



# Kjos Band News

NEWS AND INFORMATION FOR BAND EDUCATORS

## Kjos Band News Hopes Your School Year Started Well

**B**y the time you receive this volume of *Kjos Band News*, the new school year will have already begun for you and your students. We, at Kjos, hope that the beginning of this school year started smoothly and that you and your students have settled into an efficient and productive routine.

Every new school year brings hope, dreams, and challenges. It is filled with energy and enthusiasm, and is a wonderful time of the year. As the year progresses, however, that enthusiasm sometimes wanes. How can we, as music educators, keep that enthusiasm alive and vibrant in our students for the duration of the year? Let's remember that students and ensembles are a mirror of their director or teacher. That means that we must retain our energy and enthusiasm. But how is that possible

when we must deal with lesson plans, faculty meetings, performance pressures, etc.?

We must first take care of ourselves. We must be emotionally, spiritually, and physically healthy if we are to maintain *our* enthusiasm. That means that our lives must be balanced. Because we, as teachers, are giving of ourselves all the time, we must nourish our body, soul, and spirit. When our lives are well balanced and in order, we will be able to maintain enthusiasm for one of the noblest professions in the world, that of being a music educator.

*Kjos Band News*  
Neil A. Kjos Music Company  
4380 Jutland Drive  
San Diego, CA 92117

## Teaching The Brass Embouchure

by Bruce Pearson

**I**n the Spring 2000 issue of *Kjos Band News*, I wrote an article entitled, "A+E=T." In other words, A (Air) + E (Embouchure) = T (Tone). While this is true for all wind instruments, it is especially true for brass instruments.

In addition to tone quality, air support dramatically affects intonation, articulation, range, and endurance. If there is a deficiency in any of these areas, the first place to look for the source of the problem is air support.

Once the student is inhaling and exhaling properly, the brass embouchure should be taught. The embouchure is, obviously, critical to producing a good tone on all brass and woodwind instruments. With woodwind instruments the reed or the air stream creates the vibration that is necessary to produce a tone. The brass family, however, is the only

family of instruments where a part of the body (lips) is the vibrating force used to produce the tone. Consequently, good tone on a brass instrument must be taught in such a way that the vibrating lips ("buzz") remain relaxed and free of any stress.

Assist students in forming and developing their brass instrument embouchure by making each student responsible for providing a small mirror that can be placed on the music stand. This will allow students to see that their embouchure is being formed properly.

Ensure a good formation of the embouchure by having each student do the following:

1. Shape the inside of the mouth as if saying "oh." Bring the lips together as

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if saying “em.” Remind students to keep their mouth in the “oh” position while saying “em.”



2. The lips should have firm corners but a relaxed center. The chin should be flat and pointed.
3. Take a full breath of air and blow, creating a relaxed, buzzing tone.



4. While buzzing, place the mouthpiece over the buzz. Cornet, trumpet, trombone, baritone, euphonium, and

tuba should have equal amounts of the mouthpiece on the upper and lower lips. For French horn, place the mouthpiece over the buzz with  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the mouthpiece on the upper lip and  $\frac{1}{3}$  on the lower lip.



5. Put the mouthpiece into the lead pipe. Take a full breath of air and play a long, steady tone.

Once a student can produce a relaxed buzz they should be encouraged to do “mouthpiece workouts.” The first mouthpiece workout should be to produce a “siren.” Explain that the pitch is changed by tightening and loosening the *corner muscles*. The next set of mouthpiece workouts consists of three, four, and five note songs played on the mouthpiece only. The songs on pages 6, 7, 8, and 9 of **Standard of Excellence, Book 1** are perfect for this purpose. Impress upon students that the brass instrument is in reality an amplifier of the pitches that are produced by the embouchure.

By following these simple steps, students will learn to form a good brass instrument embouchure that will be important to the development of a beautiful brass instrument tone.

*Bruce Pearson is an internationally-known author, composer, clinician, and conductor. He has taught at the elementary, junior high, high school, and college levels for over thirty years. In December of 1998, Bruce was awarded the prestigious **Midwest Clinic Medal of Honor** in recognition of his outstanding contribution to music education.*

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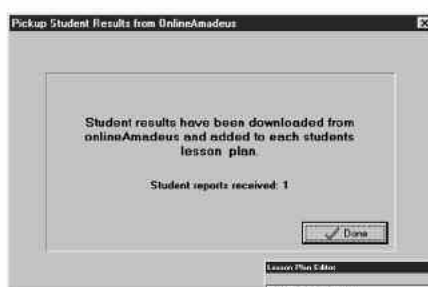
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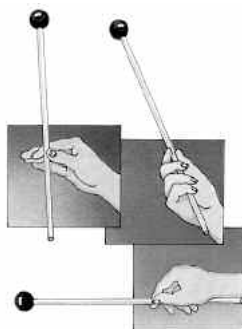


# Mallet Percussion Basics!

by Dave Hagedorn

**M**allet percussion is an important part of the percussion world, and a branch that needs to be addressed in the beginning percussionist's lessons. This article will examine various techniques and practice strategies that will enhance your students' instruction. Grip, physical stance, playing spots, mallet selection, and scale practice are topics that will be covered in this article.

