

# Sound Fundamentals

## Daily Ensemble Training for Ideal Tone, Intonation and Blend

Minoru Otaki, Saitama Sakae High School Wind Orchestra

### 1. Introduction:

Modern wind instruments with their improved technology help players produce more accurate pitch and intonation. However, aside from solo playing, it is still as challenging as ever to have a tuned and balanced ensemble sound amongst many players – playing in correct pitch, listening to others, having a mutual understanding and sense of sound structure, etc. These concepts need to be taught to all student ensemble members in a given limited time.

### 2. Before playing:

There are some basic requirements to producing correct intonation. One is to develop the skill of solfège. Another is to produce and use a strong air supply. Playing instruments with deep air is essential. I often see this is where many ensembles have difficulty. Well-projected sounds can more easily blend within the ensemble and create clearer unisons.

- a. Posture
- b. Height of music stand
- c. Feet placement
- d. Focus far away

When playing:

Teach students to

- a. Relax
- b. Utilize deep breath
- c. Look far ahead
- d. Maintain stomach/diaphragm pressure

### 3. Unison Training

In recent years many method books are available for unison training. However, it seems that unison training is not done often enough. Rehearsals cannot move forward if unisons are not adjusted and matched. As the ensemble improves in its unison training, the ensemble sound should change dramatically. The idea is that if you can't match unisons, you most likely can't produce good harmony.

In unison training, have a mutual, shared understanding of:

- 1) Sound Volume
- 2) Tone Color
- 3) Pitch

Reasons why pitch does not match:

- 1) Not playing instruments correctly
- 2) Not visualizing the pitch to create
- 3) Broken instruments

## Unison Exercise

Play the exercise shown below, starting with clarinets. Other sections need to listen to the preceding sound carefully. Brass sections follow clarinets with mouth piece buzzing. For tuba, it will be more effective to place an 8-inch long vinyl hose on the mouth piece.



After clarinets complete the exercise, add other sections is until the entire ensemble is playing.

**Group 1:** Clarinet

**Group 2:** Clarinet, Alto Sax

**Group 3:** Clarinet, Alto Sax, Horn, Alto Clarinet, Tenor Sax

**Group 4:** Clarinet, Alto Sax, Horn, Alto Clarinet, Tenor Sax, Trumpet

**Group 5:** Clarinet, Alto Sax, Horn, Alto Clarinet, Tenor Sax, Trumpet, Trombone, Euphonium

**Group 6:** Clarinet, Alto Sax, Horn, Alto Clarinet, Tenor Sax, Trumpet, Trombone, Euphonium, Bari. Sax, Bassoon, Tuba, String Bass

**Group 7:** Clarinet, Alto Sax, Horn, Alto Clarinet, Tenor Sax, Trumpet, Trombone, Euphonium, Bari. Sax, Bassoon, Tuba, String Bass, Oboe, Flute, Piccolo

All breathe steadily and equally

- 1) Produce same speed of air
- 2) Have same point of attack, core and release
- 3) Same sense of breathing rhythm and tempo
- 4) Blow adequate air into instrument
- 5) Hold steady pitch

## Breath Training (abdominal breathing)

Make sound when exhaling repeatedly (between teeth and tongue)

♩ = 60          Inhale for one beat and exhale for one beat

♩ = 60          Inhale in a half beat and exhale in a half beat

♩ = 80, 100, 120, 160, 200          half beat (one minute of each)

Do this daily and players will learn to control breath with ease

**Ave Marie     Edvard Grieg/Koh Shishikura**  
**(2014, Brain Music)**

**4. Balance Training**

Balance training is the practical basis of constructing the sound of the band. This exercise is done so students can learn to combine their sounds to blend instead of clashing. This will also help students develop an idea of the band sound as a whole.

\*\*\*See the attached *Balance Training*

**5. Scale Training**

Scale training exercises train students to hear the note they will play based upon a given pitch. This exercise is done in equal temperament (possibly with use of Yamaha's *Harmony Director*).

