

Developing the Wind Band in Middle Level Ensembles

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Rehearsal Structure:

Air
Long Tones
Lips Slurs/Register/Octave exercises
Scales
Rhythms
Tune
Chorale
Pieces/Method Book

In a rehearsal period you should spend 2/3 of the time on ensemble skills and 1/3 of the time on pieces/method book etc. This adjusts as festivals or concerts approach of course.

Air:

A simple breath exercise can focus students and encourage open free airflow.
-Any exercise from the Breathing Gym by Sam Pilafian and Patrick Sheridan
-In for 4 out for 4, 2, 6, 8 etc
-In 4 out 4, in 5 out 5, in 6 out 6 etc to 10

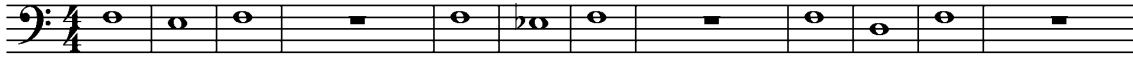
Long Tones:

Long Tones should never be skipped under any circumstance. In my opinion this is the most important thing an ensemble can do in a rehearsal. The Tone Quality of an ensemble is inseparably connected to the pitch of the ensemble. I know no ensemble that has bad pitch and beautiful tone quality. Conversely, any ensemble with good tone quality will have very few problems with pitch center.

Using the Chromatic Scale gives the musician the opportunity to hear and adjust tone quality throughout the range of their instrument.

Foundations for Superior Performance by Jeff King has several excellent exercises that work well.

Example #1



Example #2



Example #3



Play Long Tones at no more than 75bpm. Give the students an opportunity to listen and adjust.

The Principal Principle: Students should listen to the Principal Player and always adjust to them.

1. A student in each section should be identified as the “Principal Player”

- This could be a section leader or any other person but should exemplify the best tone quality in the section.

- This may be expanded to include Principal 1st, 2nd, and 3rd players in each section.

- Using Concert F have the Tuba Section match their principal player 1st.

- Once the Tubas are matching, add each principal from low to high.

- Each succeeding principal player should “Hide” their sound inside the Tuba section.

- Once all the principals are matching add the rest “tutti,” instruct the rest of the ensemble to find the principal player in their section and “Hide” their sound inside the principal player.

2. Adjust sections by asking if they can hear their principal player.

3. If done correctly the over-all volume of the ensemble will decrease.

4. As long as the Principal Tuba is in tune most of the other sections will also be in tune.

5. If a student can hear themselves...

- They are playing too loud

- They are sharp

- They are very, very flat

Example:

1a-Long Tone Exercise- Principal/Tutti

1b-Lip Slurs Principal/Tutti Buzz (Brass Section)

1c-Chorale Principal/Tutti Sing

Continually remind Principal players to find the Tuba section and “Hide” in their sound.

Continually remind the ensemble to find the principals and “Hide” in their sound.

Lips Slurs/ Register/Octave exercises:

Remington exercises or something like them are necessary to develop embouchure strength and flexibility in brass players.

Register and Octave exercises are critical to the development of the versatile woodwind player and should be addressed at every rehearsal.

Scales:

Daaaaa...scales are the basic building blocks to every piece we play. The better we know these the more pieces are available to our ensembles. Mix it up with different scale patterns etc.

Oh...there are more than just the Concert Bb scale....

Rhythms:

Please do some kind of rhythm reading everyday. They can be short bits from music you are working or out of a rhythm counting book. We need to teach our students to READ!

Do your students go to their English teacher with a novel and say, “I don’t know how this goes can you tell me?”

And how many of those English teachers will simply read the book to them word for word?

Tune:

This should be quick and painless if you use the “Principal Principle.”

Use some kind of pitch generator. Do not depend on the students to give the pitch just yet and you will be much happier.

Encourage the students to bring their own tuner as this will speed-up the process.

Concert F for Brass

Concert A for Woodwinds

Chorale:

Chorales can be used for any type of ensemble building, balance, blend, pitch center, articulation, entrance, release...anything.

We often have principal players play and the rest of the ensemble sing. Then have the entire ensemble sing. Wow what a difference you will hear.

We also will have woodwinds play and brass buzz the pitches. Again, WOW what a difference you will hear.