

Sound Fundamentals

Daily Ensemble Training for Ideal Tone, Intonation and Blend

Minoru Otaki, Saitama Sakae High School Wind Orchestra

1. Introduction:

Modern wind instruments with their improved technology help players produce more accurate pitch and intonation. However, aside from solo playing, it is still as challenging as ever to have a tuned and balanced ensemble sound amongst many players – playing in correct pitch, listening to others, having a mutual understanding and sense of sound structure, etc. These concepts need to be taught to all student ensemble members in a given limited time.

2. Before playing:

There are some basic requirements to producing correct intonation. One is to develop the skill of solfège. Another is to produce and use a strong air supply. Playing instruments with deep air is essential. I often see this is where many ensembles have difficulty. Well-projected sounds can more easily blend within the ensemble and create clearer unisons.

- a. Posture
- b. Height of music stand
- c. Feet placement
- d. Focus far away

When playing:

Teach students to

- a. Relax
- b. Utilize deep breath
- c. Look far ahead
- d. Maintain stomach/diaphragm pressure

3. Unison Training

In recent years many method books are available for unison training. However, it seems that unison training is not done often enough. Rehearsals cannot move forward if unisons are not adjusted and matched. As the ensemble improves in its unison training, the ensemble sound should change dramatically. The idea is that if you can't match unisons, you most likely can't produce good harmony.

In unison training, have a mutual, shared understanding of:

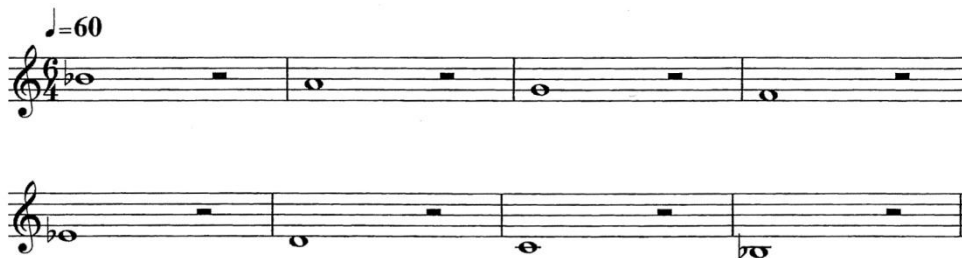
- 1) Sound Volume
- 2) Tone Color
- 3) Pitch

Reasons why pitch does not match:

- 1) Not playing instruments correctly
- 2) Not visualizing the pitch to create
- 3) Broken instruments

Unison Exercise

Play the exercise shown below, starting with clarinets. Other sections need to listen to the preceding sound carefully. Brass sections follow clarinets with mouth piece buzzing. For tuba, it will be more effective to place an 8-inch long vinyl hose on the mouth piece.



After clarinets complete the exercise, add other sections is until the entire ensemble is playing.

Group 1: Clarinet

Group 2: Clarinet, Alto Sax

Group 3: Clarinet, Alto Sax, Horn, Alto Clarinet, Tenor Sax

Group 4: Clarinet, Alto Sax, Horn, Alto Clarinet, Tenor Sax, Trumpet

Group 5: Clarinet, Alto Sax, Horn, Alto Clarinet, Tenor Sax, Trumpet, Trombone, Euphonium

Group 6: Clarinet, Alto Sax, Horn, Alto Clarinet, Tenor Sax, Trumpet, Trombone, Euphonium, Bari. Sax, Bassoon, Tuba, String Bass

Group 7: Clarinet, Alto Sax, Horn, Alto Clarinet, Tenor Sax, Trumpet, Trombone, Euphonium, Bari. Sax, Bassoon, Tuba, String Bass, Oboe, Flute, Piccolo

All breathe steadily and equally

- 1) Produce same speed of air
- 2) Have same point of attack, core and release
- 3) Same sense of breathing rhythm and tempo
- 4) Blow adequate air into instrument
- 5) Hold steady pitch

