on the music up to the last minute before Contest. Mr. Dan Gibbs, from Monahans, is my one and only Clinician.
2. During the school year many of our students are involved in All-Region Band and Solo & Ensemble Contests. This is all done during class period with some Activity period and after school help.
3. The end of school activities include: Color Guard, Drum Major, and Drum line tryouts, Spring Concert, Officer Elections, summer repair, inventory, collecting of fees, and uniform check-in to name a few.
4. Does it ever really end? The answer is no!

Junior High Bands:

1. All 6th graders are in band during one period and split up 2 ways to teach. The beginner book that we use is "Rhythm Master". They get to pick what instrument they play, with guidance from the directors. Those that want to play percussion are the only ones that have to try out. They practice together as a band for the Christmas Concert and Spring Concerts.
2. The 7th and 8th graders are 2 separate bands by class. They are combined for the Christmas and Spring Concerts. They do not participate in UIL Contest, but do compete in JH All Region Band and Solo & Ensemble festivals.

Personal Thoughts in a Small School:

1. Get used to sharing students. Everybody wants the good kids.
2. Get used to students missing class, especially in the Spring.
3. Get used to kids quitting band. This is the hardest one.
4. Get used to "and or other duties assigned". This could be a positive thing with the right attitude.
5. Get used to Fundraising.
6. Have someone to call, email, text, or visit periodically. It can be great therapy.
7. Find a stress toy to have on your desk. I have an easy button and a bell I ring.
8. Be patient in the beginning; it takes time to build a program.
9. Don't think you know everything. A College degree only gives you a license to learn. Find a ***Mentor!***
10. As my good friend Dan Gibbs always reminds me. Sometimes you have to "Stop and smell the roses". Enjoy what you have; it is not always as bad as you think.