



Texas Bandmasters Association Convention/Clinic July 22-24, 2021

Developing Music Literacy in Beginning Band

**CLINICIAN:
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HENRY B. GONZALEZ CONVENTION CENTER - SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

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Texas Bandmasters Association Convention/Clinic 2021

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What is literacy?

Literacy is the ability to read, write, speak, and listen in a manner that allows us to make sense of the world.

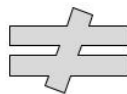
What is music literacy?

Music literacy is the ability to read, compose, perform, and listen in a manner that allows us to make sense of music.

Purpose of Presentation

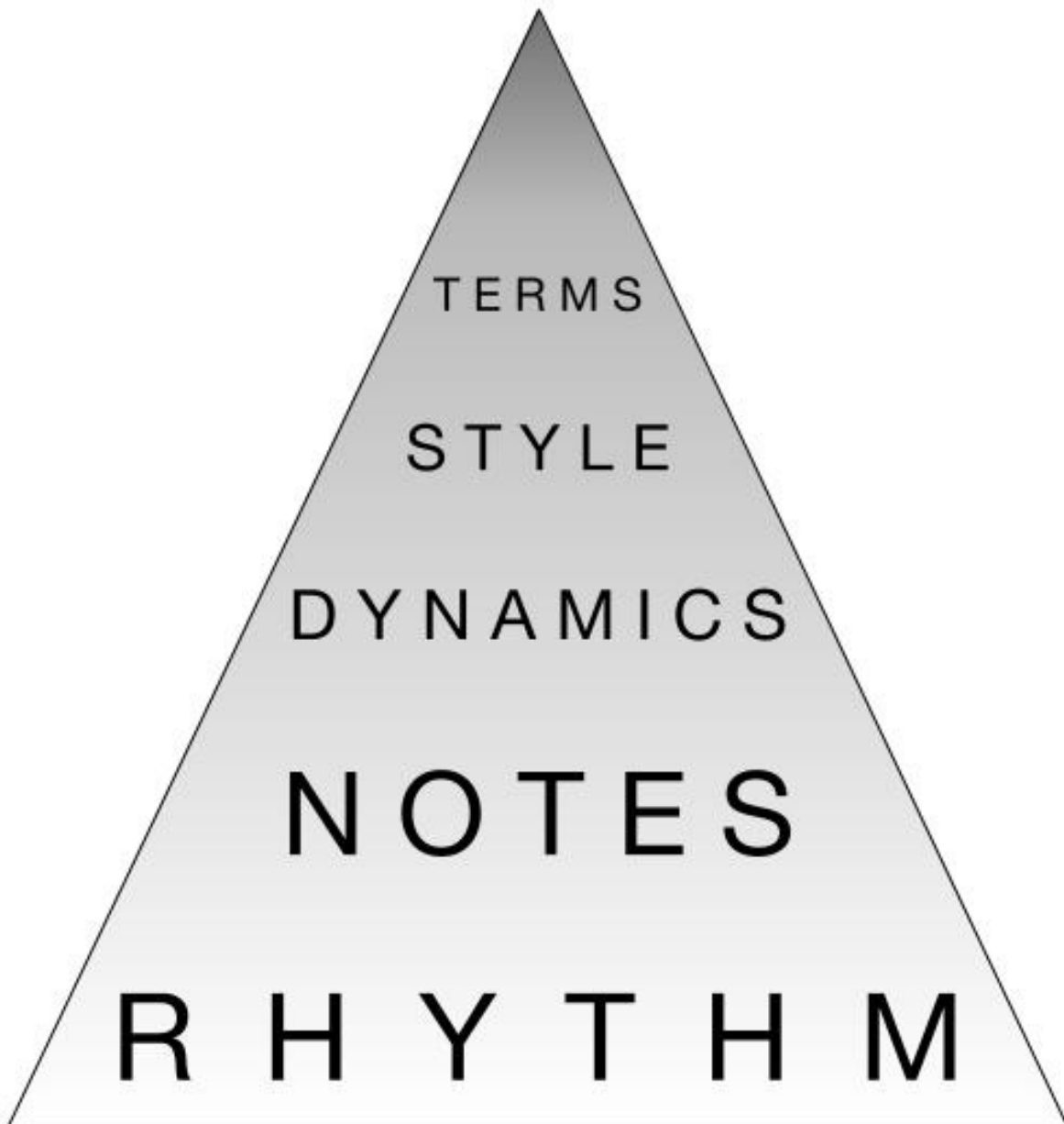
In this presentation, I will propose that literacy (specifically reading in efforts to perform the written language) is the most important skill we teach our students. Reading and performing the written language is the key to improving performance, composition, and listening skills. Students that are literate will be more engaged in learning their instruments therefore enhancing our instrumental pedagogy.

