

Ensemble Seminar



Campbell Naismith

With thanks to Bob Worrall

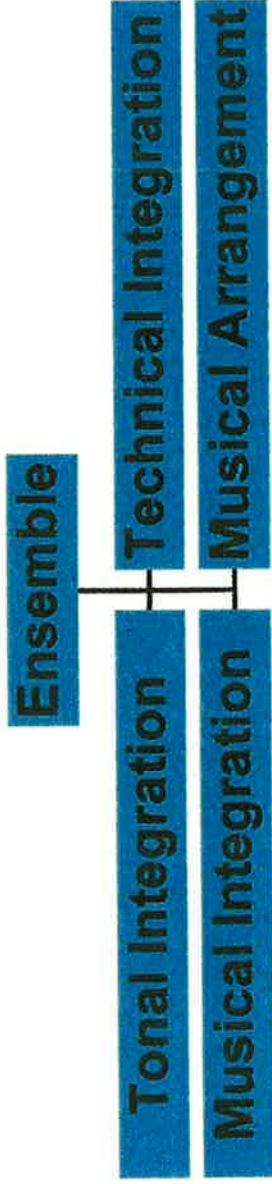
Purpose:

- Initial need in Scotland -- There was good piping and drumming but poor ensemble. What was wrong? What was missing? [MAP Program]
- Now -- Considering the visual mid-section component

Today in WUSPBA

- Preparation for the ensemble adjudicators' exam
- Education of band music leaders regarding ensemble with a view to clarify the concept and improve performance

Ensemble has 4 Big Ideas:



Tonal Integration (see handout)

- Distinguish Intonation from Pitch
- Tuning:
 - Functionalistic versus Coloristic
 - Extreme precision tuning yields extreme clarity
 - Room for Variation yields broad, rich sound
- Top Bands today have their feet in both camps

Timbre

- Pronunciation Key -[tam-ber, tim-; Fr. tan-bruh] –noun
- 1. Acoustics, Phonetics. the characteristic quality of a sound, independent of pitch and loudness, from which its source or manner of production can be inferred. Timbre depends on the relative strengths of the components of different frequencies, which are determined by resonance.
- 2. Music. the characteristic quality of sound produced by a particular instrument or voice; tone color.[Origin: 1325–75; ME tymbre < F: sound (orig. of bell), MF: bell, timbrel, drum, OF: drum < MGk timbanon, var. of Gk týpanon drum]
- Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1) Based on the Random House Unabridged Dictionary, © Random House, Inc. 2006.

Impacts on Timbre

- Increased numbers of players have a positive effect
- Higher Pitch has a negative effect
- Weak Reeds have a negative effect



Technical Integration (see handout)

- Within each corps -- “intra-corps unison”
- Between each corps -- “inter-corps unison”



- Introduction
- Transitions
- Finish
- Harmonies



Musical Integration


- Expression and Phrasing within each corps
- Complementary versus Contradictory
- Expression and Dynamics between corps
- Snare/Bass/Tenor Dynamics ★
 - Present/absent
 - Supportive/non-supportive
 - Dynamics Range
- Rhythm
- Tempo

Quality and Musicianship of the Arrangement

- **Choice of tunes (RSPBA disallows comments)**
 - **Appropriate to the idiom**
 - **Balanced (within the MSR/Medley)**
 - **Traditional versus Contemporary**
 - **Time signatures/split time signatures**
 - **Keys (major versus minor)**



Arrangement continued

- Arrangement of tunes
 - Positioning of tunes
 - Harmonies
 - Transitions
 - Tasteful Creativity
 - Originality
- Role of Tempo
- Role of Snare and Mid-section Scores 

Balance and Blend

- Pitches should blend and create no discord
 - Snares and Mid-section
 - Pipes and Drums
- Volume should be balanced pipes to drums
 - A large mid-section must have a large pipe and snare section to balance
 - In a concert setting, tuning will change to the new hearing point

Judging Suggestions

- **Pipers: give a direct ear to the drums and an indirect one to the pipes**
- **Drummers: reverse above**
- **Talk to yourself; change your focus**
- **Let it wash over you; do not get caught up in minutiae**



Score Sheet Writing

- **Write constructive commentary**
 - Particularly useful suggestions for lower grade bands
- **Avoid point deductions**
- **Be aware of ensemble judge fatigue**
 - Especially at big contests

Score Sheet

- 1st Part: Blow by blow as it happens
- 2nd Part: Comment on the 4 components generally
- Summarize: Yes's + hurt-a-bits = Overall Impression



Messages to Judges

- Keep in mind the grade level
 - Lower grade: soft
 - Higher grade: harder
- They are doing the best they can. Nurture the organization. Think about the one player with high potential.
- Judging Grade 1:
 - With humility
 - It is a privilege, not a right



The Ensemble Exam

- Written questions
- Score sheet writing
 - MSR and Medley
 - Ranking
 - Cover 4 areas
 - Cover pipes, snares, mid-section
 - Use musical terms