

“If You Don’t Know Where You Want To Go, Any Road Will Take You There: *Making Decisions That Will Improve Your Band*”

61st Annual Midwest Clinic

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4:30-5:30 PM

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1. Introduction

“By expanding your awareness of the music so that it encompasses not only your own playing but that of other sections of the ensemble, . . . you can deepen your own playing, your ability to make music harmoniously with others, and your overall experience of the music itself”. Barry Green

- A. If you do not make and share decisions about all aspects of ensemble playing, decisions will still be made. You just won’t necessarily know what they are.
- B. Sometimes we confuse students with too much “how to” information, and not enough “goal” information.
- C. Student agreement on specific goals can solve many (but not all) ensemble problems.

2. Balance

A. Melodic Balance

- i. Melodic balance is the dynamic relationship between melody and everything else.
- ii. When *forte* is marked for everyone, everyone cannot play *forte*.
- iii. It’s about the melody stupid!
- iv. In general the melody is the most important line and must be heard clearly.
- v. Play the melody game.

B. Harmonic Balance

- i. Harmonic balance is the dynamic relationship between notes sounding together in harmony.
- ii. Play into the dissonances.
- iii. Improper harmonic balance can change harmonic content by making it impossible to hear all chord members.
- iv. Some instruments must play louder than others to be perceived as playing AS loud.

3. Blend – timbre

- A. Decide what sound you want to achieve.
- B. Practice “modifying” tone quality during warm-ups
- C. Blending to horns can give the impression of having a stronger section than you have.

4. Transparency – Looking at or Through the Window

“Another idea I was interested in was the idea of montage, and the presentation of two thoughts at the same time, as when you look at a piece of glass and you see what is reflected on the surface of the glass and you see what is behind the glass. You see them independently or you see them both at the same time depending on your point of view.” Warren Benson

- A. Clear articulation allows parts to be heard without excessive dynamics.
- B. Short notes on stage will almost always sound longer to the audience.
- C. Space often needs to be added between notes to allow them to be heard clearly.

5. Phrasing

- A. Where does the phrase begin/end?
- B. Where did it come from/go to?
- C. Awareness game

6. Dynamics – Expressive or Excessive?

“Is loudness a narcotic to which we have now become so addicted that we need ever increasing doses of it? Is it that we are no longer content to let our ears be the sole recipients of musical communication, but that the rest of our body needs literally to feel, to experience physically, the acoustic vibrations? Or is it that we are simply reacting competitively and in self-defense against the ever-rising noise levels in the material world around us?
Gunther Schuller in *The Compleat Conductor*

- A. Decide how loud LOUD is. Left up to your students it will almost always be louder than you probably want.
- B. Decide on specific goals in time. Dynamic changes must be made by all players simultaneously to be effective.
- C. Decide on specific shapes for crescendos and diminuendos.
- D. Crescendos are not always the shape they appear on paper.
- E. Allow moving parts to be heard during crescendos
- F. Balance crescendos and diminuendos.
- G. Maintain the dynamic you achieve until the music indicates to change again
- H. What goes up MUST come down.
- I. Instrumentalists only see what THEY have.
- j. Accents occur within the prevailing dynamic.

7. Intonation

- A. What do your students have to know and be able to do to play in tune?
 - i. What does “in tune” sound like?
 - ii. What are the natural tendencies of the instrument?
 - iii. How do you modify pitch while playing?
- C. Who to tune to
 - i. Tune down first
 - ii. Who can you hear clearly that is playing your part?
 - iii. Any decision is better than no decision and any decision can be right as long as everyone answers the question the same way.
 - iv. Tuning to each other just changes the intonation problem

- D. Balance affects the ability to play in tune. You can't tune to what you can't hear.
- E. Intonation is a function of tone quality. If a student cannot sustain a tone and make a decent sound they will NEVER play in tune.
- F. There are good uses for tuners. Tuning to one isn't necessarily one of those good uses.
- G. If a player is giving the reference pitch he/she must use a tuner so that the proper pitch is given and it can be repeated.
- H. Unless you address intonation problems in every rehearsal don't expect good intonation at the concert.

Terry Austin is Director of Bands and Professor of Music at Virginia Commonwealth University where he oversees all aspects of the band program and teaches courses in conducting, and music education.

He is an active guest conductor, clinician, and adjudicator and is published in several journals, including the *CBDNA* (College Band Directors National Association) *Journal*, *BD Guide*, *Young BD Guide*, *Instrumentalist*, *Dialogue in Instrumental Music Education*, *The National Band Association Journal*, *The Indiana Musicator*, *the Missouri Journal of Research in Music Education*, and *VMEA* (Virginia Music Educators Association) *Notes*. He has also authored chapters in two books.

Austin is chairman of the *National Band Association/William D. Revelli Memorial Band Composition Contest*, a member of the Boards of Directors of *the American Bandmasters Association*, *the John Philip Sousa Foundation* and the *National Band Association*, and is a past-president of the *Virginia Music Educators Association*.

Dr. Austin received the 2005 Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts *Distinguished Achievement Award of Excellence*. He is included in the 62nd edition of *Who's Who In America*, and is included in *Who's Who in Fine Arts Higher Education*, *Who's Who Among America's Teachers*, and is a multiple recipient of the National Band Association *Citation of Excellence*

Dr. Austin is the Artistic Director for World Projects' *Pacific Basin Music Festival*. He founded and conducts the *Greater Richmond Youth Wind Ensemble*, an ensemble of the finest high school musicians in the Richmond metropolitan area, and the *Commonwealth Winds*, an ensemble comprised of Richmond area teachers and professional performers.

Austin earned a Bachelor of Music Education from Indiana University, a Master of Arts in Music Education from the University of Hawaii, and a Doctor of Philosophy in Music Education from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He lives in Richmond with his wife, Tracia and twin sons Joshua and Seth.

The VCU Department of Music (www.vcumusic.org) takes pride in its achievements in performance, music education and composition. Graduates have been recognized with ASCAP Composition Awards, Kellogg and Thelonious Monk prizes in composition and Grammy Award nominations. Alumni have appeared in performance venues such as Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera, Carnegie Hall, Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and have toured world-wide with groups such as the Wynton Marsalis Sextet. They hold distinguished positions at educational institutions in the United States and abroad, with premier symphony orchestras and military bands and in internationally touring ensembles. Their compositions are heard on network television and their music is performed around the world. Our students, faculty, alumni and internationally celebrated guest artists present more than 225 concerts annually. With more than 300 majors, 60 full- and part-time faculty and accomplished graduates in prominent and fulfilling careers, the VCU Department of Music offers a rich heritage, a wealth of experiences and exciting possibilities for the future.

Student performance opportunities at VCU include two wind ensembles, two jazz orchestras, symphony orchestra, chamber ensembles of all types, small jazz ensembles, large and small choral ensembles and opera theatre. Through VCU and metropolitan area events, many students earn substantial income and gain professional experience by performing in churches, theatres, jazz clubs and for social, government and professional organizations.

Located on two downtown campuses in Richmond, Va., Virginia Commonwealth University ranks among the top 100 universities in the country in sponsored research and enrolls 30,000 students in more than 195 certificate, undergraduate, graduate, professional and doctoral programs in 15 schools and one liberal arts college. MCV Hospitals, clinics and the health sciences schools of Virginia Commonwealth University constitute the VCU Medical Center, one of the leading academic medical centers in the country.

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