



**Tips for a Successful Region Band Experience
From Start to Finish!
Three Perspectives: Student, Teacher, Clinician**

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**Texas Bandmasters Association
2012 Convention/Clinic**



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**JULY 20 – 23, 2012
HENRY B. GONZALEZ CONVENTION CENTER
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS**

Tips for a Successful Region Band Experience... From Start to Finish!

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**Sunday, July 22, 2012
8:15 AM**

Are you not seeing the results you or your students want through the region band process? Are you a student who is looking to uncover new ways of practice that will benefit you in your musical achievements and goals? Perhaps you are new to the clinician role and want to “dot your I’s” and “cross your T’s” in ensuring a positive and lasting experience for your students? The panel will lead a discussion session on strategies that have helped them be successful in their respective roles.

From the Student... “Proactive Preparation!”

Upon first receiving the music

- Acquire a recording. Listening to someone else’s interpretation of the etudes can give you ideas on how to perform them.
- Define the musical terms that are used in each etude.
- Sing through the etudes. Singing the etudes adds a more music aspect rather than just notes and rhythms. If we want to perform them as if we were singing, why not sing them?
- Learn the etude measure by measure during your individual practice. “We must eat the elephant one bite at a time!”

Strategies for practice

- Practice slowly and methodically. Trying to rush through the entire etude and “get it done” will only cause frustration, especially at the beginning.
- Practice in segments.
 - Try breaking practice segments up into 20-30 minutes sections with 20-30 minutes in between
 - This is essential for brass players and some woodwind players to avoid fatigue
 - This will help you to avoid frustration with the music
- Practice materials that are NOT the etudes.
 - Other materials will help counteract the tedium that can set in as you get closer to the audition
 - Pick a fun, relatively easy solo. This can lead to new musical ideas that you might apply to the etudes.
- Participate in/create your own mock auditions. Being able to play the etudes straight through will pay off greatly come audition day!

Resources

- **PLAY FOR YOUR DIRECTORS!**
 - Make an appointment to play for one/all of the directors at your school (if not already scheduled)
 - Contact other directors in your district (your former middle school teachers, other local directors)
 - Seek constructive criticism and new ideas
- **PLAY FOR PRIVATE TEACHERS!**
 - Seek out private teachers that are not YOURS and that you do not regularly play for
 - Find other local musicians that you have contacts with (piano teacher, music minister). Getting multiple opinions on this music is vital.

Inspiration

- Listen to other players. Take what you can from them and apply it to your performance.
- Never get complacent with your playing! There will always and forever be something that can be better about the music.

Audition Day

- Is actually just another day of practice!
 - Work to make yourself “comfortable” in the audition room
 - Try to picture the place where you normally practice
- Is not the day to change anything about your performance.
 - If you hear another student playing something differently (and you think it sounds better), **DO NOT TRY AND IMITATE IT!**
 - Perform exactly as you have practiced
 - Making changes on audition day can be catastrophic
- Be cool, calm, and collected!
 - This is not the day to be extremely social and rowdy!
 - Get focused the morning of the audition, and do not lose that focus until after the audition is complete
 - Keep your eye on the prize

Final comments from the student...

When you receive the results, be respectful. No matter how well or poorly you played, work hard not to show no emotion in public. You never know how your reaction will affect the other students who may not have performed as well as you!

From the Band Director...
“Proper Planning Prevents Poor Performance!”

Objective/Pass-off Sheets

- Break etudes down into small chunks – no more than 4 bars expected for MS; larger chunks (multiple lines) can be expected of HS students.

- Have clear expectations for what a “pass-off” is – be realistic, be flexible, and use a fair rubric depending on the age and ability level of the players you are teaching.
- Consider a standard that rewards the result you are looking for (i.e. – early pass-offs reward perfect notes and rhythms at a slower tempo, while pass-offs that occur closer to the audition date require performance tempi with dynamics, style, and shaping).
- Use a visible accountability system (pass-off charts or something similar).

Band Outline/Sectional Plans and Curriculum for Each Six Weeks

- Investigate general weaknesses for the entire section – plan accordingly (could be different from section to section).
- Make teaching the students HOW to practice a major focus!
- Strategize fundamental concepts/drills that will make the music easier for your students.

Sectional Plans for Each Week

- 1 hour sectional should be divided fairly equally between fundamentals, region scale work, and listening to actual excerpts from the music.
- Strategize fundamental concepts/drills that will make the music easier for your students.
- Be willing to review previous sectional’s material when the music presents challenges that you didn’t see coming. Try to plan well enough to avoid this scenario.

Masterclass Night from Outside Teachers You Respect (Practice Marathon or Similar Activity)

- 30 minutes of fundamental exercises/routines – have clinicians bring a hard copy of exercises they use – you are paying for their services, so why not learn from it and gain something concrete that you can use in later years?
- 45 minutes on each etude.
- 30 minute break in between the two hours for pizza and time to talk with clinicians about what they are seeing/hearing.

Mock Audition (Four weeks Prior to Real Audition)

- Prior to:
 - Prepare students for the rules and procedures involved in all aspects of your region’s audition process – this may take an entire sectional, but it will be worth it
 - Go over “Audition Tips for Success” – stress the importance of having a plan and sticking to it
- Day of:
 - Make the mock audition as much like the real thing as possible
 - Use the results of the audition for winter concert seating

Mini Lessons – One-on-One sessions with students

- Three weeks prior to audition – group sectionals end until conclusion of region auditions).
- Schedule lessons 10-15 minutes each.

- Use this process to screen players – they have 3 weeks to meet your standards for audition (make your expectations clear).
- Teach beginning of lesson like mini-audition.
- Make a copy of the etudes to mark on so that each student can get a concrete representation of what they need to work on for their next lesson.
- Pick at least one scale that is out of their comfort area and demand that the scale be great!
- Sightread if your region requires this procedure
- Select excerpts from etudes.
 - Expose them to the reality that their cuts will not necessarily start at the beginning of the etude
 - This is especially important for your percussion students since they are likely to memorize their mallet etude
- At the conclusion of the mini lesson, cover major areas of concern. Discuss what it will take for the student to “earn” the opportunity to audition for region band.

In Class

- Revisit scales daily.
 - Gradually increase tempo and number of scales played each week
 - Have a process for how scales are to be played
 - Make sure your ensemble performs scales as you would like the individual to perform in audition
- Make a “Region Band Audition Day Countdown” – display in a prominent place in your band hall.
- “Talk it up”
- Celebrate students who have earned the right to audition (display certificates, pass-off charts)
- Review “Audition Tips” a few days prior to the audition. Cover audition procedures with all of your students with emphasis placed on your young students who are auditioning for the first time.
- Go over expectations for audition etiquette.

Final comments from the band director...

So much of our students’ success or failure can be traced back to their introduction to the etudes and following course of action in learning them. We forget that the art of auditioning is indeed an art unto itself! Educate students on appropriate audition strategies that will allow their hard work to show through when it counts...in the performance!

From the Clinician... **“Careful Composition of the Clinic/Concert”**

Before the Clinic... Selecting a Clinician

(Suggestions for the region officer responsible for securing the clinician)

- Learn as much as possible about the person you are asking to conduct the clinic.
 - Have you heard their band?

- Do colleagues recommend this person as a clinician?
- Have you observed them in a clinic/band camp setting?
- Consider whether or not this person will satisfy the diversity of your region.
- Look at the teaching experiences of the clinician.
 - Primarily middle school or high school
 - Primarily metropolitan areas or small school/rural area
- When contacting the clinician, be very specific about timelines.
 - Rehearsal/concert schedules/schedule of when other materials are needed
 - Deadlines for music selection
 - Staff assigned to the region band (organizer, percussion organizer, contact person)

Music Selection

- Ask questions about the skill level of the band you will be working with. Ask for a copy of past programs. Contact past clinicians to get their perspective.
- If conducting the second or third band, inquire about who is conducting the other bands. Contact other clinicians to keep music levels sequential
- Find out HOW the bands are set up.
 - Bands set up top to bottom
 - Two equal bands
 - One “wind ensemble” and two equal second bands
- Consider the clinic length.
 - One day – could be spread over two days
 - One evening and one full day
 - Sectionals before the clinic?
- When is the concert in relationship to the final rehearsal?
- Know your teaching pace – select pieces of appropriate length accordingly!
- Ask about region directors’ expectations.
 - Is there a commissioned piece that will be included in the program – when will it be available?
 - Ask if there are any other considerations – holiday/patriotic piece acceptable?
- Consider selecting several new pieces/stay away from pieces on the contest list.
- Establish a “library” of region band tunes that you can “mix and match” for region bands that you may conduct over a period of a few years.
- Consider including a piece that you can almost “play down” with little rehearsal, one that sounds harder than it really is, and one that the students will really enjoy.
- Keep a log of past programs/regions – make notes about pieces for future reference.
- Always take at least one “back-up” piece – one easier and/or one more challenging – just in case you need it!