The mallets should be held very similar to the snare drum sticks, as shown on page 2 of **Standard of Excellence, Book 1**.



The difference between the mallet technique and the snare drum technique is that of rebound. A snare drum stick will naturally rebound off the drum head, whereas the mallet must be lifted off the tone bar with the wrists. Consequently, the mallet should be held closer to the fleshy part of the palms so the wrist can easily lift the mallet away from the tone bar after striking it. The motion is similar to what one would do if one accidentally touched something very hot—the finger would immediately lift off the hot surface.

To sustain a sound on mallet percussion instruments, a single stroke roll, not a multiple bounce or open double-stroke

roll, is used. This technique will also help when playing other percussion instruments that do not have much rebound, such as the woodblock, triangle, or suspended cymbal.

The physical stance is also very important in playing mallet percussion instruments. Like the snare drum, the weight should be evenly distributed between both feet. It is important to stand in the middle of the range where one is going to be playing. For example, if a student is playing *Excellerator 88A* from **Standard of Excellence—Drums & Mallets Percussion, Book 1**, the student should stand in front of first space F.



If, however, the student is playing *Excellerator 96B*, the student should stand in front of third space C.



I find that standing in this manner makes each passage easier to execute. Similarly, I move the music stand to where I am standing. It's important to have the music stand in a line between the percussionist and the director, so that it is easy to see both the director and the music. This does not mean that you need to move the stand as you are playing, but that you need to pay attention to the range of the passage you are playing and set up accordingly before you begin rehearsing, practicing, or performing.

It is also important to have the instrument at the correct height for each musician. Just as the snare drum needs to be

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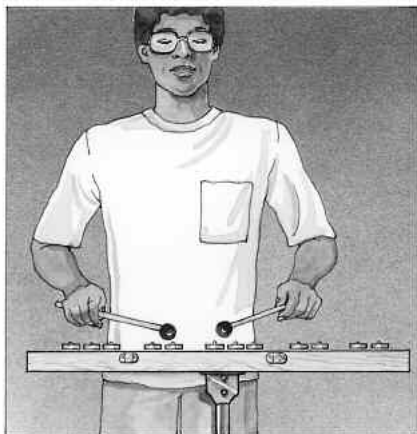
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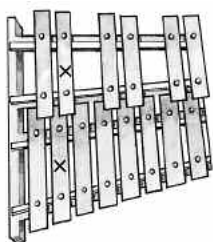


adjusted for the performer's height, the mallet percussion instrument needs to be adjusted also so that the instrument is at a comfortable height to facilitate performance.

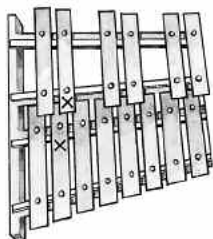


Where one plays the tone bars affects both the sound and accuracy. A bar may be struck anywhere except at the nodes (the area of the bar where the cord or supporting device comes in contact with the bar). Encourage students to listen and discover the various sounds created by striking the bars in different places. When playing non-technical passages, the center of all bars is preferred for the purest sound. When playing technical passages, the player should strike the natural bars (those bars that correspond to the white keys on a piano) just off center. The accidental bars (those bars that correspond to the black keys on the piano) should be struck between the node and the edge nearest the player.

non-technical



technical

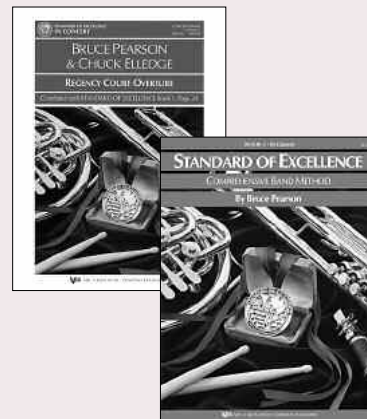


**Standard of Excellence** provides many scale and arpeggio studies, both within the main body of the book and on page 42 of **Book 1**. I recommend singing these scale patterns using either note names or solfège. This will help develop the musical ear.

Using the right mallets for the musical passage is critical to a good performance. I attend many concerts where I can see the percussionist's hands moving on mallet instruments but I can't hear the sounds. Most composers use mallet instruments to add a brilliance of color or sparkle to an ensemble. This sparkle is lost if the mallets are inappropriate. Make certain that hard plastic, brass, or aluminum mallets are used when playing the glockenspiel, or orchestra bells, to project the sound. One should NOT use these mallets on any other instrument. It is a good rule to follow that mallet percussion instruments should NOT be struck by any mallet that is of a harder substance than the tone bar of the instrument that is being played. Xylophones with wooden tone bars should be played with either wooden or hard rubber mallets. Xylophones with synthetic bars may be played with either wood or hard plastic mallets. Marimbas should be played with either rubber or yarn-covered mallets. Vibes work best when played with a cord-covered mallet, as yarn wears out more quickly when it is striking a metal surface.