Breath Training (abdominal breathing)

Make sound when exhaling repeatedly (between teeth and tongue)

♩ = 60 Inhale for one beat and exhale for one beat

♩ = 60 Inhale in a half beat and exhale in a half beat

♩ = 80, 100, 120, 160, 200 half beat (one minute of each)

Do this daily and players will learn to control breath with ease

**Ave Marie Edvard Grieg/Koh Shishikura
(2014, Brain Music)**

4. Balance Training

Balance training is the practical basis of constructing the sound of the band. This exercise is done so students can learn to combine their sounds to blend instead of clashing. This will also help students develop an idea of the band sound as a whole.

***See the attached *Balance Training*

5. Scale Training

Scale training exercises train students to hear the note they will play based upon a given pitch. This exercise is done in equal temperament (possibly with use of Yamaha's *Harmony Director*).

- 1) Trombone & Trumpet
- 2) French Horn, Euphonium & Tuba
- 3) Saxophone
- 4) Clarinet
- 5) Flute, Oboe, Bassoon & String Bass
- 6) Whole ensemble

***See attached *Scale Training*

6. Harmony Training

Harmony exercises are to develop the ability to play with good, balanced, and clear harmony. Also, the pitch and quality of the third note of the scale determines the accuracy of the harmony.

***See attached *Harmony Training*

7. Rhythm Training

Rhythm exercises serve to develop the skill of playing with a common sense of rhythm and articulation. These exercises help students play with a unified rhythm.

- a. Quarter notes
- b. Eighth notes
- c. Eighth note triplets
- d. Quarter note triplets
- e. Sixteenth notes

***See attached *Rhythm Training*

8. Chorale exercise

Chorale study is important to playing an instrument. The idea is that if you can't sing it, you most likely can't play it with the best intonation and blend.

Amazing Grace from 66 Festive and Famous Chorales for Band **(arr. Frank Erickson - Alfred Music Publishing)**

1. Ensemble training
2. Sectional solfège
3. Singing only
4. Singing with brass buzzing
5. Playing the tune

Details can be found in the following materials:

Winds DVD – Basic Training for Concert Band - Minoru Otaki & Saitama Sakae Wind Orchestra (Bravo Music BOD-7001) and ***Supplemental Book – Basic Training for Concert Band*** (Bravo Music BODS-7001)

Winds DVD – Harmony Training for the Ensemble (Bravo Music BOD-7003)

Minoru Otaki

Many national and international credits mark Mr. Otaki's 39-year devotion to Saitama Sakae's musical excellence, including the Vienna World Festival Grand Prix and 17 National Band Contest "Gold" Awards. He received the "Long Appearing Conductor Award" for numerous (22) nominations to the All Japan Band Competition national finals. He was awarded an Education Contributor Commendation by the Governor of Saitama State and the Commendation for Education by the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology in 2010. Mr. Otaki's technique has been the subject of Bravo Music's "Basic Training for Concert Band" DVD and Study Guide and other televised programs and method books regarding band fundamentals. He also serves as conductor, lecturer, adjudicator, and board member for numerous educational and academic band associations.

Minoru Otaki majored in vocal music at Kunitachi University of Music. He graduated in 1975, accepting the position of music teacher at Saitama Sakae High School. His involvement with the wind band club promoted additional study in band techniques with Toshio Ozawa. From a start of less than ten students, Mr. Otaki nurtured the school's band club into a thriving ensemble revered throughout his country.

Mr. Otaki currently teaches at both Saitama Sakae and Iwakura High Schools. He is also an assistant principal at Iwakura High School, President of the West Japan Band Association, Vice President of the All Japan High School Band Association, and Chairman of "Joyful Festival" for arts. He also leads the All Japan high school honor band to many international events and concerts including performances at Carnegie Hall, Wiener Staatsoper (Vienna Opera House), and Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory Music Hall.