INSTRUMENTAL
PEDAGOGY



MUSIC
LITERACY

The Overview



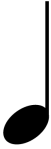



Rhythm





Rhythm is the most important aspect of understanding the musical language. Without a proper understanding of rhythm, all other attempts to develop literacy will be in vain.

A right note at the wrong time is a wrong note.

Step 1 - Developing Rhythm from the Start

- Explaining “The Beat”
- Developing Proper Foot Tap Technique
- Establish the Quarter Note & Quarter Rest





| | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  |  |  |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  |  |  |
| (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |

- Teaching Proper Clapping Technique
- Teaching Proper Counting Technique

Step 2 - Scaffolding Larger Note Values








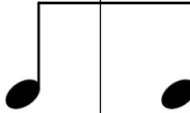
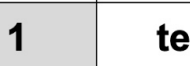
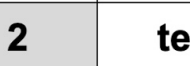
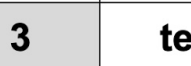
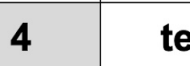
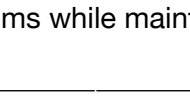
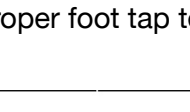


- Use a Rhythm Tree

| | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|  | |  | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|  |  |  |  |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |







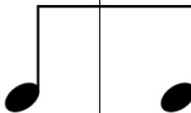
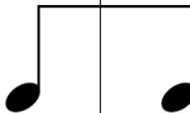
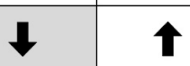







- Teach sustain and release as part of proper clapping technique
- Teaching pulsing while counting for longer note values will help establish subdivision later on. (You can teach this without explaining it. It can be done through “call and response.”)
- Always teach that sound touches silence.
- Rests are not “nothing!” They are musical pauses designed to provide interest to what would otherwise be a constant production of sound!

Step 3 - Establish Subdivision

Understanding subdivision is the key to unlocking rhythmic accuracy. In the first year of instruction, ensuring individual success with 8th note subdivision should be your primary focus.

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  |  |  |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|  |  |  |  |
| 1 | te | 2 | te |
|  |  |  |  |
| 1 | te | 3 | te |
|  |  |  |  |
| 4 | te | | |














While teaching 8th notes, make sure your students can clap and count a variety of 8th note rhythms while maintaining proper foot tap technique.

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  |  |  |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|  |  |  |  |
| ↓ | ↑ | ↓ | ↑ |
|  |  |  |  |
| ↓ | ↑ | ↓ | ↑ |
|  |  |  |  |
| ↓ | ↑ | | |















It's important to help students understand that the foot tap remains consistent with the beat and never taps the rhythm. This can be tricky when learning 8th notes and it is imperative that we help them through this hurdle.

Establishing a strong understanding of 8th note subdivision will unlock many tricky rhythms!

















Dotted quarter notes -

| | | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | |  |  |  |
| 1 2 | | te | 3 | 4 |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| 1 | te | 2 | te | 3 |
|  |  |  |  | |
| 4 | te | 5 | te | 6 |

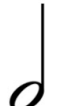
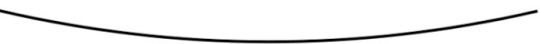












Syncopation -

| | | | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  |  |  |  |
| 1 | te 2 | te | 3 | 4 |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| 1 | te | 2 | te | 3 |
|  |  |  |  | |
| 4 | te | 5 | te | 6 |

8th note/8th rest patterns -

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1 | (te) | 2 | (te) | (3) | te | (4) | te |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1 | te | 2 | te | 3 | te | 4 | te |

8th notes tied after long notes -

| | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  | | |  |  |  |  |
| 1 | 2 | | | 3 | te | 4 | te |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1 | te | 2 | te | 3 | te | 4 | te |

Staff Notation

Staff notation is always easier for students to learn than rhythm. There are many good tricks for teaching note recognition. Some tools that work well -

- Musical alphabet
- Acronyms
- Chants

It is a good idea to teach all students both treble and bass clef. Some instruments, such as Horn, are multi-clef instruments at the high school level. It also makes switching instruments easier in the future if you need to move a Trumpet player to Euphonium or similar.

Some areas of staff notation that students generally struggle with are the following -

- Ledger lines
- Enharmonics (teaching piano keyboard is great for solving this one!)
- Stem direction (when composing)

Flash cards and regular note-naming games or quizzes can be very effective to help students read faster. They must learn to read the written notation and immediately associate the note name and fingering as one unit. Many students only connect what they see with the fingering.

Dynamics

Students need to know and understand all dynamics from pianissimo to fortissimo. In the first year of instruction, students can be expected to start demonstrating dynamics after about 6 months of instruction. Always follow this rule when allowing your students to perform with dynamics -

“Never play softer or louder than you can with a good sound.”