I hope that this information is helpful to you as you continue your quest for excellent percussion performance.

*Dave Hagedorn is a professional percussionist in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. He is the percussion instructor at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota.*



### STANDARD OF EXCELLENCE LEADS THE WAY IN ADDRESSING THE NATIONAL STANDARDS

Since its release with **Book 1** in 1993, **Standard of Excellence** has led the way in addressing the National Standards for Music Education. While using the "draft standards," the **Standard of Excellence Comprehensive Band Method** was carefully and meticulously designed and written so that, upon completion of **Standard of Excellence, Book 3**, all Grade 5–8 National Standards are addressed and exceeded. You may obtain a copy of a handout that shows which activities address each of the Standards by calling or writing the Neil A. Kjos Music Company. In addition to the method book, the **Standard of Excellence IN CONCERT** series presents exceptional arrangements, transcriptions, and original concert and festival pieces. Each of the over forty pieces currently available provides valuable activities that will help students meet, address, and achieve the National Standards. In fact, when considering the method book and correlated pieces, **Standard of Excellence** is the only curriculum that addresses the National Standards with both components.

# Building Listening Skills In The Band

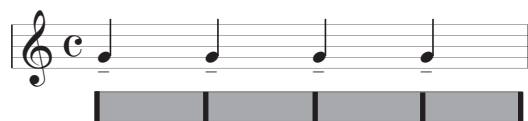
## Articulation – Part Two

by Richard Williams & Jeff King

**A**rticulation is how musicians speak through their horns. The ability of an ensemble to match articulation allows the performers to communicate each musical thought with clarity. Whether we're working on long tones, flexibility exercises, or the march for the next concert, our students need to be aware of the concepts that shape articulation on their instruments. In the last issue of *Kjos Band News* we discussed the mechanics of articulation, focusing on fundamental attack-sustain-release principles. In this issue we will discuss matching styles of articulation, and suggest rehearsal strategies that will promote the application of these articulation principles to all musical settings.

### Matching Style

Although there are many different styles of articulation, the fundamental attributes of the attack-sustain-release process outlined in the last issue of *Kjos Band News* still apply. Adjustments to note length, varying rhythms and subdivisions, dynamics, and special effects (accents, marcato, etc.) should not affect physical characteristics such as the tongue position, vowel sound, or lip/reed vibration, nor should these variables affect pitch or tone quality. It is important to narrow the focus of the exercise to allow for mastery of a few concepts that can then be modified to different musical settings. We suggest emphasizing the following styles/note lengths:



Four connected quarter notes (tenuto). The sound of one note “touches” the next note (full value).



Four quarter notes in “long and lifted” style. The attack is the same as tenuto, but the end of the note is tapered ( $\frac{3}{4}$  full value).



Four quarter notes “short and lifted” (staccato). Separated and detached ( $\frac{1}{2}$  full value).

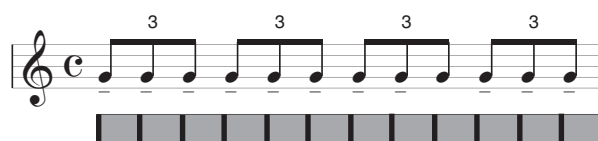
When playing eighth notes and eighth note triplets, the only lengths possible are tenuto and short and lifted. As rhythms are subdivided into smaller note values, note lengths become more limited. Tempo is the determining factor in this regard.



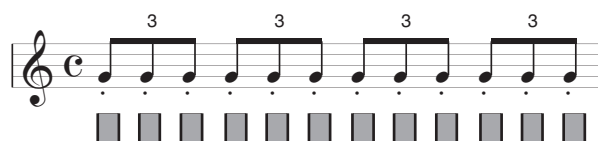
Eighth notes in connected style (tenuto).



Eighth notes in short and lifted style (staccato).

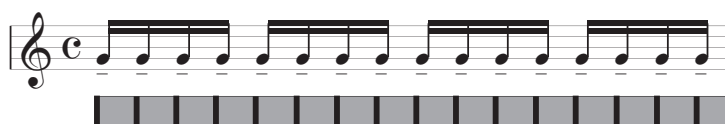


Eighth note triplets in connected style (tenuto).



Eighth note in triplets in a detached style (bounced).

When playing sixteenth notes the only possible note length is tenuto. The attacks are so close together that separation is extremely difficult. Additionally, tone quality dictates that these notes be played with a continuous air stream.



Sixteenth notes in a connected style (tenuto).

It is possible to create a “lifted” sounding style on sixteenth notes by pulsing or darting the air on each attack, but this should not be confused with creating space between sixteenth notes.



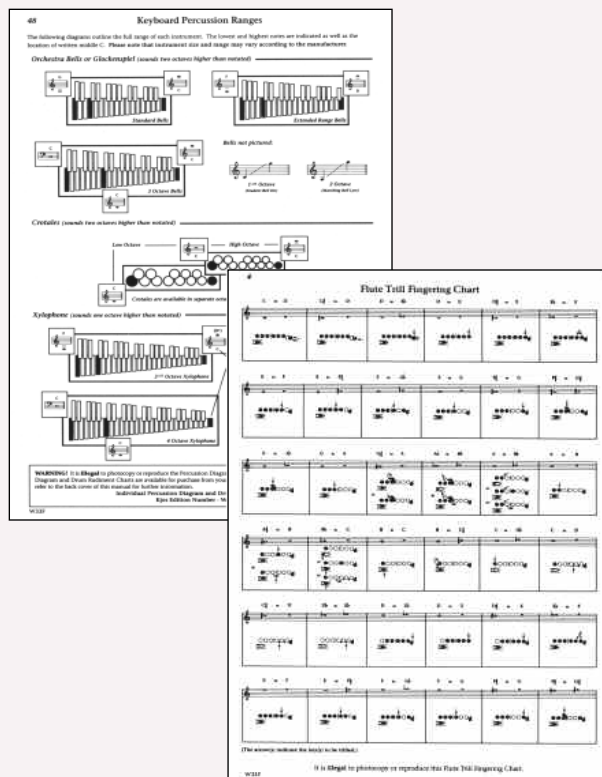
# THE COMPLETE INSTRUMENT REFERENCE GUIDE FOR BAND DIRECTORS

by Richard Williams & Jeff King  
with Derrick Logozzo

Here at last — *and in one publication* — is all of the information you need to answer the myriad of questions that arise in rehearsal! Spiral bound and laminated for convenience and durability, **The Complete Instrument Reference Guide for Band Directors** includes extended fingering charts for all wind instruments, alternate fingerings, trill charts and key diagrams for all woodwind instruments, ranges for all keyboard instruments and much, much more!

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### Articulation Exercise on Concert F (trumpet/clarinet)

1 2 3 4 5

6 7 8 9 10

11 12 13 14

15 16 17 18

19 20

\* opt. ending on whole note

\* opt. ending on whole note

\* opt. ending on whole note

\* opt. ending on whole note

from *Foundations For Superior Performance*  
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## Rehearsal Strategies

The articulation exercise above provides a short, practical context in which to practice articulation concepts and note lengths with your ensemble. Although written on concert F, this exercise can be transposed to any note you choose. This should be a unison exercise, with everyone playing in their most comfortable range. Please note the optional ending points — this allows you to build this exercise over time as students become more proficient. Here are some general goals and guidelines for students:

1. Tongue each note (concert F) in the same place on the reed or mouth.
2. Maintain a consistent air stream within each style, and refrain from breathing between lifted notes.
3. Make sure the embouchure does not move during articulations and maintain a consistent vowel sound and tongue placement.
4. Strive to produce a consistent and characteristic tone quality on every note, not allowing the varying articulations or rhythms to affect the sound.
5. Articulate at the same time and with the same strength.
6. Listen for uniform attacks and releases—listen side to side.
7. Listen for balance during sustain—try to hear the section leader.

The following points are specific to certain elements of the exercise above:

1. Tenuto notes generally need a firmer tongue.
2. On short notes:
  - use more compact, compressed air without forcing air into the horn
  - get the air to the back of the note faster

### 3. On fast notes:

- think; “How fast does my tongue need to move?”
- keep the tongue close to the point of contact
- the faster notes go by, the more sound/tone you have to put on them

This exercise can be rehearsed in many different ways. Here are some suggestions:

1. Use a metronome whenever possible.
2. Start with a moderate tempo and gradually work towards faster tempos.
3. Pass a rhythm/articulation around the band from section to section or within a section from student to student.
4. Vocalize the drill on an articulation syllable and then have students play it exactly as they said it.
  - It is vital that students vocalize with tone quality and intensity. If they just go through the motions and fail to use their voice like an instrument, no gains will be made.
5. Practice the “wind pattern.”
  - Have students articulate the exercise and blow air against their finger. You will then be able to address the differences in the sound of the air stream (which is amplified by their finger) and hear differences in the articulation syllable (e.g. “CHOO” instead of “TOO”).
6. With young ensembles, modify the harder measures; instead of 4 beats of triplets and sixteenth notes, try to play 2 beats worth of those rhythms.



