

Changing Your Warm-Up to Ensemble Development The Non-Negotiable's During the First 15 Minutes of Concert Band Rehearsal

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Richard Saucedo, Clinician

Definitions:

- 1) Warm-up: What players do after they get to their seats BEFORE rehearsal begins.**
- 2) Ensemble Development: A process by which students learn how to handle most possible situations as an ensemble member through the use of carefully thought out exercises.**
- 3) Core Exercises: A consistently used set of long tone studies, articulation exercises, flow studies and tuning chorales to develop strong ensemble skills in players.**

Minimum Equipment Needed:

- 1) Tonal Energy Tuner and Amplifier: Provides unison and chordal drones as needed to help students with ear training and tuning development.**
- 2) Amplified Metronome: To help students develop a sense of beat and tempo, including using subdivisions.**
- 3) Projector: Used to display the Tonal Energy Tuner so players can learn to tune visually as well as aurally.**

Director's Responsibilities:

- 1) Set the Tone: Be a cheerleader for fundamentals and make sure students understand how to apply the basics to actual music performance.**
- 2) Be Consistent: Keep expectations high, but be realistic. Set a standard for the performance of fundamental exercises.**
- 3) Have The Sound In Your Head: Make sure you know how you want your ensemble to sound.**

The Percussion Section:

- 1) Separate or Together: There is evidence on both sides, but whenever your percussionists can work on their ensemble skills while separate from the winds, the chances of both groups achieving success drastically improves. If the winds and percussion sections are together, it is important that the exercises develop both wind and percussion skills.**
- 2) Set the Tone: Make sure your percussionists feel like they are an important part of the ensemble. Make sure to use appropriate percussion terminology when speaking to the section. There are many resources out there to help you develop your percussion chops.**
- 3) Implements: Make sure your percussionists are using appropriate sticks, mallets and beaters. Many issues regarding balance can be solved by simply using the right equipment for the music being played.**

Non-Negotiable Exercises for Ensemble Success:

Establishing Sound: EXERCISE 1-1 Block Concert F

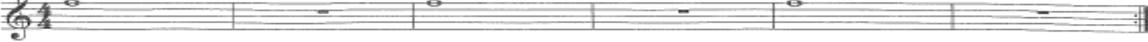
WHY?? To establish a high and consistent standard for ensemble sound.

HOW TO APPLY TO MUSIC: Isolate pitches of rhythmic passages.

DIRECTOR'S RESPONSIBILITY: Expect excellence and avoid going through the motions. Use drones and an amplified metronome.

1. Establishing Sound

1-1 Block Concert F



Student Goals

1. Breathe together.
2. Start together.
3. Follow through with the same air and vowel sound.
4. Release together.
5. Organize the end of each note as clearly as the beginning.
6. Vibrato-producing instruments can alternately play a straight tone or with vibrato.

- This is the perfect exercise to establish the quality and tuning of the beginning, middle and end of the note - No exercise is too “simple” to perfect!
- Goal: The purest ensemble sound possible without excessive “noise” or distractions in terms of quality, blend, balance and pitch.
- Goal: Impeccable timing of initial attacks and releases based on established tempo.
- Goal: To set a “base-line” approach to sound, blend, pitch and balance that the group will use in all appropriate musical situations without being reminded by the conductor.
- Goal: To take a relaxed and appropriate breath during the 4 counts of rest in-between notes.
- Extra: Sustain the first note for indefinite periods of time so students can listen for tone, tuning, blend and balance without being concerned with tempo.

Establishing Articulation: EXERCISE 2-1 Long to Short Note Values

WHY?? To establish a high and consistent standard for the sound of all note lengths.

HOW TO APPLY TO MUSIC: Isolate rhythmic passages on the same note to focus on articulation consistency.

DIRECTOR'S RESPONSIBILITY: Expect excellence and avoid going through the motions. Use drones and an amplified metronome.

2. Establishing Articulation

2-1 Articulation Drill – Long To Short Note Values



- Although this exercise focuses on rhythm and articulation, remember that EVERY exercise is a tone, tuning, blend, balance and timing exercise. The Tonal Energy Tuner should continue to provide a drone as needed.
- Goal: Every note must sound the same, no matter the note length. There should be no difference between the quality of sound of a whole note and a staccato 8th note.
- Goal: Approach to using the tongue should be such that there is instantaneous sound established at the beginning of each note without any overuse of the tongue, especially on shorter note lengths.
- Goal: The air stream must stay steady through each measure, regardless of the number of notes or note lengths.
- Goal: Students should be able to perform this exercise on unisons, octaves, 5ths, triads and even extended chords using the “just” tuning system.

FINAL THOUGHTS:

The closer we can come to blurring the lines between warm-up (ensemble development) and the actual rehearsal and performance of music, the more time we actually save our ourselves and our ensemble members. Although there is much to be said for following a well thought out lesson plan, that plan is only as good as the ears on the person that put the plan together. Watching the clock and/or watching the calendar, more than focusing on what your ears tell you to do, can only lead to frustration down the road as you prepare music for concerts or festivals.

Don't be in a hurry, but rather, take the time now to establish great ensemble concepts so that you can enjoy your rehearsals and performances down the road. Use the four exercises offered above or come up with your own set that accomplish the same thing but make fundamentals one of the most important parts of your program's culture.

Thanks for attending the clinic and have a wonderful and fulfilling 2021-2022 school year!

Richard