#### **NEWS AND INFORMATION FOR BAND EDUCATORS**

## It's Time for a Little Spring Cleaning

## by Bruce Pearson

ith the grass turning greener and buds beginning to form on flowers and trees, it's clear that spring is here. Spring brings with it a sense of new beginnings and a fresh start. Spring also marks the time when we must do a little "spring cleaning." The winter months often see many of us collecting unwanted items that clutter our garages, attics, and closets. During the process of cleaning those havens of clutter, we may even find or rediscover something that's of value to us. It may be an old, but prized baseball glove or, perhaps, a cherished family photo. Spring cleaning our career may also help us rediscover something of great value - PASSION. In order to rediscover that passion we may have to re-evaluate what is important to our students and to us. Someone once said, "The good is the thief of the best." We may be involved in many good activities but do they take away from that which is better? If we lack passion in our teaching, it just may be that we've allowed clutter to cause us to lose our PASSION.

Before one starts the spring cleaning project, a need for it must be realized. Does your life, as a band director, exude an attitude of hope, enthusiasm, and energy, or do you display apathy, resignation or defeat? The great bicyclist and cancer survivor, Lance Armstrong, who has won the Tour de France four times now states with great passion,

"I want to die at 100 years old with an American flag on my back and the star of Texas on my helmet after screaming down an Alpine descent on a bicycle at 70 miles an hour. I want to cross one last finish line as my wife and my 10 children applaud. Then I want to lie down in a field of those famous French sunflowers and gracefully expire, the perfect contradiction to my onceanticipated poignant early demise..."1

That's fine for Lance Armstrong, a worldclass bicyclist, but how about me — an inexperienced, or perhaps, even a veteran, band director? Don't allow the unimportant activities to rob us of our PASSION. All great developmental leaders say that it's impossible to impart passion to anyone. Instead, the challenge is to discover, or perhaps rediscover the passion that is already within and build on it — fan it into flame and make it come alive!

All of us entered this wonderful, exciting, challenging, and rewarding field of music education because we love kids and we love music. Let's not lose our focus.

In order to rekindle that flame of passion in our teaching, we must first have a solid grasp of our philosophy of music education based on a curriculum that emphasizes comprehensive musicianship. This philosophy allows us to perform what we are studying rather than study what we are performing. Having a clear vision of our philosophy of music education will allow us to have a solid foundation and will shape all that we do in the execution of our job — from selection of repertoire, our attitude regarding competition, accepting performance requests, organizing rehearsals, to disciplining students. In other words, our philosophy shapes our curriculum, which defines our instructional activities and methodology.

A clearly defined and implemented philosophy of music education that emphasizes comprehensive musicianship, for the benefit of our students, will help us weather any storm that may rob us of our passion. It has been said, "If one doesn't know where they are sailing, no wind is in the right direction."

Lance Armstrong also said that he does

## IN THIS ISSUE

## It's Time for a Little **Spring Cleaning**

by Bruce Pearson

Page 1

### A New (Multimedia) **Dimension to Live Performance**

by Craig Harms Page 3

## The Piano - Dig It!

by Dean Sorenson

Page 4

#### The Power of Unison

by David Newell

Page 6

#### **Triangle Technique**

by Dave Hagedorn

Page 8

#### In Praise of the Phrase

by Bruce Pearson

Page 10

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nothing slow. He even sleeps fast. I take that to mean that his rest and relaxation are equally important as his activities. We can learn from this, for it's important to rest, relax, listen to good music, and attend concerts, clinics and seminars just what we need to jumpstart a deadbattery attitude.

If we want our students to be motivated, we must remain motivated, for our students are a reflection of us. If we want our students to be passionate about the music that is being performed and rehearsed — we must, first, be passionate about it. The reward for a teacher is seeing the student's eyes "light-up" and experience the joy of music.

From time to time all of us need to do

a little spring cleaning of our teaching to ensure that we may exhibit that allimportant ingredient that all successful teachers possess — PASSION.

1. Jeremiah, Dr. David, Turning Points Magazine and Devotional, January 2003, p.6.

Bruce Pearson is an internationallyknown 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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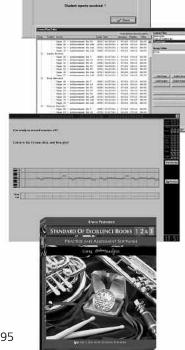
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## A New (Multimedia) Dimension to Live Performance

## by Craig Harms

hen we look for ways to increase concert attendance for our school band programs, sometimes it helps to think "outside the box." If you are looking for new performance ideas, you might consider "presenting" music in every dimension possible. Entertainment promoters and performers are continually conjuring up new ways to entice the public to come out from their home theaters, with their surround sound and high definition television, and into the community theaters and concert halls. Modern audiences have come to enjoy (and perhaps expect) the experience of a multimedia production linked to live performance.

