

Habits of
A
Successful
Band Director

*Practical Rehearsal Strategies
That Lead to Music-Making*

60th Annual Midwest Clinic
Chicago Hilton and Towers
December 22 and 23, 2006

Scott Rush

AUTHOR OF
HABITS OF A SUCCESSFUL BAND DIRECTOR
GIA Publications, Chicago, Illinois

**HABITS OF A SUCCESSFUL BAND DIRECTOR:
PRACTICAL REHEARSAL STRATEGIES THAT LEAD TO MUSIC-MAKING**
Clinician: Scott Rush

Exceptional musicians are not born; they're made. They're made by great teachers who inspire and motivate – someone had to light the fire. Each of us had those people in our lives. Just as the inspired student must practice, the band director must also practice to be *effective* and *successful*. To be an effective conductor/teacher, the band director must establish habits of four key practices.

The practices are:

- You must design a blueprint for *what* to teach
- You must establish effective teaching strategies for *how* to teach it
- You must develop an appropriate system for addressing *all* learners
- You must cross the threshold from the *Components of Playing* to a rehearsal vocabulary filled with musical concepts

These practices are deceptively easy, but hard to put in place. They are exceedingly hard to do well, but with consistent practice, can become acquired habits.

The Need for Teaching Musical Concepts

- Larry Blocher's study

Key Practice #1: "What" Needs to be Taught

- Components of Playing
- Teaching Inventory Sheet (left column)

Key Practice #2: Establish Effective Teaching Strategies

- Develop several ways to teach the same concept
Key Signature Recognition
Blend
- Teaching Inventory Sheet (right column)

Key Practice #3: Design an Appropriate System for Addressing All Learners

- Determine both large scale sequencing, as well as the sub-components within a concept
- Develop a sequence for teaching certain concepts
Tuning
Balance
Scale Study Sequence
- Use differentiated instruction by incorporating the *Three-Tiered Assessment* model
- Our job is to put tools in their *musical toolboxes*, which will enable our students to make music

Key Practice #4: Crossing the Threshold from the "Components of Playing" to a Music-Making Vocabulary

- *Would you please define music-making?*
- The Phrasing and Musicianship Sheet
- Choose literature that allows for applying and reinforcing musical concepts
- Conceptual teaching promotes transfer from fundamentals to music-making

Our Rehearsal Rooms Should Be Laboratories for Making Music

Components of Playing

List the *Components of Playing*, whether individual or ensemble based, that should be taught as part of an effective teaching curriculum:

1. Tone
 2. Timing
 3. Tuning
 4. Dynamics
 5. Phrasing
 6. Articulations (staccato, marcato, legato, slurred, accents)
 7. Rhythm
 8. Balance
 9. Blend
 10. Attacks
 11. Releases
 12. Range
 13. Endurance
 14. Musicianship (beauty, shape, emotion, nuance, style, mood)
 15. Technique
 16. Tone Color (intensity, color spectrum, sonority)
 17. Consistency / Accuracy (Horn player mentality)
- Practice each of these individually*
- Practice all simultaneously*
- Each requires some form of "acting"*

- Use the fundamentals/warm-up time to teach the components
- Establish effective teaching strategies to address various learning styles
- Develop a logical sequence of instruction that accounts for both large scale sequencing, as well as the sub-components within a concept

Teaching Inventory Sheet

Skill to be taught

How to/Materials Needed to Teach It

Scales	
Tone	
Rhythm Study	
Solfege	
Tuning	
Tuning	
Timing	
Dynamics	
Balance	
Articulations	
Interpretation of various accents	
Blend	
Appropriate examples of recorded work	
Phrasing	
Attacks (air attacks vs. tongued)	
Key Signature Recognition	

DESIGN A WEEKLY CHECKLIST DERIVED FROM YOUR QUARTERLY "TEACHING INVENTORY" SHEET

Teaching Key Signatures Using McGrew's Fourths

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Flats (b)	C	F	B	E	A	D	G
Sharps (#)	C 7	F 6	B 5	E 4	A 3	D 2	G 1

Probing Questions: Why do we start with zero? Why do we go to seven?