Style

It is highly encouraged that you have the students play all notes as connected or “touching” notes in the first year of instruction. However, you can still make them aware of basic style markings and what they mean so that they know what lies ahead for them in the second year of instruction.

Terminology

Have you ever heard this question in class? (It usually happens at the worst time!)

“What does allargando mean?”

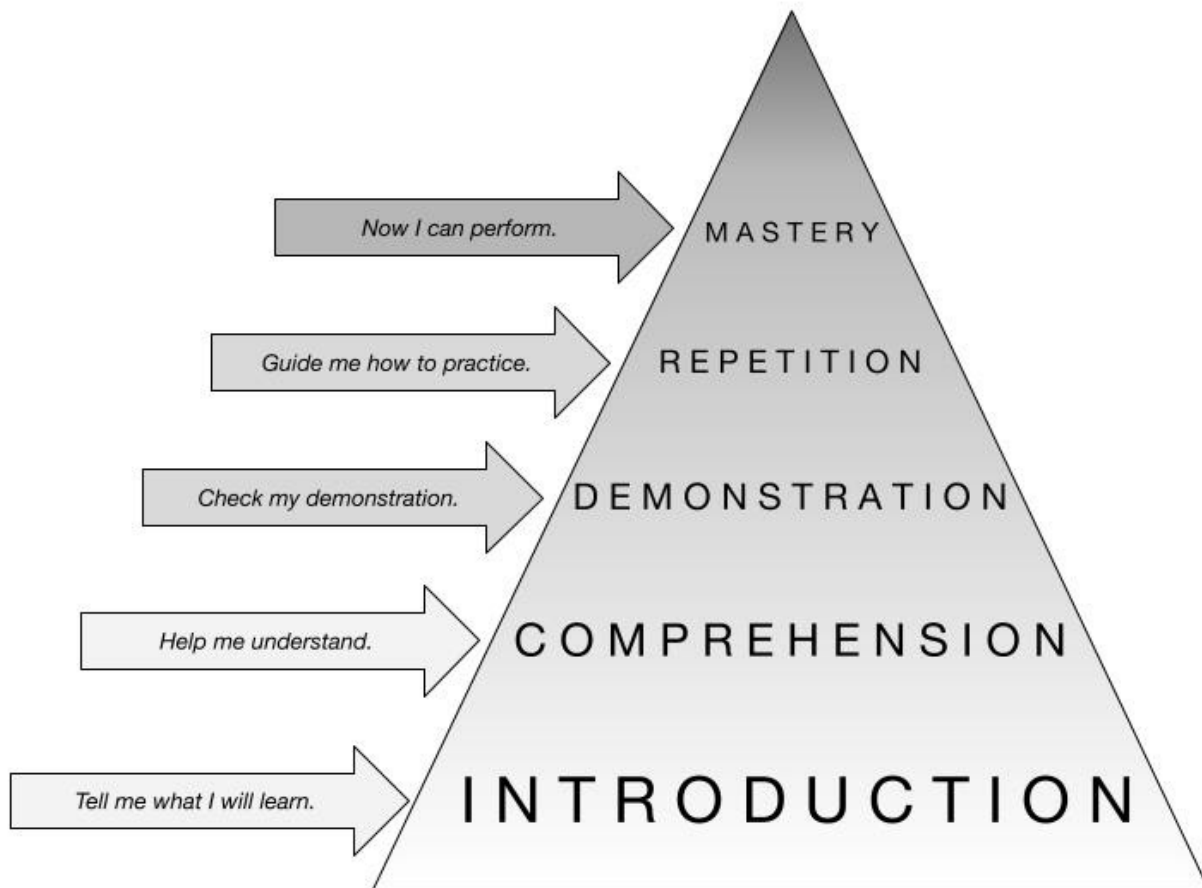
STOP! Don’t answer the question. A wonderful teaching moment has just presented itself to you. With the invention of the internet, students today now have the ability to find the answer themselves with just a few clicks on their phone or tablet. Ask them to look it up themselves!

Now I know what you’re thinking...

“Won’t this take away from rehearsal time?”

You’re right. It most certainly will take away from rehearsal time. However, they’ll be more likely to look up words in the future if you make them do it once and then hold them accountable to know what the words on the page mean in the future!

The Hierarchy of Mastery



Introduction

Skill acquisition begins with introduction. Always start by exposing students to new material by telling them what they will be learning and in some cases, demonstrating the final product.

Comprehension

After introducing new material to your students, begin scaffolding their comprehension. Ask yourself the following questions -

- *What concepts are new to my students in this lesson?*
- *What key components must my students understand in order to demonstrate this skill?*

As you begin instruction, carefully observe your students and ask yourself the following questions -

- *Are there any gaps in their learning from previous lessons that may prevent them from completing this task? If so, you must fill those gaps before proceeding. Gaps in*

learning are the most common reason why students struggle to play more advanced music later on.

