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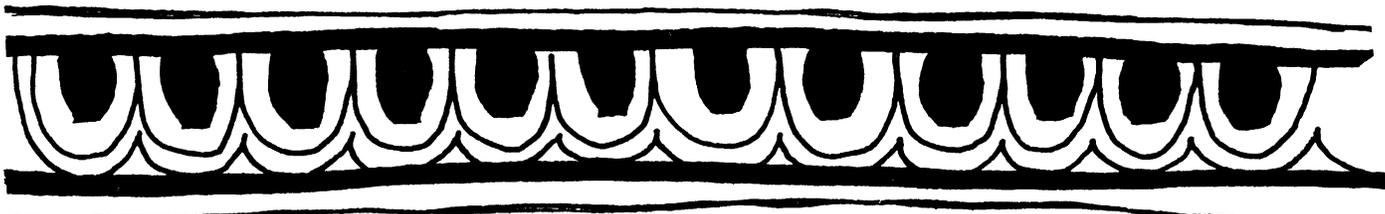
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## WOODWIND TEACHING SUGGESTIONS

By Walter L. Wehner

■ In order to improve the general over-all quality of performance, especially in regard to the woodwind section of the band or orchestra, a number of suggestions may be helpful. Probably the most significant item in the planning of an entire program involving woodwind instruction is the provision for a dedicated, enthusiastic teacher who believes wholeheartedly in what he is attempting and has faith in the students he is working with. In his capacity as teacher he will be called upon to serve many functions: musician, counselor, conductor, and friend. He will want to attend various workshops and clinics to learn more about each of the instruments with which he will be working. Most important, he will demonstrate the enthusiasm he feels for the woodwind instruments to such an extent that his pupils cannot help but feel that they are attempting something significant.

The selection and use of good instruments, mouthpieces, and reeds will help immensely in improving the over-all sound of the section. Tone quality and intonation are affected to a great extent by the quality of the instruments used. An excellent performer can produce an adequate sound on most instruments but a beginning student needs the best instrument possible. Perhaps the greatest influencing factor in regard to tonal concepts, intonation sensitivity, and performance standards is the quality of the instrument and other equipment used by each beginning student. Every effort should be made to supply the best instrument possible in each circumstance.

The program should be organized so that the woodwind section is working progressively toward definite specified goals which each individual is expected to accomplish. Such a program should require work in addition to that which is

required in the performance organization. Whether this work is used as part of the grading system or not, there should be daily requirements and accomplishments just as there are in other disciplines in the school system. Standard instruction methods should be utilized to assist in the development of requirements for each grade level or level of achievement.

Extreme care should be shown in the choice of materials used. All music should be chosen because of its high degree of musical content. Since the music education of each student is directly related to the quality of music chosen for instructional purposes, choose only that which is significant and will lead to greater appreciation and taste-development on the part of each student. The music must also be chosen with the technical and musical maturity of the performers in mind. If examples of the various periods in the development of western music can be chosen, the music instruction for the woodwind section can be more rewarding.

Each individual of the woodwind section should be encouraged to work toward improvement of the general intonation level within the group. It is mandatory that the woodwind student understand the peculiarities of his own instrument. For example, the nature of the *Chalumeau* register on the clarinet requires each clarinetist to lower the pitch somewhat because of its extreme sharpness. Such understandings are preliminary to comments regarding intonation levels. Learning to blend sound with that of one's colleagues necessitates stressing the importance of listening. Blending develops more quickly when each student becomes conscious of how his individual part fits into the entire scheme of the music. The ability of the woodwind

section to perform as a unit is contingent upon the mastery of various types of articulation. Acquiring such an ability will necessitate outside practice. However, each student must learn to perform by using the various articulations which are part of the educational program needed on each instrument. Each student should also develop a dynamic level individually. He needs to know the nature of his *pianissimo*, his *forte*, and all other gradations. And he should understand his own levels in relation to the group of which he is a member. If a special effort is made to educate the woodwind section in the fundamentals of woodwind playing in addition to organizational requirements, a highly proficient section will be the result.

### *Woodwind Class Instruction*

In beginning stages class instruction on woodwinds is invaluable. It not only encourages friendly rivalry and fosters a cooperative spirit among students, but also provides for a more economic division of the instructor's time and facilitates a more easily developed schedule in the public school program. However, there are many implications regarding class instruction of woodwind instruments which should be considered by all public school teachers and others who find themselves confronted with this scheduled activity.

How many students can be taught in a class? A class composed of young students should number no more than five; with the help of an assistant (an advanced student, for instance) as many as ten students might be taught successfully. The woodwind class reflects the fact that music is a highly intimate art dependent upon successful solving of individual students' problems.

Should class teaching mix instru-

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ments of the woodwind family? I believe not. The approach to the bassoon is almost completely different from that of the flute or clarinet. Much valuable instruction time is lost and the students have a tendency to lose interest or become involved in the difficulties of two or more instruments. Probably a class instruction schedule of "like" instruments would prove more beneficial.

Can class instruction really supplant private instruction? Never. The playing of any instrument is a matter of individual physical and psychological problems which can best be solved when the teacher's entire attention is concentrated on one individual. The progress of each student is almost constant and the teacher must be aware of the changes which are taking place so that he has the foresight to progressively instruct.

How far can class instruction go? It is quite possible to carry class instruction through all aspects of fundamental woodwind instrument technic: the development of a fundamental embouchure; proper position of hands, tongue, and body; basic articulations; understanding of the various tone qualities; the rudiments of musicianship; and even the proper and judicious use of vibrato. Solo repertoire, however, cannot be presented successfully.

Public performance has great value. Whenever possible the entire woodwind class should perform publicly. Individual performance before critics at regular intervals during the school year is most valuable.

What age level is best for beginning instruction in woodwinds? Private instruction can generally begin at an earlier age than class instruction, probably between eight and ten years of age. But class instruction has been found to be more successful when students are grouped in age levels from ten to twelve. However, again we must consider each social group as a unique case because of their different maturity levels.

There is an unlimited supply of good teaching material for class instruction. Most modern methods have excellent illustrations and simple directions to guide both the student and the teacher. Instructors with very little practical experience

as woodwind performers have found it possible to produce basically sound woodwind classes by giving careful attention to these directions.

It is reasonable to assume that better results can be obtained by an instructor who is himself a woodwind specialist. Some smaller communities find it advantageous to bring in such a specialist for class or private teaching one day each week. Outstanding college or university students have been successful in organizing such programs as special extra-curricular activities. However, when the class instruction program is considered, the emphasis should be placed upon the development of basic technics. Correct position (embouchure, hands, body), knowledge of the rudiments of music, strict regard for rhythmic accuracy, true intonation, and the unique peculiarities of each instrument should be emphasized during teaching periods.

#### *Selection of Music for Soloists.*

A persistent problem confronting the woodwind instructor, the music educator, and/or the student-performer is the selection of appropriate music for a solo performance, recital, or a competition-contest. What type of solo is best for each student at a given time in his progress and what criteria can be used for its selection? The following suggestions are those which I use myself.

The solo selected should demonstrate the student's control in regard to basic techniques. For example, the student should be able to demonstrate control of the entire range demanded in the composition when playing both *legato* and *staccato*. Adequate control should be present to permit the student to perform with a variety of dynamic levels which are obvious to the listener. Also, the student should be able to demonstrate a firm and even tone quality throughout the range required by the solo selected. The solo should be chosen with the participant's technical control in mind. A solo which is too difficult is responsible for faulty fingering and poor intonation. Important, too, is attention to the psychological involvement of the student and the result which may occur when per-



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formance is poor. The solo should not require extreme ranges or large interval skips unless the individual has had the proper technical preparation for such agility. A solo which includes a variety of articulations will permit the student to demonstrate his best qualities, if he has been prepared to execute the various articulations accurately. Solo material should not be chosen merely to show the audience or a judge how "fast" the participant can move his fingers. Accuracy of performance must never be sacrificed for speed.

The solo selected should be well within the grasp of the student's harmonic understanding. Basic chord movements, as they pertain to the solo part and to the accompaniment, should be understood by the performer. It is important that the student has an understanding of the intervals to insure true intonation in arpeggio passages and scale patterns.

Finally, the style of the composition deserves careful consideration. Phrasing must be understood and presented with meaning. The tempo should not be exaggerated. In most cases the metronome markings of the composer can be followed with precision. Only in the

event that continued alteration of these markings by authorities has become traditional should a different tempo be allowed. If the student is not capable of performing the chosen composition at the tempo marking indicated, a more appropriate composition should be selected. The instructor should assist the student in clearly understanding the style of a composition. A student preparing a Handel sonata, for example, should be given an intelligent reason for every technical or musical demand. Understanding is the basis of a true musical performance.

By considering the student's accomplishments and ability in relation to the above-mentioned items, perhaps a more objective selection of a solo composition may be attempted. By choosing more suitable music for each individual, students will practice and perform to their best advantage. When the solo preparation is completed and the soloist is performing in an excellent manner a solo which is within his grasp, we have completed our efforts and have succeeded to a high degree.

*The author is chairman of the Department of Music at Midwestern University, Wichita Falls, Texas.*

## Hawaii Festival of the Arts

■ House Resolution Number 233 of the State of Hawaii, May 4, 1965, makes a threefold resolve:

(1) ". . . that Stephen Kim, Elizabeth Tajima, Jan Dexey and Dennis Hoshijo be congratulated upon their selection as gold medalists for their solo performances at the Eighteenth Annual Music Festival and be encouraged to continue their musical activities which enrich the cultural lives of our community and nation; and

(2) ". . . that the distinguished guest conductors, Paul Van Bodegraven, Ernest E. Harris and Gerald Mack be warmly thanked for their contributions to the success of the [festival] as an artistic endeavor and as an encouragement to our musically talented young people; and

(3) ". . . that Robert Springer of Kamehameha Schools be highly commended for his chairmanship of the [festival] and for the admirable achievement of a festival of excellence . . ."

The week-long Festival, held in observance of National Music Week, involved musical solo ensemble and mass events in which more than four thousand Hawaiian public and private school students participated.

The festival events included a Parade of High School Bands, a Parade of Orchestras, two Parades of Choirs, a select band, choir and orchestra concert conducted by guest conductors Paul Van Bodegraven, professor of music education at New York University; Ernest E. Harris, professor of music education at Teachers College, Columbia University; and Gerald Mack, director of vocal music at Greenwich, Connecticut; and a clinic for music teachers in string, band and voice conducted by Van Bodegraven, Harris, and Mack.

The gold medalists were Stephen Kim of Kalani High School, flutist Elizabeth Tajima of McKinley High School, baritone Jan Dexey of Kailua High School and trumpeter Dennis Hoshijo of McKinley High School.