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**A Tonal Obsession - Pursuing the
Perfection of our Musical Voice**

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**Demonstration Group: North Shore Senior High
Wind Ensemble**

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

A Tonal Obsession- Pursuing the Perfection of our Musical Voice

North Shore Senior High School Band Staff:

Shane Goforth, Director of Bands

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Why are we obsessed with Tone Quality?

- Tone quality is our musical voice, at least half of our musical identity and arguably much more than that. It is the first and the only continuous expression of our musical soul.
- Our Tone Quality defines and identifies who we are as individual musicians and as an ensemble to our audience.
- We pursue the same tone quality through the use of the same fundamental exercises from August to June, for all seasons and for all genres be it marching, concert, jazz, chamber, etc.

A Singular Focus

- Our students live in an environment of hyper-stimulus and multi-tasking.
- Music is a game of perfection. We believe that the only way to perform consistently great musical phrases is to quiet the mind and have a singular focus.
- Our Fundamental Routine is not complicated or particularly extensive. It is built in such a way that the students can **work to perfect** one specific aspect of their (our) tone quality at a time, building those elements into a beautiful musical phrase.

Total Commitment to the Musical Phrase

- We are musicians, training student musicians to perform great music. The first thing, the last thing, EVERYTHING should be focused on playing a beautiful, musical phrase.
- We work to address all of the pedagogical and technical elements of the musical phrase individually so that the students can work to perfect them with a singular focus, but the primary goal of every exercise is to play a musical phrase.
- The primary goal for the program is to play beautiful, powerful, musically moving performances. The staff knows it, the students know it and we write it down so that everyone remembers it. Since the goal is to play musically, then we do everything musically and make musicality the focus of everything that we do.
- If it is not beautiful and it is not musical then we do it again and again until it is.

Building the Musical Phrase from the ground up EVERYDAY at EVERY REHEARSAL

- We are constantly looking for ways to build a beautiful, musical phrase using the most logical and efficient processes possible.
 1. We use a consistent count structure (In for 2 & Out for 8) in all of our beginning exercises (from Breathing to F Descending to Articulation) to work for uncomplicated perfection of the air column.
 2. We start with a phrase consisting of a single unison pitch completely focusing on initiating, maintaining and releasing the most resonant, beautifully projected tone quality possible.
 3. We build into a 2 note phrase adding a single transition with the same tonal focus.
 4. We believe vehemently that the beginning transitions should ALWAYS be descending and the students should begin everyday playing into relaxation and projected resonance.
 5. We add length, range and articulation to the phrase methodically always working to maintain the excellence created in the earlier exercises.

6. Most importantly always remember, "We are what repeatedly do; excellence then is not an act but a habit."- Aristotle

***If you build focused, beautiful, detailed musical phrases in your fundamentals everyday then YOU WILL find your students playing beautiful, musical phrases in your ensembles.*

Breathing

- Breathing to focus
 - Our students are coming out of the hallway and into our rehearsal. We use breathing first (and most importantly) to bring a quiet focus to our musicians.
- Breathing as a technique
 - Mouth open
 - Think open & relaxed, breathe to the floor/seat, feel the back expand
 - 4 In/4 Out, 3/3, 2/2, 1/1
- Breathing for the musical phrase
 - 2 In/8 Out, 2/4, 1/8, 1/4
 - Use other count structures as the kids get more advanced that fit the musical structures and phrases that you are working on or plan to work on.
 - We always start the breathing exercises at 82bpm but we will increase the tempo for the second half of the exercises to match musical requirements and work on breathing for those phrases. When you increase tempos, be vigilant in your observation of the students to ensure that they stay open and relaxed.

Audiation and Ear Training- Training the musician away from the instrument

- We Sing/Buzz/Play **everything** that we do. It is vitally important to train our students to be musicians and not just instrumental technicians.
- We use the Harmony Director daily to teach accurate pitch. (Just/Adjusted Temperament for Major and Minor tonalities and Equal Temperament for Chromatic intervals.)
- Humming and Singing
 - Exercise- Hum to Ah 2 and 8 (**Ex. 1**)
- Buzzing
 - Make sure that you are setting things up in an environment where you can hear both the accuracy and quality of the students' singing and buzzing.
 - The air should move freely and relaxed through the lips with no "free buzz" and the lip vibration should only occur when the mouthpiece is placed on the embouchure.
- Use of tuners and Tonal Energy

Long Tones

- Long tones are just the next step in building the musical phrase. The exercise that we use to start our long tone series is F Concert 2 and 8 (**Ex. 1**) as we move through our natural musical progression of breathe, sing, buzz and play.
 - You can (and must) evaluate all 6 musical criteria through this exercise.
 1. Tone Quality & Pitch Center
 - Is the sound smooth and even?
 - Is it free of noise?
 - Does the pitch produced match the drone, example, other players?
 2. Timing
 - Do the students initiate sound with each other, the metronome, your baton?
 - Do they have an accurate, energetic release? Our experience is that the initiation of the sound is often prioritized and the release neglected.