Balance Training

(♩=54)

Piccolo

Flute

Oboe

Bassoon

Clarinet in E \flat

1st Clarinet in B \flat

2nd Clarinet in B \flat

3rd Clarinet in B \flat

Bass Clarinet in B \flat

1st Alto Saxophone in E \flat

2nd Alto Saxophone in E \flat

Tenor Saxophone in B \flat

Baritone Saxophone in E \flat

1st & 2nd Trumpets in B \flat

3rd Trumpet in B \flat

1st & 2nd Horns in F

3rd & 4th Horns in F

1st & 2nd Trombones

3rd Trombone

Euphonium

Bass Tuba

String Bass

Timpani

1st Percussion

2nd Percussion

A Group: Bsn. / B. Cl. / B. Sax. / Tuba / St. Bass
 B Group: T. Sax. / Hrn. / Trb. / Euph.
 C Group: Ob. / 2&3 Cl. / A.Sax. / Trp.
 D Group: Picc. / Fl. / E \flat Cl. / 1 Cl.

Scale Training

Harmony Training

(♩=63)

Piccolo

Flute

Oboe

Bassoon

Clarinet in E♭

1st Clarinet in B♭

2nd Clarinet in B♭

3rd Clarinet in B♭

Bass Clarinet in B♭

1st Alto
Saxophone in E♭

2nd Alto
Saxophone in E♭

Tenor
Saxophone in B♭

Baritone
Saxophone in E♭

1st & 2nd
Trumpets in B♭

3rd Trumpet in B♭

1st & 2nd
Horns in F

3rd & 4th
Horns in F

1st & 2nd
Trombones

3rd Trombone

Euphonium

Bass Tuba

String Bass

Timpani

Percussion 1

Percussion 2

Rhythm Training

[illegible]

The image displays a complex musical score for a symphony orchestra. The score is written in a multi-staff format, with each staff representing a different instrument or section. The instruments listed on the left include Piccolo, Fl. (Flute), Ob. (Oboe), Bsn. (Bassoon), Cl.1 (Clarinet 1), Cl.2 (Clarinet 2), Cl.3 (Clarinet 3), B.Cl. (Bass Clarinet), B.C. (Basset Clarinet), A.Sax.1 (Alto Saxophone 1), A.Sax.2 (Alto Saxophone 2), T.Sax. (Tenor Saxophone), B.Sax. (Baritone Saxophone), Trp.1/2 (Trumpet 1/2), Trp.3 (Trumpet 3), Hrn.1/2 (Horn 1/2), Hrn.3/4 (Horn 3/4), Trb.1/2 (Trombone 1/2), Trb.3 (Trombone 3), Hrp. (Harp), Tuba, Euph. (Euphonium), and Perc. (Percussion). The score is written in a complex, multi-staff format, with various musical notations including notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The notation is dense and intricate, typical of a professional musical score. The score is written in a multi-staff format, with each staff representing a different instrument or section. The instruments listed on the left include Piccolo, Fl. (Flute), Ob. (Oboe), Bsn. (Bassoon), Cl.1 (Clarinet 1), Cl.2 (Clarinet 2), Cl.3 (Clarinet 3), B.Cl. (Bass Clarinet), B.C. (Basset Clarinet), A.Sax.1 (Alto Saxophone 1), A.Sax.2 (Alto Saxophone 2), T.Sax. (Tenor Saxophone), B.Sax. (Baritone Saxophone), Trp.1/2 (Trumpet 1/2), Trp.3 (Trumpet 3), Hrn.1/2 (Horn 1/2), Hrn.3/4 (Horn 3/4), Trb.1/2 (Trombone 1/2), Trb.3 (Trombone 3), Hrp. (Harp), Tuba, Euph. (Euphonium), and Perc. (Percussion). The score is written in a complex, multi-staff format, with various musical notations including notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The notation is dense and intricate, typical of a professional musical score.