



## The Ringmaster: Selecting, Rehearsing, and Conducting Literature For the Beginning Band

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### Year One Scenarios

- Lesson Structure
- Frequency of full ensemble rehearsal
- Your own priorities and standards as a professional

### Ring One: What's in a 1/2?

- Large difficulty spectrum in beginning band literature; more than any other grade level
  - Considerations of range, tonality and meter are standard, but what about texture and rhythm?
  - Individual parts will be playable by first-year students, but it is the ensemble challenges that set these pieces apart.

### Examine the following works by notable composers for young bands:

- Conquest - Brian Balmages
- All Aboard - Matt Conaway
- Lyric Prelude - Jim Curnow
- Furioso - Robert W. Smith

### Ring Two: Rehearsal Techniques

- Emphasis on method book in instruction
- Balancing rhythmic precision with learning pitches
  - Additional challenges for groups that have ensemble daily, but not homogenous lesson groups; essentially the reverse of programs that are purely homogeneous lessons
- Reinforcing the concept of the Clef and the Time Signature
- What takes up more space, a half note or a half rest?
- Highlight examples in the music where ensemble challenges lie

- Melodic Understanding and pitch learning
  - Musical Alphabet
  - The Creative Director (Ed Lisk)
  - Techniques for rehearsal, focusing on ensemble cohesion
  - How do the elements in the texture align to avoid student confusion
  - Helping students develop ensemble techniques
    - True understanding of note & rest values
    - Play long tones into the rest

### Ring Three: Conducting Techniques

- Rhythmic intent in your pattern and how it may help and/or hinder student understanding.
  - If you give them everything, then they are too reliant on you
  - Like modeling trombone slide positions; there can be too much of a good thing
- Condensed examples given for the selected pieces
- Sometimes less is more
- Choosing when to give more information in your pattern
  - Early in the learning process
  - Performance

### Summation:

- Be realistic & honest with yourself regarding goals and standards. Are you seeking perfection in performance? Exposure to more concepts? Choose your battles.
- Plan for the least amount of ensemble rehearsal time; standardized testing happens...
- Scores are inexpensive; check them out before buying the whole set, especially if you have a tight budget and/or you are uncertain about the challenge of the piece
- Plan your rehearsals - the time is too precious to waste figuring it out as you go along

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