- 1) Trombone & Trumpet
- 2) French Horn, Euphonium & Tuba
- 3) Saxophone
- 4) Clarinet
- 5) Flute, Oboe, Bassoon & String Bass
- 6) Whole ensemble

\*\*\*See attached *Scale Training*

**6. Harmony Training**

Harmony exercises are to develop the ability to play with good, balanced, and clear harmony. Also, the pitch and quality of the third note of the scale determines the accuracy of the harmony.

\*\*\*See attached *Harmony Training*

**7. Rhythm Training**

Rhythm exercises serve to develop the skill of playing with a common sense of rhythm and articulation. These exercises help students play with a unified rhythm.

- a. Quarter notes
- b. Eighth notes
- c. Eighth note triplets
- d. Quarter note triplets
- e. Sixteenth notes

\*\*\*See attached *Rhythm Training*

## 8. Chorale exercise

Chorale study is important to playing an instrument. The idea is that if you can't sing it, you most likely can't play it with the best intonation and blend.

### **Amazing Grace from *66 Festive and Famous Chorales for Band* (arr. Frank Erickson - Alfred Music Publishing)**

1. Ensemble training
2. Sectional solfège
3. Singing only
4. Singing with brass buzzing
5. Playing the tune

Details can be found in the following materials:

**Winds DVD – Basic Training for Concert Band** - Minoru Otaki & Saitama Sakae Wind Orchestra (Bravo Music BOD-7001) and **Supplemental Book – Basic Training for Concert Band** (Bravo Music BODS-7001)

**Winds DVD – Harmony Training for the Ensemble** (Bravo Music BOD-7003)

## **Minoru Otaki**

Many national and international credits mark Mr. Otaki's 39-year devotion to Saitama Sakae's musical excellence, including the Vienna World Festival Grand Prix and 17 National Band Contest "Gold" Awards. He received the "Long Appearing Conductor Award" for numerous (22) nominations to the All Japan Band Competition national finals. He was awarded an Education Contributor Commendation by the Governor of Saitama State and the Commendation for Education by the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology in 2010. Mr. Otaki's technique has been the subject of Bravo Music's "Basic Training for Concert Band" DVD and Study Guide and other televised programs and method books regarding band fundamentals. He also serves as conductor, lecturer, adjudicator, and board member for numerous educational and academic band associations.

Minoru Otaki majored in vocal music at Kunitachi University of Music. He graduated in 1975, accepting the position of music teacher at Saitama Sakae High School. His involvement with the wind band club promoted additional study in band techniques with Toshio Ozawa. From a start of less than ten students, Mr. Otaki nurtured the school's band club into a thriving ensemble revered throughout his country.

Mr. Otaki currently teaches at both Saitama Sakae and Iwakura High Schools. He is also an assistant principal at Iwakura High School, President of the West Japan Band Association, Vice President of the All Japan High School Band Association, and Chairman of "Joyful Festival" for arts. He also leads the All Japan high school honor band to many international events and concerts including performances at Carnegie Hall, Wiener Staatsoper (Vienna Opera House), and Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory Music Hall.

# Balance Training

(♩=54)

The score is arranged in a standard orchestral layout with the following parts from top to bottom:

- Piccolo
- Flute
- Oboe
- Bassoon
- Clarinet in E $\flat$
- 1st Clarinet in B $\flat$
- 2nd Clarinet in B $\flat$
- 3rd Clarinet in B $\flat$
- Bass Clarinet in B $\flat$
- 1st Alto Saxophone in E $\flat$
- 2nd Alto Saxophone in E $\flat$
- Tenor Saxophone in B $\flat$
- Baritone Saxophone in E $\flat$
- 1st & 2nd Trumpets in B $\flat$
- 3rd Trumpet in B $\flat$
- 1st & 2nd Horns in F
- 3rd & 4th Horns in F
- 1st & 2nd Trombones
- 3rd Trombone
- Euphonium
- Bass Tuba
- String Bass
- Timpani
- 1st Percussion
- 2nd Percussion

A Group: Bsn. / B. Cl. / B. Sax. / Tuba / St. Bass  
 B Group: T. Sax. / Hrn. / Trb. / Euph.  
 C Group: Ob. / 2&3 Cl. / A.Sax. / Trp.  
 D Group: Picc. / Fl. / E $\flat$  Cl. / 1 Cl.