## The Bottom Line

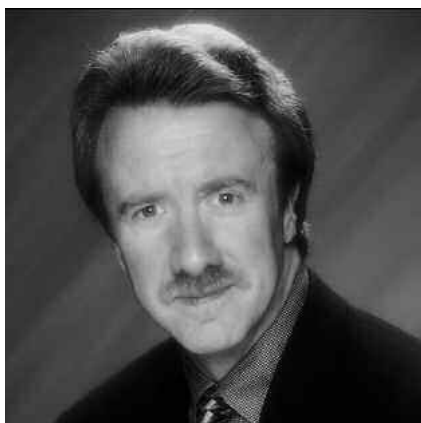
If still sounds bad, focus on:

1. articulating together
2. matching the vowel sound
3. balancing side to side and to the section leader
4. firmness of articulation

The physical and conceptual characteristics of attack-sustain-release are core elements to all wind articulation. In our efforts to promote clarity of articulation in our ensembles, we must, as teachers, develop a clear, concise, and consistent approach that enables students to articulate musical thought in any setting. Beginning with one concept at a time, articulation

skills can then be refined and developed over a period of time and the responsibility eventually shifted from the director to the student. In any exercise that is designed to build fundamentals, students need to know not only the “how,” but also the “why.” Chances are that if we don’t tell them what to think — they aren’t thinking at all.

*Jeff King is a band director in the Duncanville Independent School District. A graduate of Baldwin-Wallace College and Southern Methodist University, he currently serves as director of bands at the Duncanville Ninth Grade School and an assistant band director at Duncanville High School.*



## *In Loving Memory*

### **Richard Williams 1958 – 2001**

Richard Scott Williams, teacher, composer, father, and friend, passed away on August 22, 2001 at the age of 42. He was born in Cayahoga Falls, Ohio, and began a life-long love of music there with studies in piano, saxophone and flute. After receiving his Bachelor of Music degree from the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, and a Master of Music degree from the University of North Texas in jazz studies, he began a career as a middle school music educator in Texas. During his tenure as associate band director at Duncanville’s Byrd Middle School, his bands received consistent superior ratings, numerous festival awards, and advanced to the Texas Honor Band finals three times. Together with Jeff King he co-authored the best-selling warm-up and technique textbook *Foundations for Superior Performance*, the *Foundations Fingering and Trill Charts*, and the *Complete Instrument Reference Guide for Band Directors*. Richard’s extensive performance experience included being a featured saxophone soloist with the Dallas Wind Symphony, the Dallas Saxophone Quartet, the Texas Wind Symphony, and the New Philharmonic Orchestra of Irving, Texas. Most recently he devoted his creative time and attention to Christian music, and produced and performed on the CD *Wonderful Words of Life*.

Whether one knew Rich as a teacher, clinician, colleague, or friend, it was impossible not to be captivated by his sense of humor, his wit, his dedication, and his abundant energy. Above all he loved music, and he loved teaching, and he will be sorely missed by all. Rich is survived by his wife Rebecca, his son Joseph, and his sister Jan.

# Recruiting: The Ongoing Process – Part Four

by Bruce Pearson

Each year band directors are faced with the challenge of recruiting students into their ensembles. The number of students in an ensemble depends on both recruiting new students, and retaining existing band members. Recruiting thus should not be limited to finding new students, and wise directors understand the importance of “recruiting” existing members. There are many reasons why students choose to join, continue, or drop out of band programs. While the reasons are varied, those that a band director can directly affect can be grouped into the following categories:

1. Public Awareness
2. Program Administration
3. Communication
4. Teaching Strategies

The previous issues of *Kjos Band News* have addressed the categories of public awareness, program administration, and communication. In this issue of *Kjos Band News* we will examine the remaining category, teaching strategies.

Good teaching strategies and effective implementation of those strategies are at the heart of the educational process. Band programs may have good public awareness, effective program administration, and excellent communication with students, parents, and administrators, but without good teaching the program will not be successful.

Consider the following tips to ensure effective teaching strategies:

1. **Carefully select your repertoire.** The repertoire you select represents the material you plan to use to implement your curriculum. When selecting repertoire consider its musical merit, what you want to teach, and the appropriateness of its difficulty level for your ensemble. (For more detailed suggestions regarding selecting repertoire, see the **Standard of Excellence Conductor’s Score, Book 1**, page 569–574).

In selecting repertoire make certain that your students have new musical experiences each year. In a three-year program, for example, provide your students with three years of unique experiences, not just one year of experiences repeated three times. Also consider teaching the elements of music (rhythm, melody, harmony, texture, timbre, etc.) through varied experiences in history, style, and genre. For example, you may want to teach a specific harmonic concept while tracing its use through the historical periods, then compare and contrast that harmonic concept with its use in the music from a foreign land.

2. **Be committed to score study.** There is no substitute for knowing your music well. It is the director’s responsibility to

teach the music to your students at the highest level possible. “Have the score in your head, not your head in the score.”

3. **Use a yearly calendar** to make certain that you are not over-scheduling your ensemble. Use this yearly planner to also ensure that all components of the school year’s curriculum are addressed.

4. **Consider unit plans** where the elements of the music are studied each concert season.

5. **Plan your rehearsals carefully.** The next issue of *Kjos Band News* will address “Rehearsal Strategies”.

- A. Share your rehearsal objectives with your students.
- B. Challenge your students with “what and why” questions that make connections between the music and real-life experiences.
- C. Stress good fundamentals. Insist on good posture, hand position, embouchure formation, and breath support. Good fundamentals should include the mastery of scales, thirds, arpeggios, articulations, and percussion rudiments.