3. Balance/Voice Priority
 - Can you hear all of the instruments equally or in the proportions that you want?
 - Can you hear every member of the section equally? (The importance of equal individual contribution can not be overstated and must not be ignored.)
 - Are the students listening to the people or sections that you have asked them to? (Training students to listen, match and balance to reference voices will change your ensemble's musical life forever.)
 4. Phrase Shape/Musical Direction
 - You can absolutely hear musical direction in this 8 beat phrase.
 - Is the airstream/tone quality warm and vibrant all the way to the release?
 5. Technique
 - Are all of the students sitting or standing correctly? Are they holding their instruments correctly? Are their bodies, arms, hands and faces relaxed and free of tension? Do their embouchures look correct?
 - Most people consider technique fast playing, difficult intervals, etc. and those things will and must be developed in our fundamental process, but we will never be consistently successful in our "fast or difficult" passages until the answers to the above are yes.
 6. Style
 - Do we start the sound with the same articulation?
 - Does the air energy and dynamic match after the articulation?
 - Does the air increase, decrease or stay the same into the release?
- The Essential Three
 - Concert F 2 and 8 (**Ex. 1**)
 - F Descending (**Ex. 2**)
 - Flow Studies 1-6 (**Ex. 3**)
 - We believe that these first three long tone exercises combined with our breathing, singing and buzzing are the essential and non-negotiable foundation of everything we do. They gradually and logically build the musical phrase step by step from the breath and a single pitch to advanced intervals over a wide portion of the instruments' normal range.
 - **You must obsess about tone quality and be incredibly detailed when working on your long tone exercises.** If you are musical, positively intense, detailed and determined with your comments to your students about the performance and progress of their long tones **THEY WILL NOT BE BORED OR LOSE INTEREST!**
 - Students tire of playing one note, but I find they never tire of making music.

Lip Slurs

- Lip slurs are an essential part of building tone quality, range and flexibility. We find they are the most difficult thing to play as a musical phrase, but when played musically, pay huge musical dividends.
 - We begin with a very simple Lip Slur that begins on Concert F with a descending interval so the brass continue to play into relaxation and resonance. (**Ex. 4**)
 - We demand the same musical breath and initiation of sound (accuracy of articulation and centered, resonant tone quality) that we have on all of our long tones.
 - We teach the Lip Slurs as written but then drop the rests in m. 2, 6, 10, etc. to turn the exercise into a 4 bar phrase.
 - Our base tempo for lip slurs is 100bpm.

- We hear and work the woodwind line separately from the brass regularly on Lip Slur 3 & 4 (**Ex. 5 & 6**)
- We prepare the woodwinds for Lip Slur 4 (**Ex. 5**) by increasing the tempo of LS 3 to 120, 140, 160, 180 and 200bpm then drop the met back to 100bpm for LS 4 (**EX. 6**)

Articulation (Ex. 7, 8, 9 & 10)

- Articulation serves two purposes. Its “fundamental” purpose is to allow the air to initiate sound at the desired speed for sustained resonance. Its musical purpose is to establish the style that the note will be played.
- We play our Articulation Exercises out of a long tone to again emphasize establishing great tone quality.
- We always begin with Legato articulation and work into Marcato and Staccato.
- Establish a uniform set of syllables for Brass Articulation and Woodwind Articulation.

Brass Syllables

1. Legato- Lu (**Ex. 7**)
2. Long Lifted- Do (**Ex. 8**)
3. Marcato- Da (**Ex. 9**)
4. Staccato- De (**Ex. 10**)
 - We only use a Te, Ti, or Ta tongue in special situations where an incredibly firm tongue is necessary.

Woodwind Syllables

1. Legato- Do (**Ex. 7**)
2. Long Lifted- Da (**Ex. 8**)
3. Marcato- De (**Ex. 9**)
4. Staccato- Di(t) (**Ex. 10**)
 - We sometimes use a T based articulation syllable with Flutes if needed, but I would caution you against ever using a T syllable with any reed instrument.

