



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

**Laying the Foundation for Stronger
Ensemble Skills**

**CLINICIAN:
Jeff King**

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HENRY B. GONZALEZ CONVENTION CENTER - SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

Laying the Foundation for Stronger Ensemble Skills

Texas Bandmasters Association Convention

Thursday, July 22, 2021

Jeff King, Presenter

Daily Drill Priorities and Goals:

- **Tone, Flexibility, Range, Dynamics, Technique, Articulation, and Listening Skills**
- Balance skills both in time and ability
- Students/teacher are aware of goals and objectives behind every exercise/drill
- Relevance to music literature – all of these skills lead to better music making
- Ask thought-provoking questions – higher level question technique
- Sounds consistently good with higher levels of achievement
- Students are expected to listen ALL the time and have an educated opinion

*” If your students get bored during your daily drill/warm-up time,
maybe they have stopped thinking.”*

*“Be meticulous and exacting. Be careful not to bore students and stick with something too long in one class or it may
become pointless.”¹*

Eddie Green, Professor Emeritus, Univ. of Houston

Guiding Teaching Principles:

1. Introduce one concept/skill at a time.
2. Do not advance until concept/skill is mastered. Must be given the time to master.
3. When a concept is introduced, it must not cause confusion with students.
4. Teach on a need-to-know basis. KISS approach.

Tone:

- Concept of Sound – tone models
- Embouchure (aperture, angle, process)
- Air Concepts (inhalation and exhalation process)
- Start – Sustain – Release Concepts
- Body/Hand/Finger positions
- Instrument/Equipment (mouthpiece, reeds, mallets)
- Exercises to promote tone quality – long tones, flow studies, etc.
- Constantly improving – long journey to great tone

Long tones allow students to concentrate on TONE with a properly set, functional embouchure with efficient use of air. Students need to be aware of the sound they would like to produce before they release air into their instruments.

“The sound you have in your mind is the sound you will make.”²

John Paynter, Former Director of Bands, Northwestern University

“The benefit of playing music in unison is the first step in producing a mature sound that will help match tone qualities, intonation, volume, etc., across your ensemble. Playing in unison is one of the most efficient ways to improve the overall quality of an ensemble’s sound and is the foundation of playing in-tune. When a band plays a unison note, they are producing several different octaves simultaneously. Learning to play in-tune octaves is the basis for superior intonation.”³

David Newell, Music Educator and Author

Starting Note:

- Concert F and Bb
- Octave Options
- Sound Check

Demonstration Group – 1st note

Long Tones:

- F Descending long tone
- Remington-type long tone

“At first, I would suggest that the player remain with each exercise until he has developed a feeling of relaxation and control—through strength—before adding the next upper series note. ...keep him loose and free... but will continue to increase his control and flexibility.”⁴

Emory Remington, Former Trombone Professor, Eastman School of Music

- Chromatic long tone
- Expanding long tone
- Flow study - Vincent Cichowicz (Neal Berntsen & Tom Rolfs)
- Pass Through Exercise – Eddie Green

Demonstration Group – Expanding Intervals Long Tone

“Tone must be listed first in any discussion of music ensemble pedagogy because it affects and is affected by everything else... It may be dark, or bright, or rich, or harsh, or thin, or characteristic, or uncharacteristic, or resonant, or dull. Whatever else it is, tone is always the highway by which one travels to musical expression. It’s the fundamental life force that makes beautiful music possible.”⁵

David Morrison, Band Director, Author

UIL Comment Sheet on Tone – Stephen Covey’s 2 of 7 habits – Begin with the end in mind

- + - Centered, focused tone quality
- + - Balance within sections
- + - Balance between sections
- + - Intonation within sections
- + - Intonation between sections
- + - Dynamic contrast without distortion

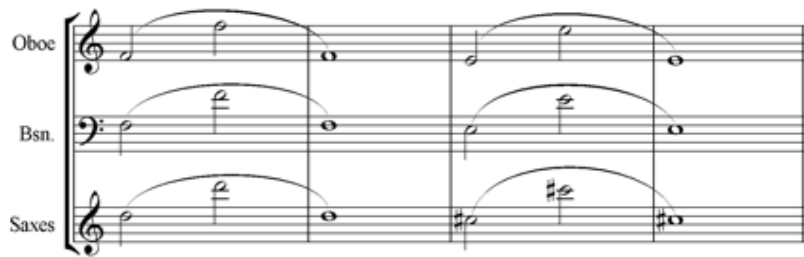
Flexibility Exercises/Skills:

1. Harmonics – flutes

2. Register Slurs – clarinets



3. Octave Slurs – saxophones and double reeds



Demonstration Group

4. Lip Slurs – all brass



5. 2 & 4 mallet technique



6. Rudimental technique

Dynamics:

Many of the exercises that you play during your daily drill time will be with a full sound to promote a relaxed and controlled sound. This being said, it is important to utilize the entire range of dynamics during your daily drill time to give your students the necessary skills to be a sensitive musician.

- Assigning numbers to dynamics
- Exercises to develop dynamic contrast and control
- When applying in an ensemble/music, it is better to understand the student’s role and listening assignment, rather than say, “play softer”, suggest “fit in to __”, balance to __

“Whatever volume we call forte and fortissimo should be no more than they can play without distorting a good tone and without “spatting” the attacks. Piano should be no softer than the sound they can produce with confidence.”⁶

Mallory B. Thompson, Director of Bands, Northwestern University

“When a band tries to play soft, the resonance and the tone quality often go “down the tubes.” Students often associate softness with a lack of intensity.”⁷

Gregory Bimm, Former Director of Bands, Marian Catholic High School

Technique:

The goal is to develop a “technical vocabulary” in all keys (major and minor). This facility will allow students to recognize and execute scale and arpeggio passages in their music with greater confidence.

