

**Writing Innovative Curricula for
Performance-based Music Classes**

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**Handouts can be found at
[http://rmhourigan.iweb.bsu.edu/Site/Handouts 2010-11.html](http://rmhourigan.iweb.bsu.edu/Site/Handouts_2010-11.html)**

Developing a Common Vocabulary

Rehearsing in an Ensemble

TONE – The characteristic sound or “color” of a given instrument. Correct posture, embouchure, and breathing are required to produce a consistent tone. Scientifically, tone is the relative presence or absence of the overtone series. Reminders: “Get inside the sound of your neighbor.” “Support your sound.”

INTONATION – The ability to play in tune with yourself and with the pitch center of the ensemble. Use the recommended tuning note for your instrument first: Bb, A, or F. You must learn the characteristic pitch tendencies of your instrument. Tuning in ensemble requires you to eliminate all beats in the sound. Reminder: “To play in tune, you must play in tone.”

BLEND – The ability to match all elements of your sound with other players (including tone, pitch, volume, articulation, style, etc.) Use the three point check list:

1. Am I playing the same volume?
2. Am I playing with the same tone color?
3. Am I matching the same pitch center?

Reminders: “Lose your identity.” “No Heroes.” “Match your neighbor on either side.”

BALANCE – The relative presence of a given musical part. The band pyramid requires the lowest voices to be the loudest, the middle voices to be relatively softer, and the upper voices to be the softest. The same pyramid applies to each section, with the lowest part being the loudest and each higher part being progressively softer. For example, when tuning octaves, the lower octave should be louder.

VERTICAL ALIGNMENT – The ability to align all rhythms from the top to the bottom of the ensemble. Because sound is directional, ensemble members must carefully watch and listen to ensure tight alignment. The ultimate test of vertical alignment is the audible result. (i.e. Are all sounds arriving together in time?)

LEVELS OF LISTENING – There are three levels of listening that must occur in ensemble playing: 1. Self, 2. Section, and 3. Ensemble. An individual player must monitor all three levels constantly and simultaneously to be a true ensemble player. This is the final synthesis of all the above concepts.

Reminders: “Listen louder, play softer.” “Listen to your neighbor on both sides.” “Listen back for pulse.”

Articulation

Every sound has three parts: 1) attack, 2) sustain, and 3) release. Articulation determines the overall shape of the sound produced and typically has the greatest effect on the attack and release of the sound. The sustained part of each sound should be steady and consistent.

STACCATO – light and separated; approximately 50% of the original rhythmic value (50% sound, 50% silence); Reminders: “Hear the space between the notes.” “Round staccato.”

ACCENT – lifted and separated with implied space; each note has the shape of a mini decrescendo

MARCATO – lifted and separated with audible space; each note is marked and well-pronounced

TENUTO – sustained full note value, typically performed with a slight stress on the note and short taper before the next note

SLUR – all notes are connected with no articulation except for the first note which is typically played tenuto. Reminders: “Spin the notes forward.”

LEGATO – smooth and connected style with a light articulation at the beginning of each note (“du”); 100% length to every pitch in a phrase. Reminders: “Blow across (or in between) the notes.”

Freshman Concert Band

2nd Quarter Test

Section I – Multiple Choice

For each question, mark the letter that corresponds with the correct answer on your scantron.

1. The characteristic sound or “color” of a given instrument:
 - A. Balance
 - B. Blend
 - C. Intonation
 - D. Tone
2. The ability to play in tune with yourself and with the pitch center of the ensemble:
 - A. Balance
 - B. Blend
 - C. Intonation
 - D. Tone
3. Every sound has three parts:
 - A. beginning, middle, end
 - B. attack, sustain, taper
 - C. attack, sustain, release
 - D. articulation, sustain, release
4. The relative presence of a given musical part:
 - A. Balance
 - B. Blend
 - C. Intonation
 - D. Tone
5. Which of the following questions is NOT on the three-point check list?
 - A. Am I blending all elements?
 - B. Am I playing the same volume?
 - C. Am I playing the same tone color?
 - D. Am I matching the same pitch?
6. The ability to match all elements of your sound with other players:
 - A. Balance
 - B. Blend
 - C. Intonation
 - D. Tone
7. Learning the characteristic pitch tendencies of your instrument will primarily improve your:
 - A. Balance
 - B. Blend
 - C. Intonation
 - D. Listening

8. Which of the following is NOT one of the three levels of listening?
- A. self
 - B. partners
 - C. section
 - D. ensemble
9. Which of the following is part of the correct balance for the band pyramid?
- A. Lowest voices the softest
 - B. Middle voices the softest
 - C. Upper voices the loudest
 - D. Lowest voices the loudest
10. The overall shape of each sound is determined by the _____.
- A. articulation
 - B. balance
 - C. blend
 - D. dynamic
11. 100% length to every pitch in a phrase:
- A. accent
 - B. legato
 - C. tenuto
 - D. sempre
12. With the shape of a mini-decrescendo:
- A. accent
 - B. marcato
 - C. staccato
 - D. tenuto
13. The ability to align all rhythms from the top to the bottom of the ensemble:
- A. blend
 - B. pulse
 - C. tempo
 - D. vertical alignment
14. Lifted and separated with audible space:
- A. accent
 - B. marcato
 - C. staccato
 - D. tenuto
15. Which of the following includes all of the recommended tuning notes for band instruments?
- A. Concert Bb
 - B. Concert F and C
 - C. Concert F and Bb
 - D. Concert F, A, and Bb
16. Approximately 50% of the original rhythmic value:
- A. Accent
 - B. Slur
 - C. Staccato
 - D. Tenuto

17. All notes are connected with no articulation except for the first note:
- A. Accent
 - B. Legato
 - C. Slur
 - D. Tenuto

18. What is the most important element of your playing?
- A. Blend
 - B. Intonation
 - C. Technique
 - D. Tone

Section II - True/False

Please mark the appropriate space on your scantron for the following true/false questions. (Remember to mark A for "True" and B for "False.")

19. In order to play in tune, you must play "in tone."
20. The most important component of tuning is your ability to hear whether you are flat or sharp.
21. Always take the same large breath regardless of how long or loud you will be playing.
22. The sustained part of each sound should be steady and consistent.
23. When balancing octaves, the lower octave must be played softer.
24. Frequent eye contact between the conductor and the ensemble is important.
25. Articulation typically has the greatest effect on the sustained part of the sound.
26. Tenuto is typically performed with a slight stress on the note and short taper before the next note.
27. Because sound is directional, ensemble members should focus on listening more than watching.
28. Blow air "between" the notes to produce a smooth slur or legato.
29. A player must monitor each level of listening only one at a time to be a true ensemble player.
30. Your embouchure is the only physical aspect of playing that affects the intonation on your instrument.

Name _____

Chamber Music Critique

Group: _____ Title of Work: _____

On a scale of 1 (weakest) to 5 (strongest), please rate the overall achievement of this chamber group based on their performance today:

- 1 2 3 4 5 TONE: Is the group producing a characteristic sound, both individually and as an ensemble?
- 1 2 3 4 5 INTONATION: Does the group establish a consistent pitch center?
- 1 2 3 4 5 BLEND/BALANCE: Can you hear the most important musical ideas at all times? Do all members contribute to the group sound as is appropriate?
- 1 2 3 4 5 TECHNIQUE: Is the group executing the technical elements of the piece, including all articulations?
- 1 2 3 4 5 TIMING: Consider all of the following: rhythmic accuracy, steady pulse, correct tempi, effective transitions, vertical alignment, etc.
- 1 2 3 4 5 STYLE/EXPRESSIVITY: Does the group establish a consistent and appropriate style for the piece? Are they communicating clear musical ideas? Dynamics?

Based on your ratings above, please describe an area of strength in detail:

Conversely, please describe an area for further improvement in detail:

Additional Comments:

Name _____

Chamber Music Critique

Group: _____ Title of Work: _____

On a scale of 1 (weakest) to 5 (strongest), please rate the overall achievement of this chamber group based on their performance today:

- 1 2 3 4 5 TONE: Is the group producing a characteristic sound, both individually and as an ensemble?
- 1 2 3 4 5 INTONATION: Does the group establish a consistent pitch center?
- 1 2 3 4 5 BLEND/BALANCE: Can you hear the most important musical ideas at all times? Do all members contribute to the group sound as is appropriate?
- 1 2 3 4 5 TECHNIQUE: Is the group executing the technical elements of the piece, including all articulations?
- 1 2 3 4 5 TIMING: Consider all of the following: rhythmic accuracy, steady pulse, correct tempi, effective transitions, vertical alignment, etc.
- 1 2 3 4 5 STYLE/EXPRESSIVITY: Does the group establish a consistent and appropriate style for the piece? Are they communicating clear musical ideas? Dynamics?

Based on your ratings above, please describe an area of strength in detail:

Conversely, please describe an area for further improvement in detail:

Additional Comments:

Name _____

NTHS Wind Ensembles

Self-Critique

Now that we have determined our ensemble goals, it is your turn to assess your current strengths and weaknesses as a performer. Under each of the concepts below, rate yourself on a scale of 1-5 (5 being the strongest) and then describe your abilities in this area. If you are uncertain of your ability in a particular area, feel free to ask a fellow musician whose opinion you trust, including any of the directors.

1 2 3 4 5 **Tone:** Your ability to produce a characteristically full and centered sound
Self-Descriptors: _____

1 2 3 4 5 **Intonation:** Your ability to play in tune and match pitch

Self-Descriptors: _____

1 2 3 4 5 **Pulse/Timing:** Your ability to maintain tempo and execute rhythms

Self-Descriptors: _____

1 2 3 4 5 **Articulation:** Your ability to produce a wide range of articulations

Self-Descriptors: _____

1 2 3 4 5 **Balance/Blend:** Your ability to match other players (volume, style, etc.)

Self-Descriptors: _____

1 2 3 4 5 **Focus/Consistency:** Your ability to rehearse and perform

Self-Descriptors: _____

Individual Goals

After completing your self-critique, determine your personal goals as a musician/performer for this semester. If possible, ask your private instructor for input into the determination of these goals. You may list anywhere between 1-3 goals. After identifying each goal, list the specific ways in which you intend to pursue/achieve the goal. (Examples: lip slurs, long tones, scales, multiple-tonguing, sight-reading, listening to professional recordings, etc.)

Goal #1: _____

Strategy for Achievement: _____

Goal #2: _____

Strategy for Achievement: _____

Goal #3: _____

Strategy for Achievement: _____

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