

Getting Tuned In: Developing Superior Intonation in Your Band

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Purpose of an ensemble warm-up / tuning routine:

- Establish a daily expectation
(Students will get good at what they practice)
- Should be an extension of the individual warm-up
- Develop beautiful tone, mature phrasing, consistent balance and blend
- Focus on breathing, articulation, sustain and release

BASIC THOUGHTS ON TUNING

- Students do not have to tune before they play in tune
- Difference between playing in tune and being in tune
- Multifaceted approach:
 - Fundamental tone quality (priority #1!)
 - Understanding pitch tendencies on the instrument
 - Understanding each note's role within a chord

DRONES AND TUNERS

- Best started in section rehearsals (able to give more specific feedback and information)
- Once students have demonstrated a basic understanding of playing in tune and adjusting to (*and within*) a drone, move into full band band rehearsal
- Singing with a drone – great way to develop listening skills
 - Once they sing in tune with the drone, experiment with them making the pitch sharp or flat against the drone to develop a sense of pitch center
- Hum pitch -> sing pitch. Then hum -> sing -> play (strive to “fit their sound inside of the drone”)
 - By fitting the sound inside the drone, students begin to play with a calmer, more fundamental sound
- Begin by droning an octave. Once students are able to do this, add the fifth.
- It is OKAY if this does not happen the first few times you attempt the exercise!! Always give specific feedback and do not give up.

TUNING CHORDS

- Drone the chord you are tuning
 - Hear each chord note and isolate which direction the chord tone has to be adjusted
 - Once you have isolated their role, have students play their chord tone with the drone
 - Not always easy for students to hear / achieve in the beginning, but over time it will become more natural / even second nature

APPROACHING CADENCE POINTS

- Use a drone to emphasize how to approach a chord note and how to go away from it
- Drone a cadence point for students as they are playing the phrase
- Listening: The single most important factor in teaching musicians to play in tune

CHORALES

- Begin with basic harmony, minimal interval movement, and no extreme ranges
- Use chorales as a vehicle to move directly into a tuning note for a more musical experience