# Scale Training

Piccolo (♩=63)  
 Flute  
 Oboe  
 Bassoon  
 Clarinet in E<sub>♭</sub>  
 1st Clarinet in B<sub>♭</sub>  
 2nd Clarinet in B<sub>♭</sub>  
 3rd Clarinet in B<sub>♭</sub>  
 Bass Clarinet in B<sub>♭</sub>  
 1st Alto Saxophone in E<sub>♭</sub>  
 2nd Alto Saxophone in E<sub>♭</sub>  
 Tenor Saxophone in B<sub>♭</sub>  
 Baritone Saxophone in E<sub>♭</sub>  
 1st & 2nd Trumpets in B<sub>♭</sub>  
 3rd Trumpet in B<sub>♭</sub>  
 1st & 2nd Horns in F  
 3rd & 4th Horns in F  
 3rd Trombone  
 Euphonium  
 Bass Tuba  
 String Bass  
 Timpani  
 1st Percussion  
 2nd Percussion

Picc.  
 Fl.  
 Ob.  
 Bsn.  
 Eb Cl.  
 Cl.1  
 Cl.2  
 Cl.3  
 B.Cl.  
 A.Sax.1  
 A.Sax.2  
 T.Sax.  
 B.Sax.  
 Tmp.1/2  
 Tmp.3  
 Hrn.1/2  
 Hrn.3/4  
 Tbn.1/2  
 Tbn.3  
 Euph.  
 Tuba  
 Str.Bass  
 Temp.  
 Perc.1  
 Perc.2

# Harmony Training

(♩=63)

Piccolo

Flute

Oboe

Bassoon

Clarinet in E $\flat$

1st Clarinet in B $\flat$

2nd Clarinet in B $\flat$

3rd Clarinet in B $\flat$

Bass Clarinet in B $\flat$

1st Alto  
Saxophone in E $\flat$

2nd Alto  
Saxophone in E $\flat$

Tenor  
Saxophone in B $\flat$

Baritone  
Saxophone in E $\flat$

1st & 2nd  
Trumpets in B $\flat$

3rd Trumpet in B $\flat$

1st & 2nd  
Horns in F

3rd & 4th  
Horns in F

1st & 2nd  
Trombones

3rd Trombone

Euphonium

Bass Tuba

String Bass

Timpani

Percussion 1

Percussion 2

# Rhythm Training

(♩ = 92)

Piccolo

Flute

Oboe

Bassoon

Clarinet in E<sub>♭</sub>

1st Clarinet in B<sub>♭</sub>

2nd Clarinet in B<sub>♭</sub>

3rd Clarinet in B<sub>♭</sub>

Bass Clarinet in B<sub>♭</sub>

1st Alto Saxophone in E<sub>♭</sub>

2nd Alto Saxophone in E<sub>♭</sub>

Tenor Saxophone in B<sub>♭</sub>

Baritone Saxophone in E<sub>♭</sub>

1st & 2nd Trombones in B<sub>♭</sub>

3rd Trumpet in B<sub>♭</sub>

1st & 2nd Horns in F

3rd & 4th Horns in F

1st & 2nd Trombones

3rd Trombone

Euphonium

Bass Tuba

String Bass

Timpani

1st Percussion

2nd Percussion

Rhythm pattern:

Rhythm pattern: