

Daily Drill: The Magic Pill for Intonation and Ensemble Skills
presented by Bobbi Mauldin
Krimmel Intermediate School
Klein ISD
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Midwest Band & Orchestra Clinic
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Have you ever wished there was a magic pill to improve your orchestra's intonation, tone quality, and ensemble skills on a daily basis? By using a series of long tones beginning with a G on the D string, students will begin to understand and hear what 'being in tune' really is. At the same time, students are learning how to control their bow speed in order to maintain a consistent tone quality in every part of the bow. By varying the bow speed, not the placement of the bow on the strings in relation to the bridge and fingerboard, tone quality can be improved and maintained. We also have time to pay more attention to the beginning and end of each note and the energy needed from both hands in order to maintain the pitch and tone quality we want.

Once the orchestra can play the G really properly in tune on a consistent basis, we add notes descending from the G by half steps. Each note receives the same attention as the G. In order for this warm-up to work for an orchestra, the director and students have to be patient and consistent. Daily Drill is exactly that...something that must be done at the beginning of every rehearsal, all year long.

Eventually, I add a Bach Chorale to the warm-up, but I never leave the Daily Drill behind. By concentrating on the intonation of just a few notes every day, your students will learn how good intonation sounds and soon you will be able to translate this to everything your orchestra performs. Concentrating on the bow stroke in long tones, while paying attention good intonation, will allow your students to understand and perform the basics of bow distribution and what they need to do with the bow in order to have a more consistent and blended tone quality.

Daily Drill, if used on a consistent basis, will give your orchestra a clearer pitch center, better bow control and tonal energy as well as a more balanced ensemble sound. Maybe it is a magic pill after all.

Before playing each note, students should think/decide:

- What do we want to sound like?
- What do we have to do to get that sound?
- How fast should the first bow stroke be?

The student's job is really simple:

- Sit correctly with good posture and left hand position/bow hold
- Breathe together before each bow stroke to begin the note together
- Use a faster bow stroke in the upper half of the bow to maintain the tonal energy of the note being played
- Stop bows together at the end of each note
- All pitches should match – careful finger placement, especially for half steps
- Maintain balance and good characteristic sound between sections

After initial sequence is in tune and balanced, make some changes to your routine:

- Start all notes up bow, then regular sequence
- Turn bow around (frog on top), then regular sequence
- Change to G – F# - G, then rest four counts, etc
- Play in doubled eighth note pattern
- “Bopping” - play just the beginning of each note, really short

Things to say:

- Focus – Spin the sound from your eyes
 - Place the sound at a certain point in the room
- Go to the end of each note
- Faster bow towards the tip
- Think about your bow speed

Choose whatever Chorale you like and have the students memorize the first section. Transfer all of the skills learned by using Remington to the Chorale and everything else you perform.

Extras:

- Pay close attention to the beginning of the note and the end of the note
- Pay more attention to the rest after the note than to the end of the note itself
- Keep good playing position and bow hold throughout
- Clear tone quality on each note
- Each note should have the same energy in the bow stroke from frog – tip – frog
- Match articulation across the ensemble

Bobbi Mauldin, a graduate of the University of Houston, is the orchestra director at Krimmel Intermediate School in the Klein Independent School District, Spring, TX. She began her career as an orchestra director in 1980 in the Pasadena, TX Independent School District. During her first year of teaching, Mrs. Mauldin placed in the top five middle school orchestras in the State of Texas and has had several other groups place in the “top ten”. Throughout her tenure as an orchestra director in Texas, Mrs. Mauldin’s orchestras have been consistent UIL Sweepstakes award recipients as well as having many individual students place in Region and All-State Orchestras.

In addition to her current work at Krimmel Intermediate, Mrs. Mauldin began and directed the Suzuki Violin program at McGaha Academy in Wichita Falls, TX. While in Wichita Falls, she received several awards and grants for innovative teaching and a governmental grant for a music listening program she designed and implemented at McGaha Academy. While teaching at McGaha Academy, she was a featured presenter at the annual Magnet Schools of Texas Convention in Abilene, TX. Mrs. Mauldin conducted the Clear Brook HS Chamber Orchestra at the Southeast Regional Music Convention in Monroe, LA in 2008 and conducted the Denton High School Orchestra in Carnegie Hall in 1994. She has also been on several curriculum writing committees as well as chairman of the University Interscholastic League Sightreading Selection Committee in 2005 and 2006.

Mrs. Mauldin is a member of the Texas Music Educators’ Association, Texas Music Adjudicators’ Association, Texas Orchestra Directors’ Association and the Suzuki Association of the Americas. Mrs. Mauldin has participated in many Suzuki Violin Institutes and is a registered Suzuki Violin teacher. She has been nominated to Who's Who Among America's Women and Who's Who Among America's Teachers six times.

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Contact information:

bmauldin1@kleinisd.net

832-375-7148

