

Introduction and Use of this Book

One of the biggest struggles for young teachers is developing rehearsal technique. It is the greatest fear for most of us as we prepare to student teach and the biggest weakness for most of us as we enter the profession. It is extremely difficult to simulate what it is really like when you stand on the podium for the first time with students playing a band piece. How do you identify problems? How do you know which problems to attack first? How do you know the most efficient and effective way to fix those problems? These questions lie at the heart of our job and the most effective teachers are the ones who do it well.

Contained within this book are short chapters related to score study/preparation and rehearsal techniques. The ideas presented in those chapters reflect my own approach after years of teaching and, although they are not exhaustive by any means, they should provide you with an excellent starting point from which to prepare. Following those chapters are general analyses of ten significant works for band at varying grade levels, to aid in initial efforts at score study. Once you have read these first chapters, it is recommended that you purchase, mark and prepare the scores to each piece as if you were going to conduct them with your own ensemble. Then you may proceed to the larger goal of this book.

Ten real school bands have allowed themselves to be recorded twice during the rehearsal process: once during an early rehearsal and once near the completion of their rehearsal cycle. These recordings are available through the Interactive Practice Studios (IPS). To access the IPS, download the software at www.kjos.com/ips. Follow the on-screen instructions and use the sixteen-digit code printed on the inside cover of this book to get started. Each audio recording has been divided into several segmented tracks. The segments chosen were based on providing a manageable amount of music to evaluate, but they also represent a good example to the young conductor for how to approach each piece in an actual rehearsal.



I sent the recordings to leading band conductors around the country (the complete listing follows this introduction) and asked them to listen and, after each track, respond to the simple question, “What would you work on first if this were your band?” This is, in fact, exactly what we need to do when we stand in front of an ensemble. Then, after each complete version of each piece, I asked the experts to answer the simple question, “What is the biggest over-arching concern you hear in this particular band?” In other words, what might be the more long-term goals for this ensemble? These might then become focus areas for the skill-building portions of upcoming rehearsals. Most of the experts found that in every excerpt there were several issues they would want to address, so I allowed them to provide up to two answers for each track.

Armed with the knowledge from your score preparation, you should listen to each of the excerpts and, after each one, answer the same question: “What would I work on first if this were my band?” Then, after listening to

a complete version of the work, answer the second question. The following process is recommended:

1. Listen to a track once and respond to it immediately, as you would in an actual rehearsal.
2. Identify the most significant two problems you hear (basically the ones that you would choose to address first) and type or write those answers. Please focus on something specific that could be fixed immediately in that moment. For instance, do not say simply “intonation,” but instead give a more specific answer, such as “intonation in trumpets” or “intonation in measure 42.” You may find that there is one area that includes several issues, so your answer might be something like “brass articulation, balance and dynamic level from measure 21–24.”
3. If a more general answer like “intonation” seems appropriate because it is a consistent problem in the ensemble, save that answer, since it is a more over-arching concept that a teacher would approach over time. After every piece, take a moment to indicate what you feel are the two most significant over-arching problems with the ensemble at that time. You will do this again after the second time through the piece, if that makes sense, since it could change over the course of the rehearsal process.

When you have fully evaluated the recording for a complete take, compare your answers to the answers provided by the experts, found in the answer key at the back of the book. These answers are listed from most popular to least popular, along with the percentage of respondents supplying that particular answer. Choose your highest-ranking answer for each track and grade yourself by adding up the points to see how you compare to the experts.

Please remember that there is no “right” answer. All of the answers in the answer key are appropriate and all would improve the ensemble in question. Just because one answer was more popular than others does not mean that it would, in fact, be the most effective path to a better performance. In fact, the ideal use of this book would include discussion of your responses as a full class, during which you would delve more deeply into the decisions you might make and how you might choose to approach each issue. The use of labels in the Total Points section of the Student Answer Sheets is merely meant to suggest a relative sense of how you are doing. Responses that fall into the Good and Acceptable categories should still be perceived as successful, since your answers are being compared with experts in the field.

Finally, you are highly encouraged to thoroughly examine and consider all of the answers in the answer key, so that you may observe patterns in the issues that you tend to perceive in rehearsal, and perhaps more importantly, what you tend to miss. It is also suggested that you complete this book over the course of several shorter sessions, rather than “cramming it” in a few longer sessions, as a long-term approach will allow you to develop and grow each time you return to the material. This process will help you to become a more confident, more efficient, and more effective teacher from the podium.

Rehearsal Techniques

Overview

Armed with the knowledge gained from score study, I am now prepared to begin the rehearsal process. First, I attempt to approach each rehearsal as an opportunity to make music with my ensemble. How many of us have been a part of rehearsals in which the music is seemingly “fixed” note-by-note and measure-by-measure, surely improving the overall performance but never creating a moment of real music-making? I remember witnessing situations in which students, at the final rehearsal, would suddenly have a moment of enlightenment, realizing that they actually liked the piece they were playing—they simply had never played the complete work until that very moment and were, therefore, unable to appreciate it. Because of these experiences, I do my very best to have students understand the nature of the work as early in the process as possible.

This affects how I approach my rehearsals, in that I often will play through large passages of music, making note of items that will need my attention (usually by folding corners of the score as the ensemble continues to play) and then working on several focused areas, before returning to the longer passage and “putting it all back together.” This requires me to remember what needs work, rather than stopping at the first moment of difficulty, which can be challenging as I often want to “help” the group as soon as I hear a problem. However, students need to learn to continue to make music even when something goes awry. Perhaps a better way to think about this concept is to relate it to an individual in a practice room. When you are preparing music yourself, do you stop at the first sign that something is wrong, or do you continue to play a complete passage and then return to the problem areas?

Rehearsal Plan

It is also important to have a rehearsal plan in place each time I step on the podium. I need to know what I hope to accomplish in any given rehearsal with my ensemble and have a related strategy for how to achieve those goals. Sometimes these plans might involve teaching a larger concept, but often they are simply focused on specific moments in the music that need improvement based on previous rehearsals. I generally make note of items for future rehearsal attention immediately after finishing work on a piece, while students are moving to the next piece on the rehearsal schedule that day. As with all plans, it is equally important to have flexibility. Adherence to a lesson plan without consideration for what is actually happening in the ensemble can be an enormous waste of time. Often items that appeared to need work will be fine at the next rehearsal and I have witnessed young teachers continue to “rehearse” passages in order to “fix” elements that no longer needed attention, instead of demonstrating a willingness to move on to other issues based on what they were actually hearing from the band.

African Festival

Quincy Hilliard, Chuck Elledge, and Bruce Pearson

African Festival is a setting of the folk song *Siyahamba*, which is thought to be originally of Zulu origin but first notated by Andries Van Tonder in 1952. The song came to be identified with the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa and would, therefore, be particularly useful for creating cross-curricular connections. Other potential teaching opportunities abound, including the pentatonic scale, monophony, imitation, and an elided cadence.

Introduction	A1		A2	
	a	b	a	b
measures 1-4	5-12	13-20	21-28	29-36
E♭ major				

A3		A4	A5	Coda
a	b	a	a	
37-44	45-52	53-60	61-67	68-79
			F major	

Introduction (mm. 1-4)

The percussion section introduces the piece, notably using dampening techniques on timpani, tom-tom, and bass drum to create a more authentic timbre.

A1 (mm. 5-20)

The “a” part of the pentatonic melody is stated by the clarinets and alto saxophones using monophony. After two phrases (antecedent/consequent) at a piano dynamic, the full ensemble enters suddenly forte at measure 13 with the “b” part of the tune and an added harmonized response in the upper voices.

A2 (mm. 21-36)

The initial dynamic pattern is reversed, with the “a” section now forte and the “b” section piano. The flutes, oboes, and trumpets present the melody, and a new chordal accompaniment is added underneath, using a dotted quarter/eighth note pattern. The “b” section begins at measure 29 with the melody in the trumpets and is heavily altered from the first time through.

A3 (mm. 37-52)

The dynamic pattern is reversed once again, now beginning at piano and presenting the “a” section in two-part counterpoint. The melody returns to the lower voices for the “b” section at measure 45, in a passage that is very similar, but not identical, to the one at measure 13.

African Festival

Take 1

Track number/Your responses	Points for your highest ranking response
Measure 1-21 1. _____ 2. _____	<div></div>
Measure 21-37 1. _____ 2. _____	<div></div>
Measure 37-61 1. _____ 2. _____	<div></div>
Measure 61-end 1. _____ 2. _____	<div></div>
Over-arching Issue 1. _____ 2. _____	<div></div>
Total Points for Take 1 <div></div>	

Excellent	129-153
Good	77-128
Acceptable	25-76
Needs improvement	0-24

African Festival

Take 1

Measures 1–21

1	Flutes, trumpets, horns, note accuracy and intonation (mm. 13–16)	37
2	Dynamic contrast between <i>p</i> and <i>f</i>	25
3	Clarinet and alto saxophone, intonation, style, and balance (less saxophone) (m. 5)	19
4	Ensemble balance (accompaniment voices covered) (mm. 13–20)	12
5	All voices lighter articulation	2
	Percussion, alignment and stability	2
	Hold notes full value throughout	2
	Rhythms are rushed, especially the “and” of beat 1	2

Other more general comments: Clarity of articulations and rhythms. Intonation.

Suggestions for Rehearsal:

- Flutes, trumpets, horns, note accuracy and intonation (mm. 13–16) – The note accuracy seems relatively good aside from the A-flat concert in m. 16, so begin by reminding the players of the key signature. Then play the first note at m. 13, beginning with the Eb, then Bb, then G to balance the chord and improve intonation. If necessary, ask the students to sing the chord.
- Dynamic contrast between *p* and *f* – As with most dynamic contrast issues in bands, the problem is not that the *f* needs to be louder, but that the *p* should be softer. Begin by asking the percussion to start the piece softer and then reinforce that request through conducting gestures.

Measures 21–37

1	Ensemble balance, trumpets covered/accompaniment too loud, no dynamic contrast (mm. 29–36)	32
2	Accompaniment voices, clarity of articulation, balance, no crescendo/accent on 2 nd note (mm. 21–28)	21
3	Ensemble balance, percussion and accompaniment too loud (mm. 21–28)	13
4	Trumpets, note and rhythm accuracy, especially m. 29 and 34	9
5	Melody voices, clearly re-articulate repeated notes	7
	Accompaniment voices, clarity of articulation and rhythmic accuracy (mm. 29–36)	7
7	Trombone and baritone, tone quality (m. 29)	4
8	Early entrance (m. 33)	2
	Cabasa, rhythmic accuracy (mm. 29–35)	2
	Trumpets, softer (mm. 21–28)	2
	Review key signature	2

Suggestions for Rehearsal:

- Ensemble balance, trumpets covered/accompaniment too loud (mm. 29–36) – These are all related issues. The dynamic contrast is lacking because the accompaniment voices all play too loudly at m. 29. Begin with those voices, asking the low woodwinds to control their sound and listen to those outside their section. Continue through the passage to also improve the rhythmic errors later in the passage (see #5 above).
- Accompaniment voices, clarity of articulation, balance, no crescendo/accent on 2nd note (mm. 21–28) – Begin by playing and holding the accompaniment chord at m. 21. Part of the problem here is that alto saxophone 2 is the only voice with the 5th of the chord, so work to hear all voices equally. Then sing the articulation as desired, stressing the fact that there is no crescendo to the second note and that the second note should be light, not heavy and accented. Finally, have the accompaniment voices try playing together and ask them to ultimately listen for the melody (see #3 above).