

Unlocking Creativity Through Focused Repetition

CON FUOCO OMEA and CMIEC Conference 2021

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In today's clinic, we are honored to share what we believe are some of the most important rehearsal concepts we've learned over the years...

- 1) Repetition, although valuable to the rehearsal process, must be differentiated between those that are focused and audibly make a difference in the quality of the group and/or music; and those that simply allow performers to go through the motions without any audible improvement as individuals or as an ensemble.
- 2) Although "time" may be one of our most valuable commodities as a teacher or rehearsal technician, sometimes it is important to simply stop teaching by the clock or by the calendar and instead, teach by using our ears as our lesson plan. Patience is more than just a virtue on the podium. It is a must!
- 3) There are arguably many exercises that can be used in an ensemble setting to improve the individuals of the group as well as the ensemble itself, but we believe there is a core group of fundamental exercises that should be used on a consistent basis in order to develop, maintain and continually improve a quality ensemble. These exercises are immediately achievable by groups of any experience level and are applicable to all age groups.
- 4) The core group of exercises, which we will highlight today, cannot just be used in a vacuum. They must be learned in such a way that they can be applied during music rehearsal and performance without constant reminders from the director, therefore saving valuable time.

Percussion During Ensemble Development Time: Percussion should be used during ensemble development and the focus for percussionists is not all that different from the winds since tone quality, tuning of the instruments and timing is also essential to developing a great percussion section.

The core exercises come from *Ensemble Concepts - Essential Musicianship* by Eddie Green, David Bertman and John Benzer; published by Hal Leonard Corporation.

Tools used: Harmony Director by Yamaha or Tonal Energy Tuner, audible metronome (at times), projector & screen to show Tonal Energy Tuner (if appropriate).

Establishing Sound

EXERCISE 1-1 Block Concert F

1. Establishing Sound

1-1 Block Concert F



Student Goals

1. Breathe together.
2. Start together.
3. Follow through with the same air and vowel sound.
4. Release together.
5. Organize the end of each note as clearly as the beginning.
6. Vibrato-producing instruments can alternately play a straight tone or with vibrato.

- This is the perfect exercise to establish the quality and tuning of the beginning, middle and end of the note - No exercise is too "simple" to perfect!
- Goal: The purest ensemble sound possible without excessive "noise" or distractions in terms of quality, blend, balance and pitch.
- Goal: Impeccable timing of initial attacks and releases based on established tempo.
- Goal: To set a "base-line" approach to sound, blend, pitch and balance that the group will use in all appropriate musical situations without being reminded by the conductor.

- Goal: To take a relaxed and appropriate breath during the 4 counts of rest in-between notes.
- Extra: Sustain the first note for indefinite periods of time so students can listen for tone, tuning, blend and balance without being concerned with tempo.
- DEMONSTRATION of Exercise 1-1 as written (singing, mouthpiece, playing)
- DEMONSTRATION of Exercise 1-1 being applied in music performance: Isolating the skill of starting a note in harmonic context with a clear sound. “Tuning Chorale” by Richard L. Saucedo

Establishing Articulation

EXERCISE 2-1 Long to Short Note Values

2. Establishing Articulation

2-1 Articulation Drill – Long To Short Note Values

- Although this exercise focuses on rhythm and articulation, remember that EVERY exercise is a tone, tuning, blend, balance and timing exercise. The Harmony Director or Tonal Energy Tuner should continue to provide a drone as needed.
- Goal: Every note must sound the same, no matter the note length. There should be no difference between the quality of sound of a whole note and a staccato 8th note.
- Goal: Approach to using the tongue should be such that there is instantaneous sound established at the beginning of each note without any overuse of the tongue, especially on shorter note lengths.
- Goal: The air stream must stay steady through each measure, regardless of the number of notes or note lengths.
- Goal: Students should be able to perform this exercise on unisons, octaves, 5ths, triads and even extended chords using the “just” tuning system.
- DEMONSTRATION of Exercise 2-1 as written (singing, mouthpiece, playing)
- DEMONSTRATION of Exercise 2-1 being applied in music performance: Isolating the skill of creating clear style and articulation without changing quality of sound. “Tuning Chorale” by Richard L. Saucedo

Linear Intervals Up and Down

EXERCISE 3-1 Descending Intervals Created Up and Down

3. Linear Intervals Up and Down

3-1 Descending Intervals Created Up and Down

- Although this exercise focuses on intervals, remember that EVERY exercise is a tone, tuning, blend, balance and timing exercise. The Harmony Director or Tonal Energy Tuner should continue to provide a drone as needed.
- Goal: To move clearly from one note to the next without any extraneous noise or distractions between notes, no matter what interval size.
- Goal: The middle note should match the quality of the outside notes in sound quality and volume.
- Goal: The first and last notes should be consistent in terms of quality, tuning and volume.
- Goal: Students should learn to use their ears, embouchures and air support to avoid any

- sound issues in between notes.
- Goal: Students should be able to perform this exercise on unisons, octaves, 5ths, triads and even extended chords using the just tuning system.
- DEMONSTRATION of Exercise 3-1 as written (singing, mouthpiece, playing)
- DEMONSTRATION of Exercise 3-1 being applied in music performance: Isolating the Skill of changing notes in a melodic phrase clearly without burden of rhythmic concerns. “Tuning Chorale” by Richard L. Saucedo