Tuning Sequence

1. Explanation of Tuning with the Tuner (no audible pitch; visual process)

2. Stop the needle on a Stationary Pitch (requires a steady airstream)

Both of the above steps are visual in nature and are the only steps that are strictly visual in the process

3. Eliminate waves (use your ears and try to achieve "beatless" tuning)

4. Know how to Adjust the instrument (mechanics; tuning plug on flute)

This step may include knowing that an oboe reed should crow a "C" - knowledge of bocal size, etc.

5. Center pitches on the mouthpiece (headjoint/mthpc & neck, barrel, or bocal)

See "Tuning and Pitch Indicators"

6. Learn inherent "Bad" notes on the Instrument (pitch tendencies)

7. Learn adjustments for just intonation (major/minor chords; other situations)

Other adjustments would include anything in the realm of bending pitch, finger shading, etc.

8. Do a Pitch Tendency Chart (good reference for your instrument)

9. Play "In Tone" (many pitch problems will correct themselves)

Other Ways to Improve Intonation...

- SING AND INTERNALIZE YOUR PARTS
- Good Posture and Breathing
- Balance and Blend within the Ensemble
- Good Embouchure Development
- Play on Good Equipment, especially Mouthpieces
- Have a working knowledge of how Dynamics and Temperature affect Pitch

Differentiated Instruction

Master Musician

- A movement from a major solo work for your instrument
- Musical terms test (list of 160)
- Sightsing intervals through full range in the arts lab (7 out of 10)
- Rhythm Theory through level 6 in the arts lab (10 out of 10)
- Interval Theory through level 9 in the arts lab (10 out of 10)
- Pitch Tendency chart on Intonation Trainer
- Twelve major scales and seven minor scales
- Vibrato exercise, *if applicable for your instrument:* quarter note=72

Advanced Musician

- The All-State solo for your level
- Twelve major scales
- Musical terms test (list of 100)
- Sightsing all diatonic intervals in the arts lab (7 out of 10)
- Interval Theory through level 7 in the arts lab (10 out of 10)
- Rhythm Theory through level 5 in the arts lab (10 out of 10)
- Pitch Tendency Chart on Intonation Trainer

Intermediate Musician

- One approved etude/solo for your instrument
- Nine major scales
- Musical terms test (list of 70)
- Sightsing intervals using five diatonically adjacent syllables (7 out of 10)
- Interval Theory through level 5 in the arts lab (10 out of 10)
- Rhythm Theory through level 4 in the arts lab (10 out of 10)
- Pitch Tendency Chart on Intonation Trainer

Formula grading scale adjusted for each level of instruction

Scale Study Sequence

- Teach the order of sharps and flats
- Teach enharmonic notes for mastery
- Teach rules for determining the key signature (3 ways)
- Teach the proper spelling of scales
- Teach appropriate transpositions for each of the instruments
- Teach the chromatic scale enharmonically correct

Thoughts About Phrasing and Musicianship

Musical Tips

- Long notes should have direction - they should intensify or decrescendo.
- Phrases should have peaks and valleys, arrival points, and weighted notes (agogic).
- You should carry over phrases and make sure that you don't breathe at inappropriate spots.
- If a line is repeated, do something different with it the second time.
- Find tension and release points.
- Musical moments usually take longer to build than they do to pull away.
- In many styles, short notes lead to long notes.

Extramusical Stimuli

- It's what's NOT on the page that makes the music.
- Use "mood" words to establish style and ambiance.
- Assign words to entire musical phrases to help establish meaning and purpose.
- Persichetti said, "Music is either dancing or singing."
- It's what happens from note-to-note that makes the music come alive.

Philosophical Prompts

- Trust your soul to feel and express the music – be musical! Tell a musical story with passion and conviction.
- The conductor's blood must drip with musical conviction, both to the players and the audience.
- Try to discover music in every phrase.
- Unlike a painting or sculpture, music can be re-created again and again, with new meaning and understanding.
- The paper and ink don't make the music; instruments make no sounds on their own – the soul creates the music.
- Music must be interpreted to the point that the performance is said to be *artistic* and the performers, *artists*.

"Where is the electric socket for possibility (music making)? It's just there over the bar line, where the bird soars. We can join it by finding the tempo and lean our bodies into the music; dare to let go of the edges of ourselves... and *participate!*"