


Three Keys for an Artistic Performance of Wind Band Music

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Slides at bit.ly/bandinterpretation

BIG PICTURE CONCEPTS

- ❖ Three s
 - **Preparation** Are there unintentional omissions in your score study process?
 - **Realization** Does your performance mirror what the composer has written?
 - **Interpretation** What is not overtly captured in the notation?
- ❖ Your score study process: form, melody, harmony, pulse, timbre, articulation, context
 - What are the strengths and weaknesses of your score study process? By drawing attention to your weaknesses, you'll quickly unlock a more musical performance.
 - Do you work micro and macro?
- ❖ Consider the “evolution” of notation. We often have more information now than ever!
- ❖ Realization/analysis versus interpretation
 - Realization/analysis requires no decision-making. What does the notation say? Is your interpretation justifiable to the composer?
 - Interpretation requires analysis and you!
- ❖ How do you make interpretive decisions?
 - Can you justify your decisions with musical reasoning?
 - Kevin Noe (UMKC) says... 85% analysis + 15% intuition
 - Music that includes your perspective will always be more meaningful!
- ❖ Strategies
 - Subverted Expectation
 - Recomposition
- ❖ Be careful
 - How much change is too much change?
 - Recordings
 - Incorrect Assumptions

ELEMENTS OF MUSIC, CONSIDERATIONS, AND EXAMPLES

Form

- ❖ Where are the arrivals, and are they obvious to the first-time listener?
- ❖ Consider fermati and silences. How resonant is your rehearsal versus performance space?
- ❖ Audio Timeliner (<https://www.singanewsong.org/>)
- ❖ Excerpt: *Vital Sines* (Cuong)

Dynamics

- ❖ Block dynamics
- ❖ Dynamics peaks/curves
- ❖ It's nearly always easiest for longer notes to shape dynamics than shorter notes
- ❖ Excerpt: *Diamond Tide* (Cuong)

Harmony

- ❖ Harmonic rhythm: what is the rate of change?
- ❖ Utilize recomposition. How could the piece have gone?
- ❖ Do you emphasize dissonance or consonance? Consider vertical and horizontal.
- ❖ Excerpt: *Washington Post* (Sousa)

Pulse: Tempo/Rhythm/Meter

- ❖ Are tempos accurate?
- ❖ Mensuration. Shorter rhythmic durations typically feel faster than longer durations.
- ❖ Weak and strong beats. Are they and should they be obvious?
- ❖ Are metric modulations accurate?
- ❖ Are triplets accurate?
- ❖ Excerpts: *Moth* (Cuong) and *Tango* (Stravinsky)

Melody

- ❖ Vibrato. When *senza*? Does it blend in with the section and choirs?
- ❖ Trills. Half step or whole step? Changing speed?
- ❖ Non-Chord Tones. To the fore or hidden?
- ❖ Line. Bring out ascending or descending lines? Does short seek long?
- ❖ Sequences. How obvious do you want the repeated phrase?
- ❖ Surface Rhythms. Should they be played precisely?
- ❖ Sustains. Where are the releases marked?
- ❖ Excerpt: *Bells for Stokowski* (Daugherty)

Timbre/Forces/Texture

- ❖ Color. Do you want a completely blended woodwind choir, or should a single instrument lead?
- ❖ Timbre. More brass in the tone? More "nasally" double reeds?
- ❖ Consider the march genre. Changes in the orchestration are idiomatic on repeats.
- ❖ Excerpt: *The Florentiner* (Sousa) *note subverted expectation!*

Context, Articulation, Markings

- ❖ Don't forget to read the score's performance notes!
- ❖ Frederick Fennell says, "All ... [articulations] depend upon the character of the music of which they are a part."
- ❖ Excerpts: *Big City Lights* (Douglas) and *First Suite in E-flat* (Holst)

FROM THE GREATS

“There are not safe, foolproof formulas for the solution of interpretive problems – no sure recipes for the correct ratio between the performer’s initiative and his fidelity to the composer and the text. While this fidelity should be a principal consideration, it will be sterile if not pursued with that blend of instinct, intellect, intuition, and imagination without which great performance cannot happen.” – George Szell

“It’s very hard to decide to what extent an interpreter should be free and how far his freedom should stretch. Only self-criticism can provide the right guidelines and prevent one from over-stepping the mark.” – Claudio Abbado

“The conductor should approach score study as an imaginative musician, a creator, and not simply a decoder of notation. A performing musician should have a strong desire to create a personal musical statement.” – Frank Battisti

RESOURCES

Don’t forget to consult the front matter of the score and composer websites!

Battisti, Frank L., and Robert Joseph Garofalo. *Guide to Score Study for the Wind Band Conductor*. Meredith Music Publications, 1990.

Blum, David. *Casals and the Art of Interpretation*. The University of California Press, 1980.

Green, Elizabeth, et al. *The Modern Conductor: A College Text on Conducting Based on the Technical Principles of Nicolai Malko as Set Forth in His the Conductor and His Baton*. Pearson Prentice Hall, 2004.

McBeth, W. Francis. *Effective Performance of Band Music; Solutions to Specific Problems in the Performance of 20th Century Band Music*. Southern Music Co, 1972.

McGill, David. *Sound in Motion: A Performer's Guide to Greater Musical Expression*. Indiana University Press, 2021.

Anthony O’Toole’s YouTube Channel

Poli, Roberto. *The Secret Life of Musical Notation: Defying Interpretive Traditions*. Amadeus Press, 2010.

Schuller, Gunther. *The Compleat Conductor*. Oxford University Press, 1998.

Thurmond, James Morgan, and Weston H. Noble. *Note Grouping: A Method for Achieving Expression and Style in Musical Performance*. Meredith Music Publications, 1991.