We all agree on the importance of music for music's sake. Yet on the other hand...we do live in an information age with levels of expectation never experienced by previous generations. For some audience members, it might not be enough to simply "play" or "sing" music. It might be equally important that in order to maintain the interest of everyone in attendance, we "present" music in every dimension possible.

Several years ago, as part of the Woodland Park (Colorado) Community Band Christmas Concert, I decided to "author" a series of "video enhancements." With the aid of one of the multimedia editing programs available, I created a series of video productions set to many of the selections performed by the band. Presented at a "live" public performance, each video production was meant to visually reinforce thematic, emotional, and/or historical aspects of the selected music. It was a great success!

An added benefit to school groups is that a multimedia approach as described above can be created as an interdepartmental affair. The development of a multimedia project could involve many other departments of the school (art, language, history, computer and computer graphics). Imagine the thrill and pride students in the school would feel when given the opportunity to create a music video for a "live" performance by their peers. It is important, however, that music remain the foundation to the presentation. In reverse to movie soundtracks, music controls each video enhancement.

So . . . how to begin?

#### THE PROCESS:

- Study emotional and thematic aspects of each piece.
- Insert a recording of the piece on one audio track of the
- Begin building a video representation of the music. Much

- of the data used can be a combination of scanned and approved downloaded pictures and graphics.
- All events (transitions) are "triggered" by musical and emotion content of each piece; however, transitions of all events must be produced in a way that should allow some interpretive flexibility (i.e. cross fades as opposed to abrupt entrances).

#### THE FINAL PRESENTATION:

- It is suggested that during a concert, the video be projected on to a large screen positioned behind or beside the performing ensemble.
- Rear projection is recommended.
- 1000 lumen (or brighter) video projector is suggested.
- Music stand lights provide an optimum level of impact.
- To insure proper "synch to video"..." count off numbers" should appear (1–8) in tempo prior to the beginning of the video presentation.

We all realize how much music impacts the lives of students. In this information and video age perhaps we should also be cognizant of the importance of exploring every tool available to provide optimum musical experiences for both performer and audience.

As for my community band...we just keep increasing concert attendance and membership. Recently the band presented a Tribute Concert to 9/11 and Hayman Forest Fire Tragedies. Virtually every composition performed by the band was coupled with video enhancements and "narrative reflections" presented via video and in person of people involved personally with each episode.

I truly believe that the "multi dimensional" format of the concert not only inspired the band to perform its best, but also helped prove that "music truly heals the pain and helps us move to the other side."

Mr. Harms has a BME and MME from Wichita State University and taught instrumental music in Kansas; Colorado; and London, England (through the Fulbright Teacher Exchange Program) before leaving public school teaching to develop his own Music Technology Consulting Dealership – Creative Consultation Service. Mr. Harms has conducted numerous seminars to public educators on music technology throughout the United States and abroad.

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## The Piano - Dig It!

## by Dean Sorenson

n this series of articles we are looking at the different instruments of the jazz rhythm section. Previous articles have addressed the bass and drums. In this issue we look at the role of the piano in more detail and give you some tips for helping young pianists. As always, listening to the masters will provide the clearest example. Take advantage of the discographies included in the Standard of Excellence Jazz Ensemble Method or the Standard of Excellence Jazz Combo Session Director Scores.

The piano can perform a variety of roles in a jazz rhythm section. The bass provides the most basic harmonic function by playing the roots of the chords. The drums provide the basic rhythmic function by playing rhythm patterns that are consistent with the groove of the piece. The piano ultimately has to fit into this mosaic by contributing a blend of harmonic support (through chords) as well as rhythmic support (through comping rhythms).

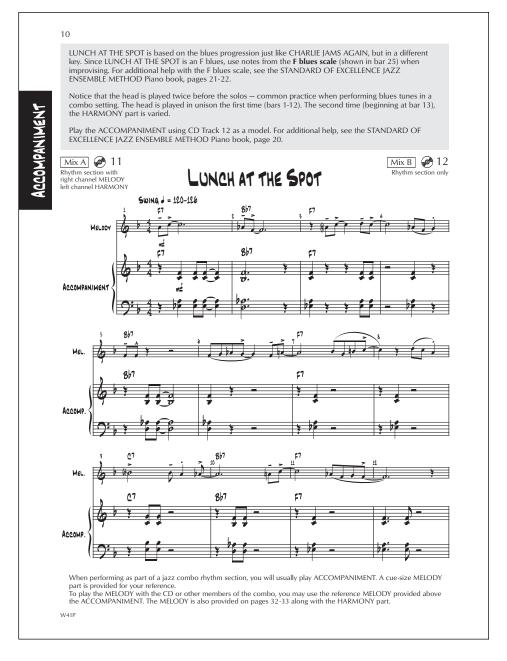
Comping is the term used to describe what the pianist is doing most of the time when part of a jazz rhythm section. The term comes from the words COMPose (since the player is creating the part on the spot), and acCOMPany (since the piano is serving as an accompanist to the soloist). Using chord symbols and the groove provided by the bass and drums, the experienced pianist creates chord voicings based on the chords given in the music (harmonic function), and plays them in rhythms that compliment the ensemble (rhythmic function). It is important to understand this dual role that the piano plays in the rhythm section. If either the harmonic or the rhythmic function is ignored, the groove in the rhythm section will suffer.

The example above refers to an experienced pianist, but what if a piano player is new to jazz or new to the piano? Many young pianists have been taking lessons from Mrs. Clinkscales down the street

since they were toddlers. They can knock out a Mozart piano sonata at the drop of a hat, but they curl into a shell when presented with chord symbols. Many charts now include piano voicings that are written out, and this is obviously of great help to younger students. The example below is from the Standard of Excellence Jazz Combo Session piano accompaniment. Note the chord symbols and written voicings. The top staff is a melody cue that the pianist can use to

follow or play along with the melody.

It is important for the pianist to realize that even though the harmonic side of the equation is covered, the rhythmic side is just as important. Attacks should be thought of as slightly accented most of the time. Young players, especially those that are inexperienced, tend to shy away from the keyboard, as they are unsure of whether or not they are playing correctly. This is a perfectly natural response, and we see the same



response from wind players who do not put enough air through their horns on passages they are not yet comfortable with. While being careful that the pianist doesn't pound on the keys, encourage your pianist to always "dig in," and to be less afraid of playing an incorrect voicing. Give them the same dictum that the band gets, "If you are going to make a mistake, let me hear it!"

It has been my experience that classically trained pianists use the sustain pedal on just about everything. The sustain pedal, unless used in the correct way, can be a surefire groove killer in a rhythm section. The "wash" of sound that is created with the pedal lends a very muddy character to the rhythm, and this DOES NOT compliment what the bass and drums are trying to accomplish. Inexperienced players should avoid the sustain pedal altogether, regardless of the style of the piece. This will ensure crisp releases of the chords that will better compliment the style of attack described above.

Pianists that are new to the keyboard face the additional challenge of learning instrumental technique. They will, of course, be able to take advantage of the written voicings and should always be playing in a rhythmic way. If the written voicings are too thick for a young player to grasp, some notes can be left out of the voicing. The most important notes of a chord voicing are the third and the

 $\blacksquare$ 

seventh (remember that the bass is playing the root), and these generally occur in the left hand. You may need to give the player some assistance in finding these pitches. No matter how many notes of a voicing a pianist plays, they should always "dig in" to the keys and play in a way that compliments the bass and the drums.

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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## The Power of Unison

## by David Newell

ver the years I have become convinced that a common mistake made in working with bands is the general abandonment of unison playing far too early. As a matter of fact, I believe more firmly than ever that a significant amount of daily rehearsal time should be spent playing unison materials. The finest bands have much to gain by going back to the unison approach utilized in beginning band methods.

Generally speaking, students are weaned from any significant amount of unison playing when they finish their beginning classes and graduate to the full band experience in the middle school/junior high school setting. At this point an overwhelming amount of rehearsal time is spent preparing band literature, with its obvious emphasis on individually differentiated parts and constant sounds of harmony. This is necessary, but a better balance between literature preparation and unison playing has a great deal to offer in the strife to turn our 'players' into 'musicians.'

There are numerous benefits associated with increased unison work at the secondary level. I will focus attention on what I consider to be three of the more important — improved overall band sound, less individual student 'down-time,' and improved intonation.