Creating Intervals with a Pedal Tone EXERCISE 6-4 Interval Pass-through

- Although this exercise focuses on passing through notes using “just” temperament as well as phrase leading, remember that EVERY exercise is a tone, tuning, blend, balance and timing exercise. The Harmony Director or Tonal Energy Tuner should continue to provide a drone as needed.
- Goal: To move clearly from one note to the next without any extraneous noise or distractions between notes, no matter what interval size.
- Goal: The inner notes should match the quality of the outside notes in sound quality and volume.
- Goal: The first and last notes should be consistent in terms of quality, tuning and volume.
- Goal: Students should learn to use their ears, embouchures and air support to arrive at the inner notes in tune relative to the first and last note.
- DEMONSTRATION of Exercise 6-4 as written (singing, mouthpiece, playing)
- DEMONSTRATION of Exercise 6-4 being applied in music performance: Isolating the Skill of adjusting melodic/harmonic responsibilities against a drone without burden of rhythmic concerns. “Tuning Chorale” by Richard L. Saucedo

Closing thoughts...

The closer we can come to blurring the lines between warm-up (ensemble development) and the actual rehearsal and performance of music, the more time we actually save our ourselves and our ensemble members. Although there is much to be said for following a well thought out lesson plan, that plan is only as good as the ears on the person that put the plan together. Watching the clock and/or watching the calendar, more than focusing on what your ears tell you to do, can only lead to frustration down the road as you prepare music for concerts or festivals.

Don’t be in a hurry, but rather, take the time now to establish great ensemble concepts so that you can enjoy your rehearsals and performances down the road. Use the four exercises offered above or come up with your own set that accomplish the same thing but make fundamentals one of the most important parts of your program’s culture.

Thanks for attending the clinic and have a wonderful and fulfilling 2021-2022 school year!

Richard
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ADDITIONAL PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE SOUND BASICS

compiled by Marissa Turney (Percussion instructor – Mt. Vernon High School, IN)

Common Concepts

- 1) Breathe and start together
 - As a section and with the conductor
- 2) Match with wind players in articulation, duration, and style of note
 - Muffle or pedal when applicable
- 3) Produce a consistent and full sound
 - Strike the instrument in the same place and in the same way, every time

Rolls

Goal - A consistent sustain of the fundamental sound. Roll speed is determined by duration of fundamental sound. Slower single stroke rolls on Timpani, Bass Drum, and Suspended Cymbal. Medium to Fast Single Stroke Rolls on smaller drums, auxiliary, and keyboard instruments. Medium to Fast multiple bounce rolls for Snare Drum. A higher pitch on a smaller instrument will require a faster roll, therefore several roll speeds may be required while changing pitch on timpani or a keyboard instrument.

- Consistent tempo between hands
- Consistent height and volume between hands
- Consistent playing zone
- Consistent number of strokes between hands

Exercise Specific Concepts

Exercise 1-1

A Consistent sustain is created through...

S -Overlap in the buzz sound so that there are no gaps in the sound. Roll pulse will be determined by tempo of the exercise. Choose a speed that will balance a consistent and long sustain from each stroke that is fast enough to mask the rhythmic pulse

T, BD - Slow roll with soft, matching mallets placed equidistant from the rim of the drum to produce a warm, full sustain. Muffle should stop the vibration of the head without producing a new sound.

A - Tambourine shake rolls should have an even rotation. Triangle rolls should have consistent playing zones equidistant from the bottom right hand corner.

K - Roll speed should be proportionate to octave of pitch. Roll speed should remain consistent from the start to end of the note.

Exercise 2-1

Variation in articulation can be achieved through....

S - Speed of stroke.

T - Speed of stroke and playing zone. Mallets close together in center of playing zone with fast stroke for more articulation.

BD - Speed of stroke, playing zone, and muffling. Utilize towel, knee, and left hand on the back head to muffle as necessary and as tempo allows.

Tri - Muffling

Tamb - Angle of instrument, speed of stroke, playing zone and technique. Experiment with amount of fingers, distance to jingles, and muffling of head.

K - Metered rolls will allow for consistent separation between notes.

Exercise 3-1

S - All ornaments: flams, drags, and buzzes should be built off of the fundamental technique and sound quality. Volume and placement of ornamental figures should be consistent. Timing and placement of ornaments should not affect overall timing.

X, M - Pitch changes should lead with the hand closest to the direction of movement to allow the notes to connect with a consistent roll speed through pitch changes

B - Muffle with fingers when applicable

V - The pedal should occur as close to the start of the note as possible to produce a connected sound.

Exercise 6-4

This is a great exercise to get your percussionists to sing with the winds. Split them on the A and B parts. It can open up communication with students between the percussion and winds about what they hear when the winds play or when the percussionists play!

S - All ornaments: flams, drags, and buzzes should be built off of the fundamental technique and sound quality. Volume and placement of ornamental figures should be consistent. Timing and placement of ornaments should not affect overall timing.

X, M - Pitch changes should lead with the hand closest to the direction of movement to allow the notes to connect with a consistent roll speed through pitch changes

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KEY:

A	All
S	Snare
BD	Bass Drum
T	Timpani
K	Keyboards
X	Xylophone
M	Marimba
B	Bells
Tri	Triangle
Tamb	Tambourine