- *(Note from Mr. Chilton - Gaps in learning are our biggest opponent of the game. Sometimes gaps occur because a student didn't understand something the previous day or previous week. Sometimes gaps occur when they aren't paying attention in class. Even worse, sometimes gaps occur because we just didn't explain the material well enough. For whatever reason a gap has occurred, we must take time to carefully fill that gap without frustration if our students will be able to move to the next skill.)*
- *How is my instructional pacing? Am I moving too slow? Am I moving too fast? More often than not, we move too fast with our students. You may worry that you are boring students if you go too slow, but the students won't know you're going slow if you don't tell them!*
 - *(Note from Mr. Chilton - I prefer to think of my pacing as thorough, not slow. I even tell this to my students and they always appreciate the level of detail in my explanation. It also helps those students that want to go faster tolerate thorough explanations.)*
- *At what level are my students understanding the new material? During the comprehension stage, it is acceptable for understanding to hover around 80% if this is your first time introducing a concept.*
 - *(Note from Mr. Chilton - I love using the 80% rule when teaching new concepts. Not all students will get every concept the first time you introduce it. That's why we teach and reteach! I always felt comfortable that if I could get 80% to understand a concept the first time that I could move on. Oftentimes, comprehension was much higher than 80%, but I used this rule to help me not bog down when approaching difficult topics for the first time.*

Demonstration

Once your students have been introduced to a concept and a satisfactory level of comprehension has been achieved, create a safe space for your students to demonstrate the newly introduced skill. After each demonstration, provide constructive feedback to guide them to a correct repetition when necessary.

Students only need to be able to demonstrate a skill once to know it's possible!

It is highly encouraged, especially in the beginning year, that students demonstrate skills individually. Individual demonstrations will always be the best way to ensure your students are prepared for eventual mastery. When students perform in a group, it can be difficult to decipher which students can and cannot demonstrate a skill.

As was mentioned in the beginning of this section, it is important to establish a safe space for individual demonstrations before asking students to play by themselves. We must be mindful of our verbal responses and body language in response to incorrect demonstrations in order to create an environment where repeated attempts are met with enthusiasm.

Create an environment where repeated attempts are met with enthusiasm!

Repetition

After successful demonstration of the new material, all students must be given guidance on how to repeat the skill and allowed time to develop their abilities. Only after time and repetition will they be able to perform.

Mastery

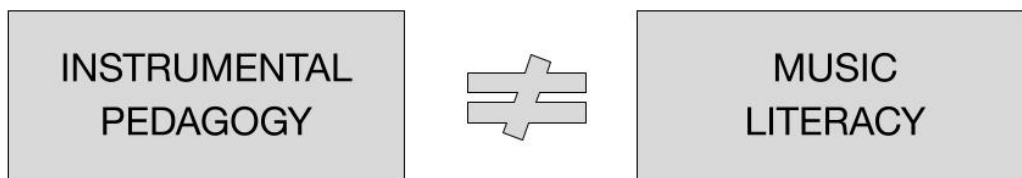
Mastery is the culmination of introduction, comprehension, demonstration, and repetition. Once a student has achieved mastery of a skill, they are ready to perform that skill for others and also scaffold new skills.

Note from Mr. Chilton - One thing I've found particularly useful is explaining to students that musical performance, like all other skills (think professional athlete or brain surgeon) aren't mastered overnight. Our current educational system tends to favor comprehension over mastery, but in music, you must master to be able to perform! Teaching them the following progression has helped my students buy into the time and effort necessary to acquire new skills.

Introduction > Comprehension > Demonstration > Repetition > Mastery

Conclusion

As music educators, it is our job to teach both instrumental pedagogy and music literacy.



A regular approach to music theory in the classroom can yield huge gains in the future years. What time may be given up during the beginning year teaching theory will be gained in the years to come when your students can read music better and faster!

RC Theory

Do you need a resource that's fun and engaging to teach music theory on a regular basis to your beginners? Check out RC Theory provided by Williamson Music 1st!

What is RC Theory? RC Theory is a set of -

- 36 fun and engaging music theory video lessons! (20-30 minutes in length each)
- 36 worksheets to accompany each video lesson!

RC Theory videos include multiple characters and a small narrative that coincides with the lessons to help keep students engaged!

All worksheets have been field-tested and improved annually since 2013 and the videos were field-tested during the 2020-2021 school year!

Come visit us at the Williamson Music 1st's booth or website to learn more!

You can reach me via email at chilton.rob@gmail.com if you are ever in need of professional development services, consultation or clinician services, or guest directing experiences.

Thank you for attending my presentation!