Clinic Responsibilities

- Ask lots of questions/make your wishes known prior to the start of the clinic.
 - Will the percussion be in or out of the first rehearsal?
 - Will there be a percussion teacher with the section throughout the clinic?
 - Can sections/soloists be pulled out if needed?
 - Are you responsible for the set-up chart?
- Set the tone of the rehearsal from the very start – positive but firm!

- Be very clear (to both students and directors) that discipline is NOT your responsibility!
- Remember that the students are there to prepare and perform a concert, not learn and rehearse your concept of daily drill exercises.
 - Use a brief warm-up to establish basic ensemble skills/protocol/learn conducting cues
 - Remember that you are a guest of the region – reserve any concepts that may be considered “controversial” for your own ensemble!
- Use your time wisely. Plan and pace the rehearsals so that you reach your “goals” by the end of each rehearsal segment.
- Remember that most of the time students are giving up their free time and often their weekends to be a part of this event. While it is an honor, students today have many activity choices to make. Treat them with respect and find ways to make it not only educational but fun as well.
- Find that “fine line” between perfection and performance-ready.
 - Make sure the performance has the best possible chance of a high level of success – play-through is essential!
 - Have a Plan B - make cuts in music if it will benefit the quality of the performance
- Develop a “technique” that will provide as much “play through” as possible without tiring the students so that a successful performance is unattainable.
- Note to directors... make certain that there are always a few directors present during the rehearsal times!
 - To handle any student “emergencies” or discipline issues
 - To show courtesy to the invited clinician!

Concert Responsibilities

- Make certain the students are familiar with your version of concert etiquette.
 - Plan/rehearse when and how to stand and acknowledge audience applause
 - Make decisions ahead of time as to who, if anyone, will be acknowledged after each piece
- Teach students that when you do this much music in this small of time frame, something unusual is bound to happen.
 - Instruct them on HOW to react
 - Assure them that the quality of the performance will be obvious if they give their best effort
- Communicate with the audience about the music but also about the clinic and the students’ experiences.
 - Brag about their children!
 - Use this time to promote music in the schools and in the community
- Remember to acknowledge and thank appropriate directors for their time.

Final comments from the clinician...

It is so important that you keep things in perspective! Remember that the region directors have hired you to provide a positive musical and educational experience for their children. Their hope is that their students return to school the next week being better musicians and loving band even more than they did before the clinic/concert. Work hard at creating and providing an atmosphere that will lead to a positive outcome for all those that are involved in the experience!

Band Outline/Curriculum – First 6 Weeks

August 23- October 1

Date	Sectional Concepts	Sectional Scale Material	Sectional Region Music Assess	Band Class
Week of August 23	No Sectional	No Sectional	No Sectional	Rules, Expectations, and Procedures
Week of August 30	Specific instrument carriage/hand position Introduce “Three is the Key!” Review/teach relaxed, prep, and set positions	Chromatic (All-Region) – Whole Notes Db Major Scale (All-Region)	None Use “Three is the Key!” technique in teaching Sept. 6 Pass-off material	Bb Major Scale (All-Region)
Week of September 6	4 Parts to the Note – Breath, Start, Sustain, Release Practice the silence and stillness after release Review and Assess: “Three is the Key!”	Chromatic (All-Region) – Half Notes Db Major Scale Review (All-Region)	Week 1 Material (see chart)	Bb, Eb Major Scales (All-Region) Specific instrument carriage/hand position Review/teach relaxed, prep, and set positions
Week of September 13	Breathing Exercises	Chromatic (All-Region) – Quarter Notes G Major Scale (All-Region)	Week 2 Material (see chart)	Bb, Eb, Db Major Scales (All-Region) 4 Parts to the Note – Breath, Start, Sustain, Release
Week of September 20	Check for Mastery and Improvement: Breathing Exercises	Chromatic (All-Region) – Quarter Notes (Take out the rests) F Major Scale (All-Region)	Week 3 Material (see chart)	Bb, Eb, Db, G Major Scales Breathing Exercises
Week of September 27	Tuning Basics: How to use a tuner, when to use a tuner, how to manipulate pitch (WW).	Chromatic (All-Region) – Quarter Notes (Faster) Ab Major Scale (All-Region)	Next 6 Weeks – Week 1 Material (chart)	Bb, Eb, Db, G, F Major Scales Check Breathing Exercises

Band Outline/Curriculum – Second 6 Weeks

October 4 – November 12

Date	Sectional Concepts	Sectional Scale Material	Sectional Region Music Assess	Band Class
Week of October 4	<p>“Level Two Listening”</p> <p>Reasons you would hear yourself in a negative way: Time, Tune, Tone, Touch (articulation, balance, volume, etc.)</p>	<p>Chromatic (All-Region) – As Written (Brass = 70)</p> <p>C Major Scale (All-Region)</p>	Week 2 Material (see chart)	Play through ALL Region Scales @ 90 – each class period
Week of October 11	<p>Rhythm Review:</p> <p>Rhythm Tree, Dots, and Ties</p> <p>Counting System Review (Handout)</p>	<p>Chromatic (All-Region) – As Written (Brass = 80)</p> <p>Instrument-Specific Trouble Scales</p>	Week 3 Material (see chart)	<p>Play through ALL Region Scales @ 95 – each class period</p> <p>“Level Two Listening”</p>
Week of October 18	<p>All about All-Region:</p> <p>Policies and Procedures (Handout)</p> <p>Audition Tips for Success (Handout)</p>	<p>Chromatic (All-Region) – As Written (Brass = 90)</p> <p>Instrument Specific Trouble Scales</p>	Week 4 Material (see chart)	<p>Play through ALL Region Scales @ 105 – each class period</p> <p>Rhythm Basics Unit 1: Exercise 1-7 (one per day)</p>
Week of October 24	No Sectional: Mini Lessons			<p>Play through ALL Region Scales @ 110 – each class period</p> <p>Rhythm Basics Unit 1: Exercise 8 – add a line each day</p>
Week of November 1	No Sectional: Mini Lessons – Golden Ticket			<p>Play through ALL Region Scales @ 115 – each class period</p> <p>Rhythm Basics Unit 1: Exercise 9 – add a line each day</p>
Week of November 8	No Sectional: Mini Lesson – Golden Ticket (last chances)			Play through ALL Region Scales @ 120 – each class period

Audition Tips for Success

The Day-Of Game plan – From Wake-up to Result Posting

- I. Waking Up!
 - a. Set your alarm and give yourself plenty of time to complete all of your morning activities and necessities in a leisurely fashion
 - b. Dress appropriately – although at this particular audition the judges may not see you, sometimes looking good helps set the tone for your day.
- II. Breakfast and Hydration
 - a. Eat a balanced meal free of fats and grease that will weigh you down and perhaps add to your uneasy feelings – its best to go with cereals, fruits, and breads
 - b. Water, Water, Water! – Dry mouth is one of the most common ailments that many wind musicians face when under pressure. The best way to combat this is to be 100% hydrated – this is more important than you will ever know! Avoid caffeine or energy drinks that proclaim to heighten your performance. You will have plenty of adrenaline and other endorphins to keep you going through the audition. Stimulants like caffeine will put you overboard.
- III. Pre-Departure, Departure, and Arrival to the Contest/Audition Site
 - a. Check, Check, and Re-Check to make sure you have all of the necessary materials for a successful audition. Music, Tuner, Metronome, Instrument and Lucky Rabbit's Foot!
 - b. Give yourself plenty of drive time to school to ride the bus. You need to be calm and relaxed so make sure all you do functions as a means to this end.
 - c. Upon arrival at the contest site, find your audition room and check-in with the monitor if possible. Next, find the warm-up area and restroom facilities. Things not to do: do not hang out in the hallways, do not listen to others play their etudes over and over, do not play your etudes over and over. Things to do: find a quiet place (if possible) and collect yourself, do a simple warm-up that focuses on the fundamentals while keeping you loose and relaxed, frequently check your room to make sure things are running on schedule, and be flexible, as most auditions are not perfect.
- IV. The Audition
 - a. This is not life or death situation, so don't treat it as such! Freaking out will only add to the stress and tension of the situation. We play best when we are relaxed, so try and maintain your focus and BREATHE. It is scientifically proven that deep, through-the-nose breathing calms and focuses the mind.
 - b. Dry Mouth – as stated before, this is one of the most common reactions to nervousness. Other than being as hydrated with water as you can be, another quick and effective way to provide almost instant relief is to have some kind of citrus beverage or citrus fruit handy. A quick drink or quick bite of a lemon will do wonders in this situation. A bottle of water with a squeeze or two of lemon in it is probably a great idea.
 - c. Listening to competitors audition can be deadly and can cause you to deviate from your game plan. Just because someone can play his or her etude twice as fast as you doesn't mean you should adjust your tempo.
 - d. You need a game plan!!! Sit or stand? Stand Height? One page of music or two? These are things that you can easily forget. Sing the part in your head before your start and remember that adrenaline can sometimes influence your tempos a bit. You get a one breath, one note warm up on the first note of the etude...please use this!!! Take a deep relaxed breath and let all the tension out before you begin. All of this should take less than 1 minute. How will you begin each piece? What is your process for determining the tempo you should play? Generally, you should silently count off a few bars in your head before you begin playing, and the most difficult technical section of the etude should determine your tempo. Sing this section in your head to get your target tempo (that is, the tempo that you know you can successfully perform well).
 - e. Being In the Moment – Now is the time to think positively and to rely on all of the hard practice that you've done. All of the hard work is out of the way, so just play! Note-perfect auditions are extremely rare and auditions at this level are probably not won on notes alone. The key to performing well is to be focused IN THE MOMENT. What do

you want each note to sound like in the grand scheme of the piece? Being in the moment means you don't think about a note you missed or a phrase you dropped. Those things are now in the past. Don't think about the hard section coming up – think, feel, and BE in the moment. Being focused in the moment gives you the best opportunity to perform to your potential.

- f. Waiting to play again – take advantage of the warm up times to keep everything relaxed and free. Do not savor your previous performance or wallow in grief over your less-than-best. Stay focused on the next etude and visualize yourself performing well.

V. Post-Audition

- a. RELAX!! Take a mental and physical break. Get to a quiet place and rest your eyes and mind.
- b. Handle the Results Professionally – be happy for others and take pride in knowing that you did the best you could.

General Considerations

Warm up before you get to the audition site - perhaps some very light mouthpiece buzzing and 15 or 20 minutes or relaxed warm up. Resist the temptation to play too much. Because you have been getting in peak shape for the past few weeks (hopefully), you don't need a two-hour practice session before an audition. All you should need is some relaxed playing just to get comfortable.

Don't look up old friends, hang around and talk shop with other players, listen to other people warm up, or generally socialize. There will be plenty of time for that after you audition!

Don't warm up too much. Get comfortable and then put the horn away. Your chops will be there; blowing every few minutes just to check them will tire you very quickly. Spend time reading, relaxing, breathing deeply and being quiet. Walk in the room relaxed and refreshed, without fear and *with* confidence.

Drink gallons of water. Water fills your stomach and keeps you from getting hungry at the wrong time. It also keeps your body super-hydrated and therefore works to prevent dry mouth. It also gives you something to do and can have a calming effect on you if you are a little nervous. If you drink the equivalent of eight ounces of water every 10 minutes, you will find that you have to go the bathroom every 10 minutes, too (begin this routine earlier in the day as "transit time" for water from entry into your body to exit is approximately four hours). Drink water only. Keep away from soda, tea, coffee, milk and other drinks that will stay in your mouth even after you brush your teeth. Water is the perfect drink. Learn to like it.

Concentrate on your goal. Playing the excerpts in your mind, not on the instrument. It's too late to practice now; you simply need to remind yourself of some of the pitfalls of each excerpt. It may help to write some thoughts down. Don't try some new breathing place or interpretation you overheard someone else use. Be confident of your style, even if it seems different from everything else you have heard that day. It may just be what the committee has been waiting to hear.

Forget about everyone else. It's useless to waste energy thinking about how well someone else sounds or warms up. Remain alone with your thoughts and your concepts. Keep away from distractions and concentrate on how you will project yourself.