6. **Hone classroom management skills.** With effective classroom management, the teacher and a large group of students can share enjoyable and meaningful musical experiences.

7. **Be a good steward of rehearsal time.**

- A. Set a specific time that the rehearsal will start.
- B. Put music in folders prior to rehearsal.
- C. Sell or distribute supplies before or after rehearsal. Many schools have the school store sell items such as reeds and valve oil.
- D. Examine and repair instruments that are working before or after rehearsal. Have “loaner” instruments available for use when instruments require professional repair.
- E. Pre-assign percussion parts. (See **Standard of Excellence Conductor’s Score, Book 1**, page 622 for a Percussion Assignment Chart).
- F. Orchestrate upbeat, high-energy rehearsals. Stand up to conduct. Minimize “down time.”
- G. Expect and demand the students’ attention. The most important element of a good rehearsal is — SILENCE.

8. **Plan rehearsals to incorporate active parts for all instruments.** If some sections (often the percussion section) are tacit, have alternate activities in mind for them.

9. **List the rehearsal agenda on the board.** Next to each piece list the objective(s) and section(s) to be rehearsed.
10. **Stay with a piece** until everyone can recognize that the objective has been met. Be realistic so that students can realize success.
11. **Dress like a professional.**
12. **Use discipline appropriately.**
  - A. Good discipline can be stated simply — “Say what you mean, mean what you say, and do what you say you’re going to do.”
  - B. Be pro-active. When students are actively engaged during rehearsals, disruptions are virtually eliminated.
  - C. Correct unwanted or unruly behavior by moving closer to the student, rather than by reprimanding the student and disrupting class. Some students misbehave to receive attention, and providing this attention only reinforces their bad behavior.
  - D. Avoid power struggles. Everyone loses.
  - E. Discipline the offenders rather than the entire ensemble.
  - F. Never discipline in anger. Allow for a cooling off period.
  - G. Give praise publicly, but discipline privately.

Good teaching is an essential component of a quality band program. Putting these tips into practice will break down many of the barriers to student participation in band and will reduce the number of dropouts. Recruiting is an ongoing process.

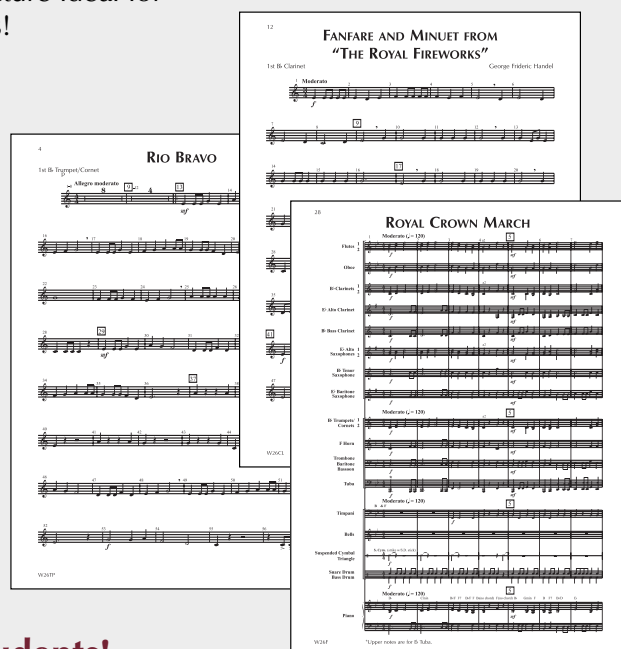
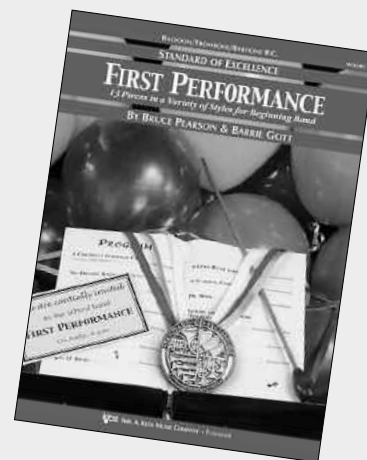
## STANDARD OF EXCELLENCE FIRST PERFORMANCE BY BRUCE PEARSON & BARRIE GOTT

**First Performance** is a collection of 13 new Very Easy/Easy (Grade  $\frac{1}{2}$  – Grade 1) pieces for beginning band. A variety of styles including marches, folk songs, Latin, rock, blues, transcriptions, and holiday music provide interesting repertoire for beginning bands from the very first concert and throughout the first year. Each selection is composed to ensure student success with extensive cross-cueing, limited ranges, and interesting parts for all sections. **First Performance** provides quality literature ideal for concerts, contests, and all first-year, programming needs!

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- Fun and Familiar Songs
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# Twelve Ways To Avoid The Brass Repair Shop – Part Two

by Robert Baca & John Huth

With ever decreasing budgets and the band director's need to become more efficient, the "I don't know how it happened" avoidable repair can add up to more than a bottle of Tylenol. With a little neglect, or using the wrong method of "band-aid" remedy, small repairs can eat away at the budget, and cause instruments to be missing from rehearsal. To provide some sound advice for students, I asked nationally recognized brass repair expert John Huth to identify the most common problems that eventually guarantee a student's horn a trip to the repair shop. In the last issue of *Kjos Band News* we provided general tips on horn care, and tips for piston instruments. In this issue we tackle French horns, rotary valve tubas, and trombones.

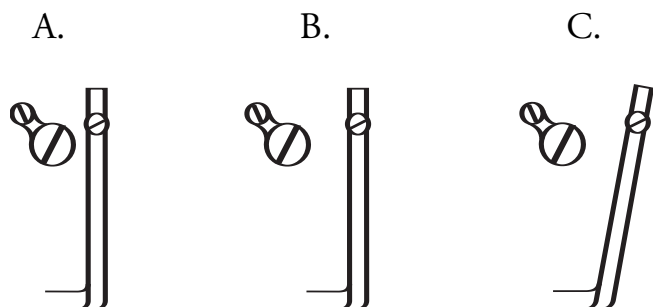
## FRENCH HORNS AND ROTARY VALVE TUBAS

### Learn How To Re-string Your Valves

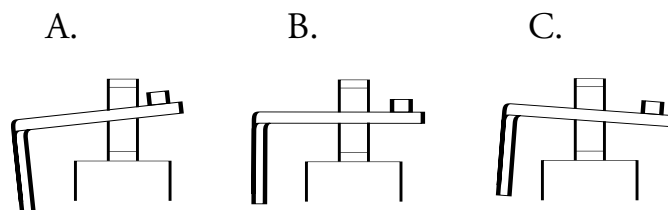
The band director or a repair shop can demonstrate how to properly tie the rotor so it operates freely and lasts a long time. For string, use a woven nylon or rayon fish line, minimum 50-lb. test. Monofilament line is not recommended for French horns. Remember too that the paddle height is adjusted at the rotor bumper arm, not by bending the paddles.

#### Lever Arms

It is not unusual to find levers bent to all sorts of odd angles relative to the stop arm, even on instruments direct from the factory. Valve action can be greatly improved if the levers are as close to the stop arm as possible, and in a side angle where the lever arm is parallel to the stop plate face when the stop arm is directly between the two string holes (see below).



Lever A is in the correct position for effective stringing. Lever B is too far from the stop arm, and Lever C is bent to the wrong angle. Both levers B & C will force the string to rub on itself—increasing drag and shortening the life of the string job.



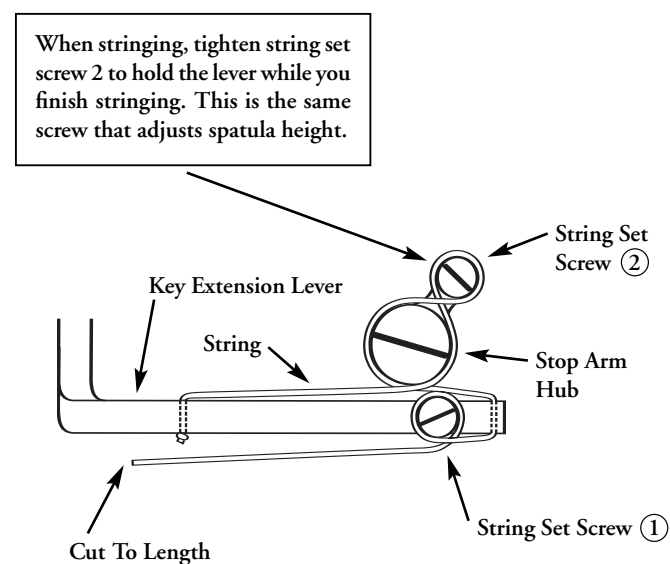
Position A shows the lever in rest position, where the lever arm should be angling slightly upward relative to the stop plate. Position B shows the lever in mid-stroke, where the lever is parallel to the stop plate and the stop arm centers between the two string holes. Position C is the end of the rotor stroke. While this exact set is not possible with some French horns, it is at the very least a place from which to begin when stringing a horn.

#### Stringing

The choice of string is up to the technician, though it is recommended that the technician seek a woven rayon or nylon line of 50-lb. test or greater. Many shops have been using the line sold by Yamaha with great success, though the string is only a small part of the job.

*The keys to the longevity of French horn stringing lie in insuring that the lever arm angles are proper (the string should never rub on itself), as well as in keeping the string set screws tight enough so the string cannot slip out.*

Tie the string as shown, with the string wrapping under itself to lock it under the string set screw heads (see below).





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### Lubricate Your Rotors At Least Once A Week

Use a heavy 30-wt. oil on the spindles and rotor oil on the valve face, oiling through the valve slide tubes once a week! Most manufacturers sell oiling kits that have the proper oils and instructions. Rotors can wear out within a year if not properly lubricated.



Rotor oil should be placed directly inside each valve slide, then channeled into the valve from there.

### TROMBONES

#### Wipe Your Handslides Once A Week

Whether you use slide oil or slide cream and water, the build-up of lubrication and debris between the inner and outer hand slides can seriously affect proper slide action. Use 100% cotton cheesecloth to wipe off the slide and wrap it on a cleaning rod (purchase at a music store) to wipe the outer slides.



Follow these suggestions and you'll save both money and a trip to the repair shop!

*John Huth has been an instructor in the Band Instrument Repair Program at nationally recognized Minnesota State College-South East Technical (Red Wing) for the past thirteen years. He has presented seminars on brasswind repair and maintenance nationwide and is honored to be a Master Repair Clinician for the National Association of Professional Band Instrument Repair Technicians (NAPBIRT).*

Use a heavy oil on the back and front spindle bearings, applying the oil as shown.

# The Jazz Ensemble Rhythm Section

by Dean Sorenson

A jazz ensemble cannot exist without a rhythm section. It is the section that defines the jazz ensemble sound. The quality of the overall ensemble is dependent upon the quality of the rhythm section more than any other. A strong rhythm section can make an otherwise mediocre band sound excellent. Conversely, a poor rhythm section will seriously weaken an otherwise strong ensemble.

To make matters worse, the rhythm section is often responsible for more than its share of director frustration. There are two main reasons for this. First, most directors do not play rhythm section instruments, and instrumental methods courses do not address the special needs of the instruments used in the jazz rhythm section. Many directors feel extremely uncomfortable, if not downright helpless, offering advice to rhythm players. Second, since guitar, piano, bass, and drum set are not usual members of the concert band, players often have to be recruited from outside the program. These students for the most part did not come through the ranks of the concert band, and their knowledge and skill levels may vary widely compared to the students that came up "through the system." Rhythm players from outside the band who show interest in playing in the jazz ensemble usually want to improve as much as the rest of the students, but directors need to be aware of the different backgrounds they may bring to the table.

Developing instrumental technique is the responsibility of the individual student. As with any instrument, the value of private study cannot be overemphasized. If at all possible, try to locate private teachers that have some jazz ensemble experience. Guitar and piano are often used as solo instruments, and are often taught from this perspective. Players with more of a "soloist" background will have a more difficult time understanding their role as part of an ensemble.

Assuming a reasonable amount of individual technique, getting a good section sound is the next challenge. More than any other section, the rhythm section will benefit greatly from sectional rehearsal. Dedicated rhythm section rehearsal time will pay large dividends to the rest of the ensemble. To be most effective, the rehearsals should focus on refining portions of the music the ensemble is playing.

A practical technique for rehearsing the rhythm section is to choose a short excerpt where the rhythm section is playing a basic groove and to perform it as a vamp. The excerpt should

be two to four bars in length and should be free of extra fills, figures, and breaks. Building the groove one instrument at a time allows everyone to hear the building blocks of the groove, and will make individual problems easier to identify and fix. A steady tempo must be maintained throughout this exercise. When all parts have been added, have the rhythm section play the vamp for at least 32 total bars (16 times through a two bar vamp or 8 times through a four bar vamp). Let the players get comfortable and let the groove "settle." As an example:

1. Begin with the basic portions of the drum groove. On rock and Latin grooves this is usually snare drum and bass drum. On swing grooves, it is hi-hat and ride cymbal. Make certain that these parts are clean, dynamically balanced, and played in solid tempo.

2. Add the bass line. On rock and Latin grooves, the bass drum and bass line are often matched rhythmically. On swing grooves the steady quarter notes of the walking line should lock up perfectly with the hi-hat on beats two and four.

3. Add the guitar part, as well as any additional elements of the drum groove. As the dynamic level rises, listen carefully for balance between all instruments. In rock and Latin styles, the guitar can be slightly more prominent than in swing styles.

4. Add the piano part. In rock styles where guitar and piano are often doubled, the guitar should dominate dynamically. In swing and Latin styles the piano part is often more independent and can have a more prominent role. Make sure the pianist is locking up with the rest of the rhythm section and is avoiding the sustain pedal. Use of the sustain pedal diminishes the crispness of the piano articulation and tends to make the groove "muddy."

5. Add the auxiliary percussion, if the chart calls for it. Be sure the tempo remains steady, and that the additional colors provided by the auxiliary percussion are present but not dominating.

Using this technique will help create a stronger overall rhythm section sound. In future articles, we will discuss in more detail the roles of the individual rhythm section instruments.

*Dean Sorenson is a prolific and highly sought-after composer, trombonist, and clinician. He holds degrees from the University of Minnesota and the Eastman School of Music, and was recently appointed Interim Director of Jazz Studies and Performance at the University of Minnesota-Minneapolis.*

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