## **Improved Overall Band Sound**

The following statement may seem controversial at first reading, but it is probably true nonetheless. In order to improve the overall quality of a band's sound, it isn't necessary to improve the finest players. The finest players are more than likely performing the literature at a high level of expertise and are more than likely self-motivated to maintain or improve that level. Instead, it is necessary to raise the performance level and the self-esteem of our weakest players to improve the overall quality!

Each time a full band plays in unison, the less able students in the group are getting precisely what they need — a 'lesson.' All of the more able students in the band are demonstrating how the part needs to be played, both technically and musically. Additionally, they are 'teaching' these things in the most significant way possible, via musical sounds rather than words. As the less able players hear the examples of phrasing, articulation, and timbre that are being set by the group leaders, they tend to lose their fear of making mistakes. With encouragement from the teacher, they become more apt to put a sufficient amount of air into their instruments. They naturally begin to attempt to imitate the sounds they are hearing all around them, resulting in improved individual tone qualities which tend to add to the band's sound rather than detract from it. Having a band spend part of every rehearsal playing in unison is one of the most efficient ways to narrow the gap between stronger and weaker players and, simultaneously, to develop a tightness and cohesiveness to the band's core sound.

#### Less Individual Student 'Down-time'

Several years ago the Women Band Directors National Association conducted an important study involving students who had dropped out of band programs after at least one full year of participation. Guidance counselors asked students in grades 8 through 12 from twenty states across the United States why they quit band. The number one reason? Surprisingly, 52.8% of respondents stated, "I was bored!" There are, of course, numerous reasons that students leave band programs over which directors have little or no control — scheduling conflicts, not enough time for studying, practicing, working, and so forth. But directors are definitely in complete control of the boredom factor during the daily rehearsal. This is a problem that we can do something about!

Students of all ages enjoy playing unison in band rehearsals. I am convinced that the reason for this is really quite simple. It is because they are playing their instruments! Students do not join band to sit and listen to other students play! It is obviously necessary to rehearse small groups of students in the full band rehearsal on a daily basis. However, the amount of time devoted to this activity could seriously be reduced by the thoughtful and judicious use of unison. Everyone can benefit from the concept or skill that the small group is learning and, if it is presented to the full group as a unison study, everyone is involved in the process and is learning. Over time, because of the group learning afforded by unison study, fewer and fewer small group sessions are actually required within the full rehearsal, resulting in increased student participation and satisfaction.

By the way, it might be interesting to note that, in the same WBDNA study mentioned above, 26.8% of students who quit band stated that, "I didn't feel that I played my instrument well enough." The daily group 'lesson' that is facilitated by unison work can go a long way toward solving that problem as well.

### **Improved Intonation**

Certainly one of the most important skills for any band to master is the ability to play with excellent intonation. Many people would agree with the statement that "Intonation is Job #1." As paradoxical as it may sound, the more time a band spends playing in unison, the better it will play harmonies in tune. This is because the very basis of superior band intonation is the ability to play octaves that are in tune. With octaves being sounded that are out-of-tune, it is impossible to find that place where the 5th of the chord "locks in." The same is true, of course, of all the other harmonic intervals. True intonation cannot be achieved if the octaves are not in tune. Trying to

tune a chord when the octaves are out of tune is wasting time! But when the octaves are in tune, everything else tends to fall into place.

How do bands learn to play octaves in tune? By playing in octaves. If the recommendations involving the increased use of unison as advocated in this article are followed, students will spend more time playing in octaves. When the full band plays in unison, the students are producing up to five or six octaves simultaneously — from tuba up through piccolo. Done often enough, and with attention being directed specifically toward octave intonation, the improvement in overall intonation can be impressive. In short — the more the unison, the better the harmony!

Most bands that do play unison materials on a regular basis tend to play almost exclusively unison scales and technical studies - rhythm etudes, articulation studies, and so forth. To this mix needs to be added unison melodic materials. Bands that consistently play slow, sustained, expressive melodies in unison discover that their ability to play the slow sections of their band literature dramatically improves. This is because every student in the band, including students who never get to play a complete melody in their regular band literature, learn how to shape a phrase and how to play with a legato, sustained articulation. Such students tend to then apply these learned skills to their non-melody band parts, resulting in a cohesive and consistent style throughout the ensemble. Both melody and harmony are played expressively.

The value of unison work at the secondary level cannot be overstated and should not be overlooked as directors search for ways to efficiently and effectively help band students to become musicians rather than just players of musical instruments.

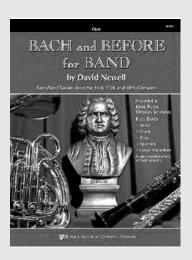
David Newell has taught instrumental music for thirty years in the public schools of Brea, Ohio. In 1979 he received the Martha Holden Jennings Foundation's "Master Teacher" Award for Excellence in the Classroom. He also received the Alumni Achievement Award from Baldwin – Wallace College in 1987.

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## **Triangle Technique**

## by Dave Hagedorn

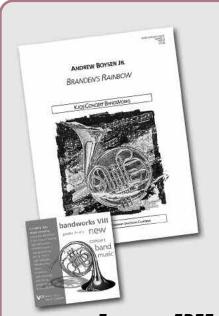
his article will deal with all of the aspects of playing the triangle, including playing spots for different sounds, beater technique, holding the triangle, and exercises to practice. It seems as though this instrument would be very simple to play, but there are many variables that can make the triangle a challenging instrument. Check out the Nutcracker Ballet by Tchaikovsky for one of the best examples of the triangle in orchestral literature.

The supplies necessary to begin are a quality triangle, a clip, and beaters. Triangle prices range from \$10 to \$400, but a triangle with a quality of sound that is acceptable for all purposes will cost around \$40. The best triangles have a multitude of overtones so there is no distinct pitch. That way the sound will not conflict with the rest of the group, no matter what key they are playing in. There are many types of beaters available. I personally prefer one with a rubber grip as opposed to a metal handle, but either type will work. It is best to have beaters that are of at least 3 different weights, for different performance situations. This will make various techniques easier to learn and master.

During performance, the triangle is suspended from a clip. Many specialty percussion manufacturers make clips, or a clip can be made with a spring-loaded clip from a hardware store by drilling holes in it for attaching fishing line to support the triangle. It's important to attach 2 loops of fishing line in case one breaks while performing so the triangle doesn't hit the floor if a loop fails. Use a lighter gauge of fishing line for maximum resonance. Do not merely tie a string or rope around the upper corner of the triangle. This will dampen the vibrations too much and may also cause the triangle to spin when it is being played.

To hold the triangle, it's best to make a sideways "U" with the left hand (for a right handed person), and place the clip on the thumb and index finger, with the triangle hanging inbetween. This allows the performer to stop the ringing sound of the triangle when a rest is needed. Hold it up just below eye level in front of the body so it can be easily heard. There is a very clear diagram of this on page 3 in the Timpani and Auxiliary Percussion part of Standard of Excellence, Book 1. The triangle should be placed in the clip so that the open corner is on the left side (for a right handed person). Play on the lower leg for most applications, with the beater striking the leg on the inside of the triangle. It may be necessary to experiment to find the location of the most resonant "sweet spot" on that lower leg. To roll, you rapidly move the beater in one of the closed corners of the instrument. See page 24 of Book 1 for a diagram of where the spots to roll are on the triangle. I prefer the lower right angle, but many people like to roll in the upper angle, near the clip. Experiment to see what works best. The one roll that is not used is the "come and get it" roll on all three angles of the triangle that is seen in old movies when it's time to eat. It's too hard to control and get a musical sound that way.

Once these basic techniques are mastered, the next step is to learn how to play rapid rhythms with one hand by modifying the roll technique. We can play pretty much anything up to certain tempos by just playing on the lower leg, but once things really get moving, we have to play on two legs, similar to the roll. This technique is necessary for pieces like the Nutcracker



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and Scheherazade by Rimsky-Korsakov, and for many contemporary band works. Another solution is to use two clips, one in each corner, so the longest leg is suspended from a stand. It's best not to attach the triangle clip to a music stand, but instead use a rack made for this purpose or use a thin piece of wood with a hole drilled into it to mount the triangle clip on a cymbal stand. This is to avoid extraneous vibrations and noises that can come from music stands. (It's OK to clip the triangle on a music stand when it is not being played, but it will produce a far superior sound if it is held during use). The rhythm studies in the back of Books 1 and 2 of the Timpani and Auxiliary

Percussion part of Standard of Excellence are perfect for practicing these triangle techniques. Start with slow tempos and gradually speed them up for more challenges.

