

Your Guide to Festival & Contest Season



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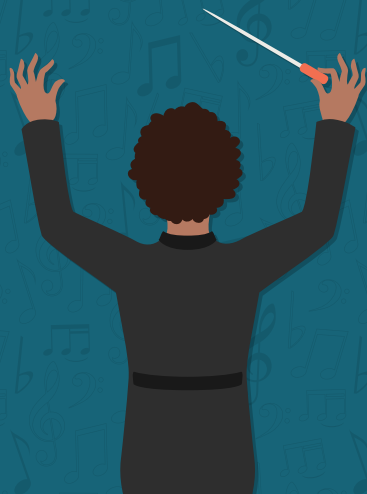
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Tips for Preparing Your Ensemble for Festivals and Competitions

By Russell Robinson

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE between festivals and competitions? None, really, but most are called festivals now. Most festivals are still “competitive” with ratings in school festivals (or as we call them in Florida, Music Performance Assessment - MPA). And, of course, the private festivals sponsored by theme parks or festival companies have awards for the first in category, overall “grand champion,” etc. I remember when choirs were graded numerically from I through V. Then, in the 1980s, most festivals (school and private) went to qualitative ratings, i.e., “Superior, Excellent, Good, Fair, and Poor.” Of course in the Roman numeral system everyone wanted a “I” rating, and when receiving a “II” or a “III” (“IV” and “V” were rarely given), music groups felt as if they had failed. So, we went to the qualitative categories above. I’ll never forget walking out in the hall on break when students were looking at their posted results, and I heard a student say, “We were terrible, we were only excellent!” The teacher’s perceptions and philosophy about competition will always be reflected in their students, for good or bad.

While deciding to participate in festivals/adjudication, take these five points into consideration:

1. DECIDE WHAT THE FESTIVAL’S PURPOSE IS FOR YOU, THE TEACHER.

Is it to win or get the highest rating? If that’s true, then this competitive “winner take all” attitude will be reflected in your students as well, and it may set you up for failure.

Is it to give students the best experience, through the rehearsals leading up to the performance at the festival, the actual performance, and the comments on paper, the recorded comments by the adjudicator(s), and/or the clinic by the adjudicator? If this is true, you and your students will have a much better experience.

Many times, there may be a difference in the ratings of multiple judges, for example: Excellent, Superior, Excellent; or Superior, Superior, Excellent; or even (rarely does this happen, but sometimes) Superior, Excellent, Good. So, if the ratings are the reason, you and your students might be disappointed. Believe me, I want music to be played/sung at the highest level and be recognized for such! But to have a goal of every singer performing at their highest level while enjoying and learning from the experience is much more satisfying and educationally sound.

2. SELECT APPROPRIATE LITERATURE.

Again, I’ve seen it all in the festivals that I have done. For example, I have heard/seen choirs in the concert choir category perform show tunes, sometimes with choreography. What was this director thinking? If it is a typical concert choir category, then the repertoire should exemplify appropriate concert literature for this category. And, if your festival is to be three pieces, choose three diverse pieces, i.e., a piece from the Renaissance, Baroque, Classical periods; a 20th or 21st century piece, and perhaps a spiritual or multicultural piece. Of course, there is a wide variety of material in the category, but don’t perform a show tune, jazz tune, etc., in a “concert” category as these styles have their own

defined categories. If it is the show choir category, it must be choreographed unless you do an a cappella ballad as one of your selections. In the jazz choir area, these must be “jazz” pieces. And, I suggest at least two jazz standard arrangements.

Not only is appropriate literature by category important, but so is another consideration: Does the literature fit the choir’s/ensemble’s level? A young high school choir is better off doing easier repertoire well, than very difficult literature poorly. Text is important in the selections. Silly texts = silly choirs. My goal with my choirs (and in my writing) has always been to have the choirs look and sound intelligent and proud. You can’t make high quality music with trite literature. Unfortunately, I have also seen high quality literature performed poorly, either because of lack of rehearsal techniques and strategies or the literature was too difficult for the group and could not be achieved.

3. FOLLOW THE SPECIFIC GUIDELINES FOR THE FESTIVAL.

Every festival has their own specific guidelines. Read all material including the fine print. You must follow them to the letter!

There is another rating that I’ve seen or been told to give: DQ (Disqualified). This can be one of life’s most embarrassing moments—as a teacher, you paid for transportation, housing, outfits, music, chaperones, etc., and are disqualified for not reading a specific part of the guidelines. These include: providing original published copies of the music, being on time for warm-up and performance, and staying within the time limits for these; turning in your paperwork on time; providing the proper stage requirements for your ensemble. Any of the details that are not followed can result in points being lost, a lower rating or disqualification.