Remington Exercises (Ex. 11, 12, 13 & 14)

- Many directors begin their daily drill with a Remington exercise, but we feel that tone quality, flexibility and timing should already be established in the rehearsal before we expect the students to play these exercises as a musical phrase.
- The sing/buzz/play technique is essential to playing these exercises accurately & musically.
- We explain and rehearse all of the intervals individually with the students.
- We place the Remington exercises after the articulation series because we will often add articulation patterns from the literature we are preparing. This really helps to bring relevance to the fundamentals and creates transfer from the fundamental routine to the literature.

Scales (Ex. 15 & 16)

- We write the scales in a single octave and in a single direction to place emphasis on playing the scale as a musical phrase. We find that when played in multiple octaves in both directions all but our best players really struggle to keep a musical focus.
- Changing keys every 2 measures has proven incredibly helpful in building our sight reading skills and is a great exercise in focus for the students.
- In the summer we start the scales incredibly slowly and by the spring we are working on the scales at 130-140bpm
- Students work on full range scales in their sectionals and private lessons.

The Chorale (Ex. 17)

- The chorale is where most directors start to think musically. I challenge you to make it the logical conclusion to a process where musicality is always the goal.
 - Select a chorale that is easily attainable from a technical perspective, is in a reasonable key and is written in four parts.
 - Work to ensure that every student can sing and/or buzz their part with accurate timing, intonation and smooth transitions.
 - Make sure that everyone knows what part they are playing; Soprano, Alto, Tenor or Bass.
 - **Clearly define the phrase shape for the students and assign breathing or discuss musical breathing options.**
 - Play the voice parts individually, in pairs and trios. Again, sing/buzz/play the parts in these groups
 - When playing two parts at a time look for consonant intervals to tune. For example in our chorale (Ex. 14) when the Bass and Alto lines play together the intervals in the first phrase are; 5th, 5th, Octave, 5th, Octave, 5th, Octave, 5th; a great tuning exercise.
 - Hold one note at a time so students can listen and tune.
 - Play every pitch as a whole note with four beats of rest in between. Add a drone playing the two pitches in the rest for the students to match.
- Build the chords Root/5th/3rd as shown at the beginning of the chorale (Ex. 15)

Please scan the QR Code below or type in the URL to find this handout and our complete Fundamental Packet.

goo.gl/4MxbqW



Please feel free to contact me with any questions that you might have. We would love to help you in any way that we can.

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Fundamental Routine

North Shore Senior High Band

TBA 2018

1

2 F Descending

3 Flow Study Series 1-All Slurred

4 Lip Slur #2

5 Lip Slur #3

6 Lip Slur #4

Woodwinds

106

Brass

111

115

7 Articulation Series-Legato

Flute

Clarinet, Trumpet, Horn

121

Trombone and Euphonium

Tuba

8 Long Lifted

Flute

Clarinet, Trumpet, Horn

134

Trombone and Euphonium

Tuba

9 Marcato

Flute

Clarinet, Trumpet, Horn

147

Trombone and Euphonium

Tuba

10 Staccato

Flute

Clarinet, Trumpet, Horn

160

Trombone and Euphonium

Tuba

11 F Remington

173

12 Bb Remington

188

13 Remington in 5ths

Musical score for 'Remington in 5ths' in B-flat major, 4/4 time. The piece consists of two staves. The first staff (treble clef) starts at measure 203 and features a series of chords in the fifth position, primarily using the right hand. The second staff (bass clef) starts at measure 203 and features a series of chords in the fifth position, primarily using the left hand. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat).

14 Remington in Major Chords

Musical score for 'Remington in Major Chords' in B-flat major, 4/4 time. The piece consists of two staves. The first staff (treble clef) starts at measure 218 and features a series of chords in the first position, primarily using the right hand. The second staff (bass clef) starts at measure 218 and features a series of chords in the first position, primarily using the left hand. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat).

15 Descending Scales

Continue chromatically up to the F Major Scale

Musical score for 'Descending Scales' in B-flat major, 4/4 time. The piece consists of two staves. The first staff (treble clef) starts at measure 233 and features a series of descending eighth-note scales. The second staff (bass clef) starts at measure 233 and features a series of descending eighth-note scales. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat).

16 Ascending Scales

Continue chromatically down to the F Major Scale

Musical score for 'Ascending Scales' in B-flat major, 4/4 time. The piece consists of two staves. The first staff (treble clef) starts at measure 243 and features a series of ascending eighth-note scales. The second staff (bass clef) starts at measure 243 and features a series of ascending eighth-note scales. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat).

17 Doxology Chorale

Musical score for 'Doxology Chorale' in B-flat major, 4/4 time. The piece consists of two staves. The first staff (treble clef) starts at measure 253 and features a series of chords in the first position, primarily using the right hand. The second staff (bass clef) starts at measure 253 and features a series of chords in the first position, primarily using the left hand. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat).