

Teaching Principles of Ensemble
Performance During Warm-Up
or
``I Don't Teach Music, I Teach
Band''

MidWest Clinic
Williford Room
Chicago, IL
Friday, December 19, 2003
8:30 am

Leslie W. Hicken, clinician
Furman University

Assisted by members of
The Woodlands (TX) High School Band
Brett Johnson, Director

*Your Band can Function like a Chamber Music Ensemble if the Students
are trained to make Artistic Decisions on their own.*

The Conductor has a choice, he or she can control all musical decisions from the podium, or the conductor can train the students to contribute to the music-making atmosphere by making artistic decisions based upon fundamental musical principles.

- balance within the section, the family, and the tutti ensemble
- intonation adjustments
- attacking, sustaining, and releasing notes together
- melodic interpretation
- matching musical styles - length of notes
- rhythmic uniformity

Teaching Characteristic Tone Quality is Fundamental.

Basics of proper posture, proper breathing, proper hand position, and proper embouchure must be established before higher order artistic musical decisions can be presented.

- breathing exercises
- F concert/Bb concert chord
- chromatic intervals
- long tones

Establish Concepts of Ensemble Sonority.

Your students need to understand the sonic relationship between tessitura placement and dynamic level. This relationship defines the sound quality which your ensemble produces. This concept also forms the foundation for the adjustment of pitch.

- McBeth pyramid
- balance and blend
- section balance
- family balance
- ensemble balance

Establish a Process for Students to Adjust Their Own Intonation.

We need to turn the responsibility of adjusting intonation over to the students.

They can be trained to listen and adjust based upon what they hear.

- beatless tuning demonstration
- principal player tuning
- spot tuning of sections
- Dallas Brass exercises

Establish Principles for the Interpretation of Melody

Composers do not mark every nuance of phrasing in their compositions. Students can be given principles of interpretation which will allow them to approach melodic phrases expressively.

- shape the phrase
- returning scales
- points of tension and release
- sustained notes
- repeated notes
- connecting upward intervals

- diatonic intervals

Teaching the Ensemble to Attack, Sustain, and Release Tones Together is the Beginnings of Establishing Musical Style.

Your ensemble must understand that each tone has three components: the attack, the sustained portion of the sound, and the release. Each component has a rhythmic and tonal function.

- attack together (breathe rhythmically together)
- sustain tone quality throughout sound
- release points
- sound and silence exercise

Matching Musical Styles

Students can be trained to listen and match note lengths. Work should be done on the various techniques for beginning and ending notes on a wind instrument.

- release with the tongue
- release with the air
- staccato, legato, marcato, roof top accent
- string bowings and wind consonants

Establish Concepts of Ensemble Rhythm

Students need to understand the two underlying concepts of rhythm, steady pulse and subdivision. Establishing a steady pulse within the ensemble without a conductor is crucial for future success.

- defining the "inner pulse"
- scale segments
- moving accent study
- off-beats

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Leslie W. Hicken, Director of Bands, joined the faculty of Furman University in the fall of 1993. In the Department of Music, his responsibilities include the directorship of the Wind Ensemble, Symphonic Band, and Chamber Winds; instructor of instrumental conducting; instrumental music education coordinator; and instructor of clarinet. In addition to his duties at Furman, he is the Artistic Director of the Carolina Youth Symphony and the Director for the Summer Lakeside Concert Series at Furman. In the fall of 2000, Dr. Hicken completed a residency with the public schools of Volta Redonda, Rio de Janeiro State in Brazil preparing a concert with their String Orchestra.

Dr. Hicken is a member of the South Carolina Music Educators National Conference, the College Band Directors National Association, the National Band Association, The International Clarinet Society, and the South Carolina Band Directors Association. He belongs to Phi Kappa Lambda, Phi Beta Mu, and is an honorary member of Kappa Kappa Psi and Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia. He received his Bachelor of Music degree from the Eastman School of Music, a Masters of Arts in Teaching from Teachers College, Columbia University, and a Doctorate in Music Education from Indiana University. He has studied clarinet with D. Stanley Hasty, Leon Russianoff, and Bernard Portnoy and conducting with Dr. J. Marion Magill, Dr. Robert Klotman, and Ray Cramer. Dr. Hicken received the Outstanding Bandmaster of the Year Award in 2000 and the Outstanding Contributor Award in 2002 from the South Carolina Chapter of Phi Beta Mu. In 2002, he was inducted into the prestigious American Bandmasters Association.

Order of Musical Examples

- Chromatics from F
- Bb Chord/Chromatic Intervals

- Bb Concert Chord/Balance and Blend
- Beat reduction demonstration
- Principal player tuning
- Dallas Brass tuning (Ab concert w/ patterns)
- Ab Concert Scale/ Attack, Sustain, Release (5 up, 5 + 1 down)
- Ab Concert Scale/5 note progressive pattern (shaping the phrase)
- Diatonic Intervals
- Repeated notes
- Lip Benders #10
- Scale Segments