4. DRESS APPROPRIATELY.

For concert attire, you cannot miss with black and white. Black tuxes and bow ties and long black dresses (this avoids varied and inappropriate hemlines). I have also seen young choirs and bands

perform in black slacks and white shirts/blouses that look very nice and uniform. Basically, I’ve never seen a great ensemble that looks sloppy, and I’ve rarely seen a great looking ensemble that didn’t perform very well. Look like a group that is going to perform well before you sing or play your first note. Remember that from the time the performers walk on stage until they exit, they must look professional and proud.

5. BE PREPARED IN EVERY WAY.

Let the music be heard. Precise and correct notes, crisp diction, projection, dynamics, phrasing. All of these are not magic, but happen through careful rehearsals prior to the performance.

Conductors should not have to use flagrant or distracting gestures in the conducting. Remember, this is not your first rehearsal, this is “the” performance.

In addition, if given the opportunity have your groups stay and hear as many other ensembles as possible. This is a great experience for your musicians.

I do hope that these suggestions lead you to satisfying musical performances and festival/adjudication experiences.



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4 Things to Consider for Seating Placement of Your Ensemble

By Robert Sheldon

IS IT AT ALL IMPORTANT how you arrange the seating and placement of your ensemble? Why does it matter? What is there to be gained? I believe there are many reasons to have this discussion. Although every director may have their own opinion about what works for them, it is important to at least have an opinion, and to have thought through the reasons why we have made these decisions. We have all seen those design shows on television where the owner gets a room makeover, and in doing so is amazed and thrilled that by changing up the placement of the furniture in their room that suddenly the space is so much better, revitalized and more appealing. Until the moment when the “reveal” takes place, they hadn’t changed the room in years because it had not occurred to them that it could or should be done differently. It is easy to fall into keeping things the way they are just because that is the way we have always done it.

1. GEOGRAPHY OF THE SPACE

Seating placement is all about the performers being able to hear each other, and the audience being able to hear the best possible representation of the performance. When thinking about the geographical placement of the performers, it is helpful to consider the physical rehearsal space in which you will be working each day. But you must also consider the performance site as well. What are the acoustical properties of these spaces? Are risers built in to the rehearsal space, but not used in the performing area? Or are risers used on stage, but the ensemble rehearses on a flat surface? Balance will change dramatically when back rows are raised. Likewise, balance can change given the direction of certain players’ instruments. Not only will the location of brass players and the direction their bells are facing affect balance, but the posture they are using and the height and direction of their bells while they play will have a major impact. Players who raise their bells up will be heard much more than the players who point their bells to the floor in front of them. Consequently a consistent and uniform bell height in the section will promote better balance.

2. REPERTOIRE

We need to be aware of the needs of the individual players in the ensemble as well. The music selection is also something to consider. Can the soloists be heard? Can the sections that have musical conversations with other sections hear each other clearly? Can all instrumentalists that play similar parts during the piece see and hear the other players who are involved? If a duet occurs, can the players see and hear each other? It might be a good idea to change the seating arrangement for a specific piece of music to address these concerns.

3. PRINCIPAL PLAYERS

Principal players are such an important part of our ensembles for many reasons. Not only are they often the strongest players in the group, but they are also the leaders, and therefore are the students with whom we may have the most eye contact, and the

ones we cue most frequently when their entire section enters. Therefore, we want to not only have them placed in the ensemble where we can see and hear them most clearly, but they need to be seen and heard by the principal players in the other sections as well. It is worth considering placing the 1st trumpet player next to the 1st trombone player, especially when those sections play pieces where they have similar entrances. The same idea can be used with horn and alto sax, clarinet and flute, and possibly others, depending on the piece being performed. When the principal players play with more precision the rest of the section has a better chance of success.

4. ENSEMBLE SECTIONS

LOW BRASS & WOODWINDS

We should also consider sections of the ensemble. If all of the low brass and low woodwinds play similar parts in a given piece, it makes sense to have them all in the same region of the band. Not only can they all interpret the conductor's cues more easily, but they can also tune to each other as they play. Obviously this applies to other sections as well.

HORNS

Horns can present a unique challenge due to the direction of their bells. I have found it best to seat the section so that the principal player's bell is facing the rest of the section. In other words, the principal horn has the rest of the section to their right. Since you may not want the last chair horn's bell facing the audience at the front of the stage, it may require seating the horns within the ensemble rather than at the outer edge. Here is where it is important to examine performance and rehearsal space. If there is a hard surface behind the horns, their sound will certainly be more evident than if they are just playing into other players who are sitting behind them. If the performance site is different than the rehearsal site in this regard, problems can certainly occur. One way to control this is by using horn walls; I have made these from 3' x 4' clear sheets of Plexiglas. These can be hung from the music stands of the players who sit behind the horns. The effect

is a much more prominent horn sound that seems to work in all environments, and the balance remains more consistent.

PERCUSSION

The location of the percussion section is also critical. A hard surface behind the snare or bass drum can allow those instruments to sound much louder in the audience. If the mallet players are playing passages with the upper woodwinds, it is helpful to place them close to those sections. Likewise, if the timpani is located near the tuba section it is easier to tune and play with better confidence. A stage that is narrow could result in some players standing behind wing curtains, and that could make it nearly impossible for them to be heard.

Given that the seating of the ensemble can have an enormous impact on balance, intonation and precision, a careful examination of the seating chart we use can lead to immediate improvements in these areas. So I encourage directors to give it a try, change it up and see what happens!



Robert Sheldon is one of the most performed composers of wind band music today and the lead author of Sound Innovations for Concert Band. His compositions embody a level of expression that resonates with ensembles and audiences alike. Mr. Sheldon is currently Director of Concert Band Publications for Alfred Music.



Using Repertoire to Create Positive Ensemble Experiences for Students

By David Pope

WHY IS CHOOSING REPERTOIRE IMPORTANT? Repertoire selection is one of the most significant decisions made by ensemble directors. Thoughtfully selected repertoire can properly develop students' technique from concert to concert, cultivate musicality, energize daily rehearsals, and motivate students to practice outside of class. My main objective as a director is to foster successful experiences for my students, and the first step in creating positive experiences is choosing repertoire that meets students' musical needs, engages them in the music making process, and excites them about playing their instrument.

To meet these objectives, directors should strive to avoid common pitfalls when choosing music. Directors should get out of their own way, understand their students' performance abilities, know the specific techniques required in each piece, and determine what motivates their students. Considering the four strategies below will help create positive learning experiences for students.

1. SET REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

The most common complaint from festival adjudicators is that ensemble directors over program. Many choose concert repertoire with their hearts instead of their heads. Common examples of this include: programming specific repertoire because directors performed it when they were in middle or high school, a desire to teach a masterwork, or blindly choosing music based on the way it sounds. Those decisions often lead to unrealistic expectations and result in directors becoming upset when their students do not rise to the challenge. Conductors transfer their stress onto students during class, and that negatively impacts the rehearsal environment.

To avoid going down that road, pay closer attention when sight-reading new repertoire of music with your students. Did you stop more than four times because chaos reigned and the ensemble fell apart? Were the students in the back of the ensemble lost the entire time? If the answers to those questions are "yes," consider selecting different repertoire that will lead to a greater level of student success. Yes, most students want to push themselves to learn hard music, but it can be demoralizing if they are barely keeping up. "Playing hard music" should not be the goal. Make creating positive and memorable musical moments the objective in your classroom.

2. KNOW YOUR ENSEMBLE

Part of setting realistic expectations is accurately understanding your students' abilities. Before selecting repertoire for each concert, determine where your students' are in their musical development. Determine which concepts they perform proficiently and those that need additional practice to reach a satisfactory performance level. With that knowledge, music educators can choose repertoire that nurtures their students' musical development.

Another component of successful programming is knowing the strengths and weaknesses of your ensemble. Effective

programming involves emphasizing the strong sections of your ensemble, limiting the exposure of inexperienced sections, and knowing how hard you can push your students for each concert sequence. Avoid featuring your inexperienced sections and chose repertoire that highlights the strengths of your ensemble. If I have strong celli and weak violins, maybe “Canon in D” is not the best option for my ensemble. While “Canon in D” is a wonderful work, it does not give the ensemble the best opportunity to succeed. Also consider the amount of rehearsal time for each concert sequence. If you have a limited number of rehearsals due to state testing and field trips, consider that when selecting repertoire.

3. DETERMINE THE REQUIRED TECHNIQUE

Once you narrow down possible repertoire choices for your next concert, dissect each piece to determine what techniques are required. Establish what skills—technical, musical, physical—are necessary to produce a high level performance. That information, paired with in-depth knowledge of your students’ performance abilities, will help determine how many new concepts occur in the repertoire.

I use a basic math formula to determine the amount of new skills I want to introduce in new repertoire. I also consider what playing techniques I plan to refine. For beginning 6th grade students, creating proper set-up and playing position is my main goal. As a result, I skew heavily toward refinement (70%) over new skills (30%). I do not want to overwhelm my students with too many techniques at once. However, the ratio changes as students age because they have a solid set-up and better multi-tasking abilities: 7th grade (40% new skills and 60% refinement), 8th grade (45% new skills and 55% refinement), 9th grade (50% new skills and 50% refinement), 10th grade (55% new skills and 45% refinement), 11th grade (60% new skills and 40% refinement), and 12th grade (65% new skills and 35% refinement). To create positive experiences, it is important to set students up for success through detailed analysis and proper planning.

4. CONNECT TO EVERY STUDENT

Another step to successful programming is choosing repertoire your students want to perform. If you are like me, I am sure you have selected at least one piece of music your students did not like. If your ensemble population mirrors mine, you have a diverse group of students with an even wider array of musical preferences. Yes, it is essential to teach students about specific genres and important pieces of music, but what impact will that have if they continuously do not like our repertoire choices? Will it cause students to lose their desire to play in our ensembles?

Even though directors may prefer specific genres of music and think our students need to know specific works, consider programming works outside of your comfort zone to engage all students in your classroom. Find a variety of new pieces that engage all of your students. As long as the repertoire meets your students’ technical and musical needs, choose works that match their personalities. Remember to choose repertoire that inspires your students to love music, and we can use a variety of genres to reach that objective.



David Pope is Director of Orchestras for the Elyria City Schools near Cleveland, OH. In addition, he serves as the conductor of the Camerata Orchestra at Case Western Reserve University and teaches string pedagogy courses for VanderCook College of Music. Dr. Pope is also a senior conductor and the co-director of Florida State University’s Summer String Orchestra Camp.



Research is showing that the brain learns new skills when it is engaged and active versus passive. Repertoire provides a natural way to actively engage students as they develop new technique. For example, they are actively expressing a phrase while shifting to a new position. The immediate feedback of using a new technique in a passage provides an ideal learning situation.

Consider these technical aspects when selecting repertoire for instrumental and choral ensembles:

- Articulations
- Bow strokes
- Breathing
- Difficult rhythms and/or meter changes
- Extended Positions/ Chromatics
- Phrasing
- Ranges
- Shifting

Selecting Repertoire for a Reason

By Becky Bush

CONCERTS, FESTIVALS, CONTESTS, GRADUATIONS, SCHOOL, AND COMMUNITY CELEBRATIONS—we do so many performances! Teaching our students the joy of performing music is one of the many reasons we do what we do.

So how do we develop our students’ technique and have successful performances? By selecting repertoire for a reason!

For example, many orchestra music educators use “Sahara Crossing” by Richard Meyer and “Gauntlet” by Doug Spata when teaching flats to younger students. Why not take it one step further and use repertoire to master other areas of technique?

I’ve found that when students need to learn specific techniques to perform well, I am highly motivated to teach and they are highly motivated to learn. Using additional, technically-aimed resources is crucial, but if I combine those resources with specifically selected repertoire my students receive immediate, musical gratification.



Becky Bush, Orchestra Director at Jenison Public Schools, was String Editor at Alfred Music, Adjunct Professor at Grand Valley State University, St. Cecilia Youth Orchestra Conductor, and founder of the Hudsonville Schools orchestra program. A graduate of the University of Michigan and GVSU, she has presented at national music conferences.



Festivals, Copyrighted Music, and Ratings: How to Avoid Not Getting a Rating

Pam Phillips

WE HAVE ALL HEARD STORIES of an ensemble going to a festival or contest and being told that ratings will not be given due to copied music. How does a director avoid such disappointment for students and parents, as well as the embarrassment for all? Planning ahead will usually solve the problem! Here are suggestions for navigating the various issues that can arise.

Virtually all organizations that run festivals require that all music used by performers and judges must be original; in other words, it cannot be copied. For solo and small ensemble events, this includes the music used by the student(s), by the accompanist, *and* the music for the judge. For large ensemble events, this means all the music on stage and the scores provided for judges. This is a rule that is rarely, if ever, waived for any circumstance, which means that it falls to the director to be prepared.

First, I would recommend selecting music well in advance. Take the time to see if your selections are currently in print and available to purchase or order. Look at this as invested time rather than spent time because it will pay back with peace of mind! If there is a piece that is out of stock, there is time to check to see if you can obtain it. Do the research as you select music.

Next, order your music, including the extra scores, at least 8 weeks in advance of the date of the festival. The reason for this is to allow time for the unexpected issues (that we all expect) to arise! If a piece of music is out of stock with your retailer, check with other retailers to see if you can get it elsewhere. However, if you have started the process 8 weeks in advance, most likely your retailer can obtain the music from the publisher in time for the event.

Wonderful classic pieces that are out of print can be perfect for festivals! How do you replace missing parts or obtain extra scores for such a piece? If you are playing a piece that is out of print, thus not available for purchase, the rule still applies. Before you commit to performing that piece, be certain you can obtain the originals you need or that you can obtain permission to make copies. To obtain permission, contact the publisher or copyright holder. Be sure to begin this process well in advance to allow time for the request to be processed. I would recommend several months ahead. Do not assume you will get permission, so allow time to change to another piece if necessary.

Most festivals only accept copied music if the music is accompanied by an explicit letter giving you permission to make the copies legally. This will need to be obtained from the publisher or copyright holder and detail the name of the piece, the event for which you are using the copies, your name and school, the date of the event, and any other applicable details. The more detailed this letter is, the less likely you are to have any challenges from the festival. Include a copy of this letter with every score and keep several copies with you.

The ability to download and print music has opened new possibilities, particularly for solos and small ensembles! How do you prove music purchased digitally is not an illegal copy? Sometimes the music will have a statement to that effect on it; sometimes it will not. Unfortunately there are people who try to evade the system by providing their own letters or statement. This can make festival organizers understandably skeptical. I would recommend that you bring copies of the receipts showing exactly what you purchased and how many copies you purchased. Include that with every score and keep several extra copies with you.

If any of your music is copied or appears to be copied, it would also be good to contact the organizers of the festival. Explain your situation and be sure you are meeting the requirements of that festival. Again, invested time that will pay off!

A few extra steps, taken in advance, will provide peace of mind, ensure a good festival experience for your students, and make you look good in front of your administrators and the parents.

For additional information, consult *Copyright Handbook for Music Educators and Directors*, or use the Alfred Music Permissions portal to request permission to copy Alfred publications.



Pam Phillips was the string and Suzuki editor for Alfred Music. She has a broad background in production, editing, and arts management, including producing concerts, camps, and workshops. In her role as an editor she has worked on production of DVDs, CDs, orchestra pieces, and books. Pam has also served as the project coordinator for the Sound Innovations method.

Festivals, Copyrighted Music, and Ratings:
How to Avoid Not Getting a Rating

Copyright Do's & Don'ts

DO

Do view **SCORE&SOUND** on YouTube or sample pages online to review and select music.

Do arrange songs in the public domain (most folks songs, carols, hymns, and spirituals) for your ensemble.

Do make emergency copies if a performance is imminent, provided a replacement is purchased within a reasonable time.

Do make copies from classroom resources that are clearly labeled as reproducible.

Do copy short musical excerpts (no more than 10% of an entire work) to use for academic purposes.

Do the right thing—support the arts by legally purchasing music.

DON'T

Don't download and copy sample pages to avoid purchasing music.

Don't create your own arrangements of copyrighted material without prior written permission from the copyright holder.

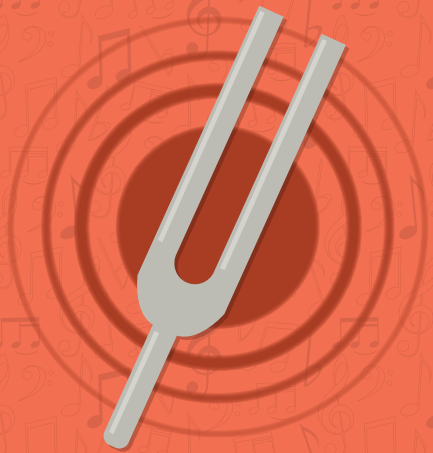
Don't make "practice" copies for students, thus allowing the original to remain in your library.

Don't share reproducible materials from school to school—one is required per building/organization.

Don't post copyrighted materials or recordings online. Remember a digital copy is still a copy.

Don't set a bad example by using illegal copies or copyrighted material from the Internet.

Copyright infringement can result in both civil and criminal action.
The information on this flyer is not intended as legal advice.



Intonation: A Game Changer for Achieving a Mature Ensemble Sound

By Scott Watson

THERE ARE MANY FACTORS that contribute to a mature ensemble sound, but one of the most effective “game changers” that sets apart fine ensembles at any level: playing in tune. While phrasing is a relatively straightforward concept to address, intonation can be tough for young players to grasp and is an ongoing process. Spending even a little time regularly working on individual and ensemble tuning with your students will lead to noticeable improvements in your ensemble’s sound! Here are some practical, effective ways students young and old can improve in the area of playing in tune.

PLANT INTONATION SEEDS

The concept of intonation should be introduced in small doses as soon as students can sustain a stable tone on their instrument. At this early stage, “planting seeds” is called for rather than lengthy explanations. A simple/quick way to plant seeds of intonation understanding is for you and a proficient student to:

1. Play the same note in tune.
2. Make a large adjustment to your tuning slide, mouthpiece, etc., and play the same note extremely out of tune.
3. Finally, re-adjust and together play the note back in tune.

In discussing what students are hearing, use vocabulary that conveys what you mean by flat—“low,” “sour,” “weak”—or sharp—“high,” “edgy,” “shrill.” I like to describe the dissonance of playing out of tune as instrumentalists “having a musical argument.”

A similar demonstration you can use once you introduce long tones (one of my favorite warm up activities) goes like this:

1. Start a long tone on a pitch together with an exemplary player.
2. As you both sustain, bend your note slowly out of tune, up or down, and then back into tune.
3. Ask students to identify whether you drifted up (“sharp”) or down (“flat”).

