

**Stop, Look, and Listen:
Giving Meaning to Rehearsal Clichés**

**Montana Band Masters
Montana Music Education Association
Professional Development Conference**

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Thank you to:

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Laurie Lafferty, Professor Emeritus, The University of Akron, received her undergraduate degree from Baldwin Wallace College, a Master's in Music Education from Youngstown State University, and a Ph.D. in Music Education from Kent State University. Her teaching assignments at Akron included wind & percussion pedagogy, rehearsal techniques, student teaching supervision, University Band, and graduate core music education classes. Prior to her appointment at Akron Dr. Lafferty was a band director in Ohio for 23 years. Throughout her teaching career her junior high and high school bands consistently received superior ratings at Ohio Music Education Association sponsored district and state adjudicated events. In addition, her bands and horn ensembles performed at local, state, and national conferences under the direction of many nationally known composers and conductors.

Dr. Lafferty is an active member of the Ohio Music Education Association, serving on various state committees, holding district office, and adjudicating at district and state level competitions. She has served as guest conductor and guest clinician at conferences throughout the United States.

Dr. Lafferty has articles on music education published in *The Instrumentalist*, *The Band Director's Guide*, *Triad*, and *Contributions to Music Education*. In addition, she has young band arrangements published by Carl Fischer, Heritage Press, Ludwig Music Publishing, and Great Works Publishing.

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Clinic Outline

- **Cliché – Definition**
 - An overused expression
 - Something that is said so often it no longer has relevance or even noticed in conversation
 - Found all over the world
 - Interpreted differently depending on
 - Cultural knowledge
 - Identity
- **Common Clichés**
 - The early bird gets the worm
 - Good things come to him who waits
 - Don't tempt fate
 - An apple a day keeps the doctor away
 - A penny saved is a penny earned
 - Don't put all your things in one basket
 - Stop and smell the roses
 - Wake up and smell the coffee
 - Patience is a virtue
- As educators we often bear the brunt of clichés
 - Those who can do - those who can't teach
 - There is no expertise to teaching, only passion and enthusiasm
 - Anyone can teach
- In the field of music education it only gets worse
 - Music is not definable
 - It is all about talent
 - Music is an activity not a scholarly discipline
 - You either have it or you don't
 - Two media clichés
 - The Music Man
 - Mr. Holland's Opus "Play the Sunset"
- **Educational jargon and clichés**
 - at risk
 - scaffolding for success
 - value added
 - best-practices
 - aggregate the data
 - stakeholders
 - authentic assessment
- Educational jargon at its best -
 - "Aligned instruction with buy-in by highly qualified teachers for authentic inquiry-based learning and student engagement in professional learning communities will produce 21st century skills in our youngsters."
 -John Merrow
 - "I have come to the conclusion that it (professional jargon) exists because of a professional lack of esteem. Other professions requiring college degrees have a specific language -- medicine, the sciences, engineering, law. But educators only have plain English, so they change it into a "professional" language that sounds fancy and inaccessible when it ought to be the most accessible profession of all."
 -Anne Lewis
- How much of what we say comes across to parents, administrators, and more importantly our students as jargon and clichés?
- How much of what we say do our students understand?
- How many of the phrases and catch words we throw out in a rehearsal do we really understand?
- A look at rehearsal clichés:

Support

- “Support the sound”
- “You need to use more breath support”
- “Support the air”
- “Support the air from your diaphragm”
- What does support really mean? Applied Teacher_ Band Director Responses
 - It means more air
 - Blow the air though the instrument
 - Engage your diaphragm, keep the air fast
 - I don't use it, it implies tension and does not exist
 - Support means taking a deep breath and using the air completely but I don't actually know what that means
 - Always using the appropriate volume of air
 - Correct breathing and good posture
 - Good embouchure, air and posture
 - Constant push or column of air
 - Keeping energy
 - Using the diaphragm muscles correctly
 - Use consistent air
 - I don't know, good question
- What does support mean? Student Responses
 - I don't know
 - To keep the air steady and full
 - The air going into the instrument
 - Hold your posture in such a way to breathe better
 - I don't know
 - Engaging the diaphragm and having good posture
 - Breathe deep
 - It means supporting the air
 - Not allowing the note to become sharp or flat
 - More air
 - Air pressure behind the tongue
 - Blowing air from your stomach not your lungs
 - To tighten your stomach muscles
 - It means keeping the air well supported
 - How you use your diaphragm
 - It means listening and using a proper embouchure
 - Full sound
 - Making sure the melody is featured and not covered
 - Constant air to keep pitch from going high or low
 - Take an adequate amount of air to support the phrase
- What does support really mean?
 - Is it about breathing, air, and/or air speed?
- What is the relationship between embouchure and air or air speed?
 - Is it possible to have good air speed without good posture?
- What are alternative phrases to “support?”
 - Sit up tall
 - Breathe deeply so you fill up your lungs
 - Keep your shoulders relaxed
 - Use fast air
 - Keep the air moving
 - ???

Phrase

- “Play the phrase”
- “Play the phrase musically”
- “The phrase needs to have rise and fall”

Philip Farkas The Art Of Musicianship

...many explanatory phrases are used in urging musicians to employ good musicianship. Commonly heard are these exhortations: "sing" "phrase" "espressivo", "project", "communicate", "say something", etc. Unfortunately, these terms are almost as nebulous as the parent word "musicianship" which they are meant to elucidate.

The trouble with the vague and nebulous words listed above is that they do not tell us what to do physically with the music. While these words may convey beautiful images to the player, they will not be audible to the listener unless the player converts them into concrete and definite physical action on his or her instrument or voice.

- What is a phrase? What does it mean to play a phrase? Applied Teacher_ Band Director Responses
 - A phrase is a musical thought
 - A phrase is like a sentence
 - A musical idea
 - Portion of or complete idea
 - Play a certain section with direction
 - Look for the peak or high point
 - To play a phrase you must not have breaks between the notes. It means to play the musical sentence
 - Play each articulation and dynamic
 - Begin at the start of the musical idea and play to the end
 - Add musicality
 - Make musical sense of the line
- Student Responses What is a phrase? What does it mean to play a phrase?
 - Follow the line of the music dynamically and breathe in the appropriate spots
 - It means to listen to what the music is trying to say
 - To play with one long breath
 - Don't take a breath during the measures
 - Play the current section of the music
 - I don't know
 - To play the phrase markings in the music
 - Play a group of measures
 - Not note to note
 - between the letters or numbers Use dynamics
 - Play more clear
 - What you do in between breaths
 - Play from one rehearsal number to the next
- Obviously need a better system for teaching phrasing
- What are components of good phrasing?
 - Good tone? Good articulation? Proper breathing?
- What are the components of good tone, good articulation, and correct breathing?
 - Good posture, good embouchure?
- What is the first step in teaching a phrase?
 - Holding notes full value?
- Second step?
 - Breathing every 2 measures?
- Third Step?
 - ????

Listen

- What does listen mean?
 - Balance, blend, style, intonation?
 - Typically band directors just say listen or in concert point to their ears
- Research on Intonation
 - Directing students to listen is a good thing. Any time you can get someone to pay attention more carefully to what he or she is doing there is going to be improvement
 - Students are less accurate when tuning to a low drone
 - Timbre effects pitch perception

- Right ear perceives pitch differently than the left
- Instrumentalists that have good basics...posture, embouchure, will play better in tune
- Approaches to tuning
 - No tuning
 - An ensemble over time establishes it's own pitch center
 - Young bands, are typically sharp which effects tone quality and forces students to pinch
 - Concert F or Bb in tuba, students match pitch
 - Students less accurate when tuning to a low drone
- Clarinet or oboe sounds a concert Bb, A, and/or F
 - Have you ever checked for student accuracy?
- Using an electronic tuner to check individuals in band
 - The cliché response is:
 - It takes too much time and
 - It only tunes 1 pitch
 - Consider the advantages of tuning one note with an electronic tuner
 - Opportunity to hear students individually each day to determine not only if the student is sharp or flat but to teach the concept of sharp or flat
 - Determine if the student's equipment is working
 - Hold students accountable for having equipment that works
 - Determine if clarinet/saxes are using a good reeds
 - Look into students' eyes to see how they are doing on that particular day
 - Keep the pitch level from rising
 - Improve student listening skills
 - Provide students with the information needed to help them learn to tune themselves

Accent

- What does accent mean? What happens physically when we play an accent? Applied Teacher_ Band Director Responses
 - Faster air and louder
 - More air
 - Faster air
 - Tongue harder
 - More emphasis on the front of the note
 - Increase in air not a harder tongue
 - Touch reed harder with tongue
 - Not tongue related, harder push of air
 - Tongue is always the same, it has to do with air
 - More push of air, tongue is always light
 - Good question, hard to answer
- What does accent mean? What happens physically when we play an accent Student Responses
 - Use more air
 - Tongue harder
 - Make it pop
 - More tongue
 - Blow air quickly
 - Use a sharper tongue
 - I don't know
 - To accent a note you add markings
 - Use the tip of the tongue
 - More sound on the front of the note
 - More strength
 - More air and more space

Piano

- What happens physically when you play a note piano? Applied Teacher_ Band Director Responses
 - Less air, warm air, less pressure, less speed
 - Slower air column
 - Less quantity of air, speed stays fast
 - Same air speed, less air
 - Firm up the embouchure and use slower air

- Use less air and slower air
- What happens physically when you play a note piano
- Keep the airstream constant, controlled and slower
- Slower, more controlled airstream
- Air needs to be not as fast
- Control the air using the diaphragm and use less air
- Playing a soft note takes more air than less and involves more breath support
- Use fast air but not as much air
- Air remains constant while the speed is decreased
- What happens physically when you play a note piano? Student Responses
 - To play a note on the piano you must push down a key with a finger
 - Same air pressure as forte but not as much air let out
 - Same amount of air, slower
 - Keep my air support but play with slightly less volume of air Push less air
 - Slow the air flow
 - Change embouchure, slower air
 - Sit with correct posture, press the key
 - Good support, slower air speed
 - Use less air
 - Faster air, use less air
 - Slower air
 - I don't know, I never thought about it
 - Same amount of air with less force
 - Breathe with it
 - Play with more restricted air
 - Use softer air

Subdivide

- What is the purpose of subdivision? Student Responses
 - To divide notes into shorter counts
 - Keep the 8th notes in time
 - To help you stay with the director
 - I don't know
 - Break a note into smaller parts
 - Divide the rhythm in your head to keep it more steady
 - More precise playing
 - Count with the measure
 - To help count accurately
 - Break the notes into smaller parts
 - Help with tempo and rhythms
 - For better accuracy of beginning and ending of the notes
 - To stay with the ensemble
 - To keep steady time
 - So you can count more efficiently
 - Break the notes into shorter counts
- Additional Words/Phrases to Consider
 - Staccato
 - Marcato
 - Legato
 - "More air"
 - "You're rushing"
 - "Watch"
 - "Play it again"
 - "Listen down" and/or "Think of the pyramid"
 - "Take it home and practice"
 - "I want to challenge the students"
 - "Play it up to tempo"
 - "Open your throat"

- Tune the third higher (or lower)
- A harder reed will improve the sound
- A larger mouthpiece will improve the sound
- There are no easy answers
- Directing students to listen is a good thing.
- Any time you can get someone to pay attention more carefully to what he or she is doing there is going to be improvement
- Anytime we pay attention more carefully to what we are doing and saying there is going to be improvement

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