



If you PLAY Something, SAY Something

CLINICIAN:

Brian Balmages - TBA Featured Composer

DEMONSTRATION GROUP:

Plano Community Band

SPONSORS:

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**Texas Bandmasters Association
2017 Convention/Clinic**

JULY 20 – 22, 2017

**HENRY B. GONZALEZ CONVENTION CENTER
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS**

If You PLAY Something, SAY Something!

Brian Balmages

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An overview of the different stages of musicality (in performance AND rehearsal)

No Musicianship

- Lack of attention to basic musical markings
 - tempo changes (*ritardando, accelerando, morendo, subito, sans*)
 - dynamics
 - articulation
 - phrase markings
 - understanding of style and its role in the music
- Often the first stage of rehearsal with the excuse that “we will focus on notes and rhythms first, THEN get into the music”
 - Inherent problem with this approach is that students get good at what they practice (in this case, get good at playing without musicality)
 - Important to realize we can still rehearse a group technically, but important to provide musical justification while fixing technical issues.
 - Ensembles often not aware of the program notes / reason behind the composition of a piece. Makes them unable to identify with the music. If students “practice music” without contextual understanding, they get good at what they practice!

Choreographed Musicianship

- Observation and basic execution of musical markings / terms
- While musical intent is there, performance seems hollow because the *reason* for the musical markings is not being understood nor conveyed
- Often accompanied by a lack of facial expression and body language from the podium

True Musicianship

- When the reason for a marking is understood through score study, communicated to the ensemble, and conveyed through performance
 - Ensemble has been aware of the inspiration behind a piece and has been rehearsing with this in mind throughout the process.
 - All musical terms have corresponding emotional / “action” terms that are understood by the ensemble
 - Facial expressions / body language of conductor reflects the music

General thoughts on phrasing

- Everything should have line (melody, supporting harmony, rhythm, sustained notes)
- Repeated notes need to have direction
- Repeated phrases need to have direction (can move upward or downward)
- Students play what they hear in their heads
- Decisions need to be made on ensemble phrasing / breathing, not just individual

(General thoughts on phrasing continued)

- Musical breath = musical entrance
- Relate phrasing to speech
 - Various elements to consider:
 - Letters (notes)
 - Syllables (intervals)
 - Words (measures)
 - Sentences (phrases)
 - Combination of sentences leads to complete work

Musical graphs

- Helpful to create a graph of the emotional arc of an entire work
 - Add musical terminology that appears throughout the music
 - Include emotional / “action” terms that correspond with musical terminology
 - Consider adding a second line that graphs dynamics

Select Musical terms

Ritardando
Accelerando
Crescendo
Diminuendo
piano
forte
sustain

Examples of Emotional / “Action” terms

Tension (or release) / relax / ponder
Energy / intensity / momentum
Push / energy transfer / engage
Pull back / relax / calm down / (intensify)
Gentle / calm / thoughtful
Strong / confident / intention
Commitment / constant / engaged