Even a quick ensemble tuning, directing students with noticeable intonation issues to adjust their instrument accordingly, plants seeds as well. In doing so, students:

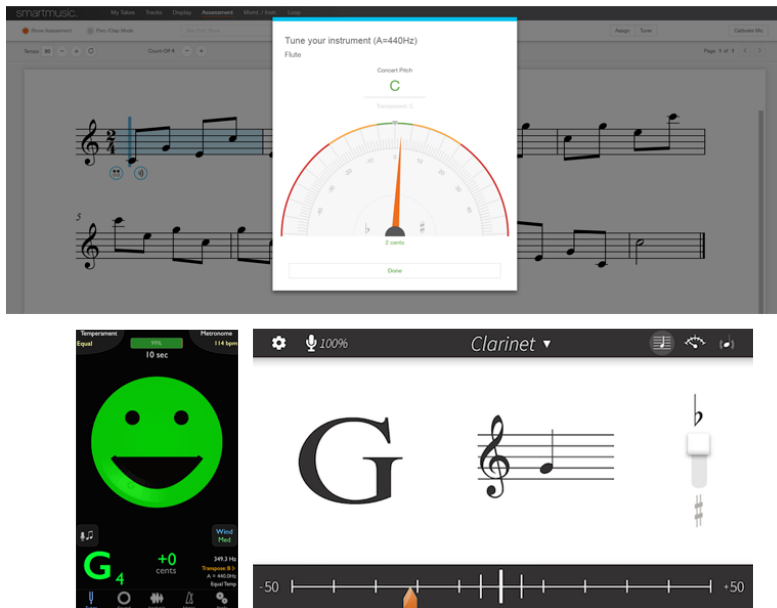
1. Learn that intonation is important to you.
2. Hear you use the words “sharp” and “flat” in context.
3. Learn how to make the appropriate adjustments for their instrument.
4. Experience what it sounds and feels like to play more in tune.

TUNING TECHNOLOGY—SEEING IS BELIEVING

A picture is worth a thousand words; using technology with visual feedback, such as the tuner built into SmartMusic or mobile device apps, can be a big help. My favorite tuning apps are the simple, straightforward Cleartune; the graphically hip Tonal Energy Tuner (emoji graphics, and easy to toggle keys for transposing instruments); and Bandmates, which (along with flat/

sharp feedback) allows users to view notes played on a staff. During the “planting seeds” stage, I allow students to see the visual feedback and discuss with them the adjustment that needs to be made. After using one of these graphic tuners, students never stop asking to tune with it in lessons! If your school allows it, students should be encouraged to download and use their own tuner app in when rehearsing.

Another great app for helping students discern tuning differences is the APS Tuning Trainer for mobile devices. The app plays two tones one after the other—a reference pitch and a “determinant” pitch which will randomly be in tune, sharp, or flat. The user can set how many cents of “pitch variance” the determinant pitch will sound. A large pitch variance of, say 35-40 cents, makes it easy to hear intonation differences. Once students master such coarse differences, teachers can decrease the pitch variance.



(PICTURED: SCREEN CAPTURES FROM SMARTMUSIC, TONAL ENERGY TUNER, AND BANDMATES TUNING PLATFORMS.)

NURTURE GROWTH

Once the seeds for the concept of intonation and the steps for tuning one’s instrument have been planted, it’s time to let students try making decisions for themselves. When tuning, ask student who can hear that they are out of tune to make their best guess and adjust. Tell students who are apprehensive about discerning intonation, “The worst that can happen if you choose wrong is you’ll sound worse! Then it will be obvious you should adjust in the opposite direction.”

Of course, tuning and playing in tune are two different things! To instill a sense of playing with a centered pitch, I recommend having students play along with a reference sound (teacher, recording, SmartMusic accompaniment, piano, etc.) and the use of interval warm-ups (such as the “Expanding Intervals” exercises in the Sound Innovations Ensemble Development books). With both, repetition is key for students to form a conception of what sound is correct and how to adjust to achieve it. After an interval warm-up becomes routine, try holding certain notes as fermatas to allow students to remove tuning tension and center their pitch. Older students can apply here what they have learned about their instruments’ specific tuning tendencies (i.e. flutes rolling mouthpiece in/out, trumpets using 3rd valve slide, etc.).

TUNE IN PAIRS

One of my favorite ways to tune a section or the entire ensemble is to tune successive, adjacent pairs of players. Begin by conducting a general tuning of the ensemble to get everyone in the ballpark. Next, have one player (I like to use the lowest sounding wind), who we’ll call Player 1, begin by playing a tuning note of your choice. After a brief time, direct player Player 2 to join Player 1 (same pitch or the octave equivalent). Player 2 compares his sound to Player 1’s and makes a determination (sharp, flat, or in tune). Under these circumstances it will be very easy to hear, but if needed the director can offer feedback. As Player 1 still sounds the tuning note, Player 2 adjusts (if necessary) until he is in tune. At that point Player 1 drops out and the next player in line, Player 3, joins Player

2. It is now Player 3 who makes a determination and adjusts if necessary. Once stable, Player 2 drops out and the next player in line, Player 4, joins in. And so on, and so on.

