

“The One-Two-Three Method”

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This tried and true method has withstood the test of time for several decades of music education in the Midwestern United States. It is based on a common sense approach to instruct middle and high school instrumentalist in self-reliance and musical independence while in the practice room.

An efficient method for an individual instrumentalist to correct difficult musical passages often found in a solo, etude or ensemble part is accessible for the student if the student musician is provided a logical approach to the problem.

Step One:

After narrowing down the difficult passage, reduce it to a small section of only one or two measures. Once this is completed, focus only upon centering every pitch without concern for the rhythm. Begin by checking the pitches with a tuner then perform the excerpt without a tuner and if possible, ask a cohort to watch the tuner as the assistant records the pitches still out of tune. Once all pitches can be performed in tune at a reasonable rate such as quarter note = 88, move to Step Two.

Step Two:

Using the same excerpt identified above, focus only upon the rhythm. In this step the performer should begin by playing the rhythm only at a slow pace on one pitch such as a concert F without concern for the individual pitches. Gradually, the performer can increase the speed of the rhythm as long as no mistakes are added. When mistakes do appear, the performer must return to the previous slower tempo and work at that pace until perfection is achieved. Depending upon the marked tempo of the excerpt, the performer should continue gradually increasing the tempo until the desired speed is attained.

Step Three:

In the last step both the pitches and rhythm are now slowly combined step-by-step until the marked tempo is reached. The vital point to remember is that the performer must not increase the tempo too quickly thus defeating the purpose of this method. In some cases the performer may not be able to attain perfection in one sitting and will need to spread this process over several practice sessions to attain accurate results.

The performer who follows this logical, step-by-step approach to improving their performance standard will most certainly benefit. You, the teacher, will need to

provide adequate encouragement when the student musician first attempts this method. With proper use, it is a sure bet to assist your students in their quest to be better performers!

As the old adage goes, "Some things just don't happen over night!"