

# The Right Music at the Right Time: Finding Music That Fits Your Beginning Band

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## **The Homewood-Flossmoor High School Band**

**Sarah Whitlock, Director of Bands, and Kelly Cooper, Associate Band Director**

Why can't we just choose music by grade level?

In a perfect world:

- .5 = first semester
- 1 = second semester
- 1.5 = start of second year
- 2 = second year, 2nd semester

### **1. Why choosing music for students in their first year can be challenging:**

- A. Steep learning curve throughout the year - moving target, will need multiple levels
  - a. Be honest to yourself about what is in your students' working vocabulary
  
- B. Student achievement varies from program to program
  - a. Contact hours
  - b. Rehearsals within or outside of the school day
  - c. Heterogeneous or homogeneous classes
  - d. Class size
  - e. Small group lessons or not
  - f. Existence of a quality general music program in the lower grades
  - g. Availability of private teachers in the area
  - h. Administrative support
  - i. Existence of a strong band tradition
  - j. Age of beginners
  - k. Budget

**Some programs will need "beginning band" music longer than others! That is OK.  
Choose the music that fits your students, regardless of publisher grade level.**

### **2. Considerations other than difficulty of music:**

- A. Tonal centers - need variety, but must stay within 2-3 flats
  - Skill Stretchers by Heather Hoefle, RWS Music Company - useful for teaching and practicing the use of **accidentals**, **key signatures**, beginning clarinet pop-ups, flute octaves, lip slurs and percussion rudiments
- B. Creating a balanced "diet" of musical styles and concepts

### 3. Planning the year backwards:

- A. Pinpoint the level of music you want students to be able to play at the end of the year
  - a. Be realistic. If you are new to a position, search for old programs.
  - b. Count the rehearsals you have up to each performance in between. Consider missed rehearsals due to holidays, snow days, etc.
  
- B. Plan your curriculum for the year and find music that will help you get there.
  - a. Give yourself many options and narrow it down as you go

**For the purposes of this clinic, we have come up with three levels of Beginning Band music:**

#### I. START HERE

Short phrases, repeated material, common time, moderate tempo, first 5-6 notes, simple rhythms, 8th note pairs

Four Part Little Star - Matthew Provino <https://www.drselfridgemusic.com/beginner-band-book>

Penguin Promenade by Mike Hannickel	Curnow Music Publishing	.5
Band Spirit by Heather Hoefle	RWS Music Company	.5
Bugler's Dream by Arnaud/Lavender	Hal Leonard Corporation	.5
Two Songs for the Holidays by Mark Connor	RWS Music Company	.5
Zombie Stomp by Rob Grice	C.L. Barnhouse Company	.5
Alpha Dog by Heather Hoefle	RWS Music Company	.5

#### II. NEXT STEP

Longer phrases, up to 3 parts, 2/4 & 4/4, variety in tempo

Range to an octave, Simple rhythms, more advanced percussion

Mechanical Monsters by Randall Standridge	Randall Standridge Music LLC	.5
Samba La Bamba by William Owens	FJH Music Company	.5
Ancient Hunters by Sean O'Loughlin	FJH Music Company	1
Beethoven's Ninth arr. Paul Lavender	Hal Leonard Corporation	.5
Starsplitter Fanfare by Brian Balmages	FJH Music Company	.5
Donut Factory by Heather Hoefle	Neil A. Kjos Music Company	.5
Alien Invasion by David Gorham	Wingert Jones Publications	.5
Creatures in the Attic by Brian Balmages	FJH Music Company Grade	.5

#### III. MOVING ON

Variety of articulations, part independence, skips in the melody, 2/4, 4/4, 3/4, Range of tempo octave plus range, rhythmic variety, ties and dots

Midnight Sky by Brian Balmages	FJH Publishing	.5
Beginners Rock! by Randall Standridge	Randall Standridge Music LLC	1
Bringer of War by Brian Balmages	FJH Music Company	.5
Tambora! By William Owens	FJH Music Company	.5
Shepherd's Hey arr. Chip DeStefano	FJH Music Company	.5