Some great material for employing this approach can be found in the “Passing the Tonic” exercises in all three levels of the Sound Innovations Ensemble Development books. In each, as a note is passed from section to section around the ensemble, players must listen and work to match intonation and other qualities.

For an ensemble familiar with this routine, it takes about five or so minutes to tune. Due to time constraints, you may want to tune only a section or two this way in some rehearsals.

TUNE A BAND LIKE YOU TUNE A GUITAR

A guitarist typically tunes each string individually, then sounds a chord to hear how the strings ring and resonate together. When heard in a harmonic context, individual string tunings may need to be refined further. I recommend tuning an ensemble similarly: first tune individual players (the older the player, the greater the player’s responsibility for tuning him/herself), then have the a section or the entire ensemble sustain a vertical sonority together so you can listen for tuning tensions that still have not been resolved. The opening or closing chords of most pieces you might be rehearsing, or the work’s climax moment, serve perfectly for this. Stopping on various chords of a chorale (such as those found throughout the Sound Innovations Ensemble Development books) allows for this as well. For more mature ensembles, non-triadic vertical note aggregates (i.e. quartal, quintal, poly chords) can be used. The key is to listen discerningly and make adjustments so the harmony rings true.

AWARENESS MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Like many educators around the country each school year, I must craft a “Student Learning Objective” as part of my teacher evaluation process. SLO’s are learning goals for students against which an educator’s efficacy can be measured. Last year, my

colleagues and I chose an intonation awareness SLO. Our goal was simply for second year players to know how to interpret feedback from a tuning app, and know what adjustment to make on their instrument based on that feedback. Although we did encourage students to make tuning decisions, our SLO didn’t require students to specifically recognize whether they were sharp, flat, or in tune. Despite such a general “awareness” approach, I was pleased with the results. Near the end of the year, after working periodically on tuning awareness all year, we held our annual district wide 5th grade concert. My wife, a fine flutist with experience teaching young bands, attends this concert each year and always gives me candid feedback about how we did. I did not share with her that tuning had been an emphasis during the year. After the concert I asked her for her impressions. The first thing she said was, “I thought the band sounded more in tune this year than in the past.”

Each year I am honored to be asked to guest conduct various honor bands. When I ask a student at an elementary or intermediate festival to make a tuning adjustment, it is not uncommon for younger players to share that their tuning slide is stuck or that they’ve never (or rarely) used it! I realize there are many worthwhile ways to spend the precious, limited time we have with students. In many cases with younger players, we’re tickled if students can just play correct notes and rhythms! Nonetheless, if you can plant seeds of tuning awareness and understanding along the way, your band’s sound will grow to be more attractive and pleasing to all who hear.



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Do Your Students Get Performance Anxiety?

By Toni Hosman

I T IS WIDELY ACCEPTED that performance anxiety affects everyone. Even seasoned musicians can be struck by that most unsettling feeling. So, the question becomes, how do performers get past this? “The show must go on” isn’t enough to break down this barrier. Ultimately, it comes down to the individual and how they handle stress and anxiety.

One of the most helpful secrets a director shared with me was simply to breathe. Oddly enough, she was right. It’s funny how much of the body can be affected by something so simple. After she said that, I realized what little breath I was using. I was just standing in a line waiting to be called into the audition room! There was only one reason I could think of as to why I had sweaty palms, a racing heartbeat, and lack of breath: my anxiety. From that moment on, I took every chance to inhale as deeply as I could. Within minutes, my demeanor changed, and I could focus with more clarity on the task ahead.

That one experience sent me on a journey to uncover even more ways to handle my performance anxiety. Years later, it still isn’t completely gone but it is much more manageable. (One thing to consider, no person is chemically and biologically the same as anyone else. Sometimes stress-management requires more than mental discipline.) One of the most effective ways I found to help manage performance anxiety is mindful meditation.

Mindfulness is the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we’re doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what’s going on around us. In performance, the ability to be fully present is paramount. If performers zone out or revert into auto-pilot mode, they become susceptible to glitches or breakdown. Or if something unexpected occurs, which is not so unlikely when performing live, a performer may not be as quick to react and adjust. Being mindful in performance is key.

Meditation is the act of engaging in contemplation or reflection. In essence, mindful meditation is the act of engaging the basic human ability to be fully present and aware. The most opportune time to do this as a performer is before every practice and again before the performance itself. Starting rehearsals by practicing 2–3 minutes of mindful meditation will help your ensemble focus with the long-term goal of overcoming performance anxiety on the big day. Here are some simple steps to help guide this process for students:

1. Find a spot—chair, cushion, bench—and sit comfortably.
2. Take several moments to feel what your body is doing. In any position you choose to meditate, every part of your body should be comfortable and at ease. Do not stiffen or tighten muscles.
3. Drop your chin and inhale as deeply as you can.