These ideas should help in making better music with the triangle and also realize that playing the triangle has plenty of performance issues just like all of the other instruments.

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.

# QUEENWOOD/KJOS

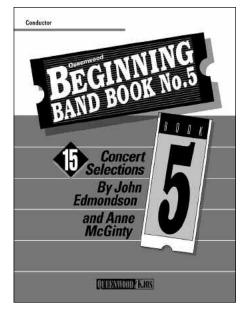
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## In Praise of the Phrase

## by Bruce Pearson

s band directors and music educators, we have the privilege of hearing many musical performances, both live and on recordings. The performances we hear vary from being poorly executed to moving musical experiences. Even well-executed performances may vary from being lack-luster to breathtaking. The difference between the two lies generally in musical phrasing.

"For me, phrasing has two main components. The first is musical punctuation. According to (Mark) Hindsley, in choral music the words themselves clearly indicate the phrasing, but in instrumental music the punctuation must be left to the imaginations of the performers and conductor. The way a band phrases, more than anything else, indicates its understanding of the music being played..." 1

In text, there are many examples of musical punctuation. One example is the period, which indicates the end of a sentence or complete thought. A musical phrase, like a phrase in prose, can be defined as a complete musical sentence or thought. It involves an understanding of harmonic and rhythmic cadences, either or both, through cognitive or affective means.

I often teach my students to determine phrase length by having them play a chorale with obvious phrases and asking them to stop playing at the end of the first phrase (without telling where that is). Phrasing is musical "decision-making" and students need to learn to make those all-important musical decisions. If there is disagreement within the band as to the length of the phrase, I use this "teachable moment" to lead my students to an understanding of harmonic and rhythmic cadences and their relationship to musical phrasing. As soon as there is agreement regarding phrase length, the students bracket the phrase ] and label it "phrase one." I repeat this with their pencils [ process throughout a composition labeling the phrases 1, 2, 3, etc. This places emphasis where it belongs — on phrases, not notes. I tell my students that they should play each phrase with one breath. Younger students may have difficulty playing a complete phrase with one breath. If this is the case, I tell them to breathe at a different place than the person sitting next to them. I also tell them not to breathe at barlines for this often disturbs the "musical flow" or movement of the music.

The second component of good musical phrasing is to understand which note or notes, within a phrase, receive emphasis. Relate the teaching of musical phrases to sentences. Have the students say the following sentence four times, each time emphasize a different word:

I love making music.

I LOVE making music.

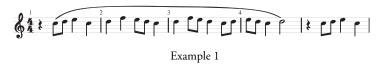
I love MAKING music.

I love making MUSIC.

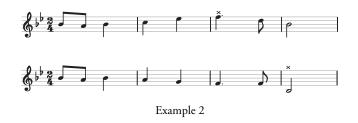
Explain to them how this changes the meaning of the sentence. The same is true of musical phrases.

The next step is to help the students discover which note or notes should receive emphasis within each phrase.

Below are four musical examples, each illustrating a different principle.



If the notes are generally moving upward, the highest note is the destination and should receive emphasis.



If the notes are generally moving downward, the lowest note is the destination and should receive emphasis.



Often times, the longest note within a phrase should receive the emphasis.



Sometimes the note outside of the key or tonality receives emphasis.

Next, I instruct my students to use their pencils to mark an X above (or below) the most important note or note of destination in each phrase.

Generally, there will be a crescendo of all notes leading to that note within the phrase and a decrescendo of all notes leading away from the most important note within a phrase.

It may be necessary to instruct those playing long notes (oftentimes the accompaniment parts) regarding the location of the most important note to ensure a fullness of musical expression.

Good teachers apply what the students have just learned to new experiences or new music. Apply this principle to the music you are preparing.

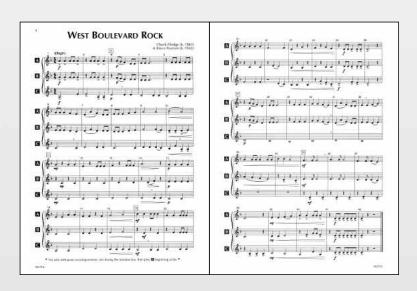
Music has often been called the "International Language" or "Universal Bridge." This can only be true if there is good musical expression. The key to expression is good musical phrasing or one may say, "Praise the phrase."

<sup>1.</sup> Johnson, Everett, Mark, Ed, Yale... ... and YOU! Alla Breve, December 2002, Auburn, Al.



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