- Develop technical vocabulary in a specific key
- Drill a specific exercise in all key area
- Always emphasize good tone

Demonstration Group – Scale in Thirds, Major Arpeggios

“Play arpeggios to get all ranges to sound good by being in tune and listening to the sound.”⁸

Adolph ‘Bud’ Herseth, Former Principal Trumpet, Chicago Symphony Orchestra

Articulation:

“Don’t play it on the horn but play it on your air-pattern & say tu, tu, tu on air only in the correct style.”¹²

Vincent Cichowicz, Former Trumpet Player, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Northwestern University

Listening:

3-Levels of Listening

1. Listen to yourself
2. Listen to your section
3. Listen to the entire ensemble



5-Levels of Listening (David Brandon)

1. Make one note sound the same from beginning to end with a mature sound.
2. Make two or more notes sound the same for a mature individual sound.
3. Match tone, pitch, & energy with others in your section to produce a mature section sound (side to side listening).
4. Match section to section for a mature ensemble sound
5. Balance to the most important part. Listen for/to _____ ??

Horizontal vs. Vertical Tuning

Intervals, Chords, Chorales

Exercises to reinforce

Concert F Around the Band

Tuning procedure – correct notes to check with tuner

- Know the harmonic series and pitch tendencies
- Know the “trouble” notes on your instrument
- Alternate fingerings/slide positions

Intonation:

- Every rehearsal should incorporate listening skills
- Centered tone – every tone has a spot where it is most resonant – centered notes generally produce in tune notes – learn the out of tune notes that need to be altered – one should be able to vary the pitch of a note, some 30 cents above and below the pitch (100 cents in a semitone/half step)
- Correct fingering/technique, correct lip vibrations (MP buzzing) will aid in finding the center of the pitch – BERP (Buzz Extension Resistance Piece)
- Playing “in tune” is not a matter of “being in tune” rather “getting in tune” with other players
- Tune 1st chair players and then match down the line
- Always emphasis good tone as good tone and good intonation, they are inseparable – correct embouchure, breath support, size and shape of the oral cavity
- Setting students apart allows them to hear themselves more easily – each player learns to play with more confidence and project sound better
- Playing in tune with a tuner/app etc. does not ensure good intonation. Students who learn to play in tune with a tuning device, will ultimately be able to make the small tuning adjustments in an ensemble setting
- Intonation skills can be greatly improved in smaller ensemble settings – in full ensemble settings, these “ensembles” or groups can be achieved by creating smaller groups within the ensemble – trio concept, etc.

“When you really think about it, we conductors are in complete control of surprisingly few things. ... I believe in shifting responsibility to the students. Their list (producing a good sound, counting, playing in tune, etc.) is a long one, as opposed to ours.”¹³

Craig Kirchoff, Former Director. of Bands University of Minnesota

“Players have to match each other and stop the beats: then an interval will sound in tune, even though the tuner may indicate that one note is out of tune. For example, we intentionally lower the third to get major chords to sound right; and students are very adept at differentiating between this “vertical” tuning and the “horizontal” type. When the last thing you want to do is play a flat interval when moving from the tonic to the third in a major key. A melodic line demands true intervals. The choices depend on understanding that the player’s role in the musical process will change, according to the function – melodic or harmonic.”¹⁴

Eugene Corporon, Conductor, Director of Wind Studies, University of North Texas

Demonstration Group – Chord Tuning in F Major (p.32)

Tuning Major Chords

1. Establish root for pitch and volume
2. Stretch the 5th slightly (P5 up OR P4 lower) and balance and tune to root
3. Lower the 3rd slightly and balance to root and 5th

Tuning Minor Chords

1. Establish root for pitch and volume
2. Stretch the 5th slightly (P5 up OR P4 lower) and balance and tune to root
3. Raise the 3rd slightly and balance to root and 5th

*“Of the two separate parts of a rehearsal, it is **The Lesson Part** that is the most important, whether with beginners or with the most advanced groups in a music program. Basic Skills, logically sequenced and mastered, are taught to 100% of the students **before** they are encountered in literature. **The Lesson Part** is what makes **The Literature Part** work.”¹⁵*

David Newell, Music Educator and Author

¹ Eddie Green. *On Teaching Band, Notes from Eddie Green*. Hal Leonard, 2012.

² Donald Hunsberger. *The Remington Warm-Up Studies*. Accura Music, 1980.

³ John E. Williamson/ed. Kenneth L. Neidig. *Rehearsing the Band*. Meredith Music, 1998.

⁴ Donald Hunsberger. *The Remington Warm-Up Studies*. Accura Music, 1980.

⁵ David Morrison. *The Band Whisperer*. Kjos Music Press, 2020

⁶ Joseph Casey. *Teaching Techniques and Insights for Instrumental Music Educators*. GIA Publication, 1993

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Daniel L. Kohut. *Instrumental Music Pedagogy*. Stipes Publishing, 1973

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Richard Floyd. *The Artistry of Teaching and Making Music*. GIA Publication, 2015

¹² Joseph Casey. *Teaching Techniques and Insights for Instrumental Music Educators*. GIA Publication, 1993

¹³ John E. Williamson/ed. Kenneth L. Neidig. *Rehearsing the Band*. Meredith Music, 1998

¹⁴ Joseph Casey. *Teaching Techniques and Insights for Instrumental Music Educators*. GIA Publication, 1993

¹⁵ David Newell. *The Rehearsal: A Quick Guide to One Music Teacher's Most Potent Retention Tool*. Kjos Music Press, 2015.

“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act – but a habit.”

Aristotle

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