How to Overcome Stage Fright with Mindful Meditation

4. Relax here for a few minutes. Bring your attention to your breath and what your body is feeling. Focus on different parts of your body—especially your breathing and take a few moments to register the physical sensation of breathing. (Music educators: this is a good opportunity to practice various breathing exercises!)
5. From this point on, your mind will wander. That's okay. As time goes on, you will learn how to redirect your thoughts and keep focused. But until then, when you do realize your thoughts have wandered, gently return your attention to breathing.
6. After 2–3 minutes and with intention, gently lift your gaze and notice any sounds in your environment. Notice how your body feels, your thoughts, your emotions, then decide how to engage in the rehearsal or performance with your fellow musicians.

The hardest part of mindful meditation is consistency. Daily practice is obviously ideal, but even if it's only before rehearsals or once a week, get your students into the habit. One day they may overcome performance anxiety entirely, but only if you work at it. As the performance approaches and you find students swirling in a thought-vortex of forgotten words or worried about being on stage in front of an audience, remind them to tap into their mindful meditation. Help them let go of those anxieties and just breathe until their mind is clear. And finally, take the stage and perform without fear.



Toni Hosman is the School & Solo Performance Marketing Manager at Alfred Music and a private piano and vocal coach. She attended Westmont College and performed with the College Choir and Women's Chorale. She has also worked as a tutor and Liberal Arts Ambassador to children in the Santa Barbara charter school community.

Do Your Students Get Performance Anxiety?





Festival First Aid Kit: Resources for the Road

Toni Hosman

IT IS FAR TOO EASY FOR SOMETHING TO GO WRONG during festival season. Even if you try to anticipate every situation, every scenario, there is still probably going to be a surprise you couldn't have prepared for. Working with kids, especially student musicians, can be a daunting task when you have to corral 40+ students with fragile instruments of varying shapes and sizes, possibly in a new location, while trying to check-in, find your assigned seats...the list goes on. For a music educator, it is essential to have chaperones, trusted parents, and a "festival first aid kit" to count on when it's go-time.

The best thing a director can do before leaving for a contest or festival is to prepare as much as possible in advance. But don't do it alone. Don't let the burden of preparing for the performance rest on your shoulders alone. If you have a booster board or a parent committee, work with them to help coordinate chaperones for the various festivals throughout the season. If not, then go directly to the parents. You can even begin asking as early as the

first back to school night. Inform parents of the ensemble's needs and how their help can better keep the students safe. You may discover more help than you knew you had.

Now you're just a week away from the contest and chaperones have committed. As the music educator, you still need to help chaperones understand what they are responsible for. Below is a general checklist for chaperones to have the day of the performance. This is a starting point. Add to the checklist whatever specific information or situations are relevant to your ensemble, location, or schedule.

- General schedule/outline for the day
 - Address of location
 - If on a college campus, include a map
- Director contact information
- All chaperones contact information
- Roll Call
 - Name & Instrument (for each student the chaperone is responsible for)
 - Dietary restrictions, Allergies (medication?)

There is one more group of people who need to act responsibly at the festival: your students. You can also give students a checklist prior to boarding the bus, even the day before while in class. This checklist is more specific to the individual. Create sectional checklists for the instrument groups and add instrument care items, necessary attire, list of pieces being performed, etc. By making students responsible for themselves and each other, you're creating more thoughtful and well-rounded musicians.

On the day of the performance having extras and emergency essentials is paramount, especially while traveling. Consider having a festival first aid kit on hand. This kit is not just intended to hold medical supplies, but supplies for instruments and attire as well. Of course, it is always smart to include a medical first aid kit for student's, but also acknowledge the instruments and attire

as extensions of the performers as well. These material items are going on stage with the musicians, so they'll need to be fixed should something go awry or break. This first aid kit is probably going to be larger than a backpack; consider something on wheels to make it easier to travel with. Below is a list of items that should definitely be included in every festival first aid kit, but don't forget to add to it and make it unique to your ensemble's needs.

- Apparel Accessories—Socks, Misc. Jewelry, Ties
- Rosin
- Extra Strings
- Extra Reeds
- Small Sewing Kit
- Small First Aid Kit
- Large Black Sharpie
- Small Bag of Misc. Makeup
- Safety Pins
- Baby Wipes
- Repair Kit—Pliers, Screwdrivers (Flathead and Phillips), Hammer
- Extra Cello/Bass Rock Stops or Boards
- Valve Oil / Slide Oil / Cork Grease
- Mutes for Literature
- Duct Tape
- Rubber Cement for Temporary Pad Glue
- Crochet Hook to Reset Woodwind Springs—Paper Clip in a Pinch!
- Drum Key
- Shoe Polish
- Stain Remover



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