

BEYOND THE NOTES Ensemble Concepts for Artistic Performance

Music is art. Art is about beauty. Music is *not* about notes; it *must* be about beauty.

Important

stepping

stones

on

the

path

to

Sonority: group sound resulting from collective tone quality
(Sonorous: full, rich, deep or resonant, as a sound)

Sonority has to do with sound **quality**. All music **quality** issues depend upon **human ears and judgment**.

Balance: has to do with volume (see “Dynamics” below)

- I. Melodic balance: **melody rules**; if you don’t have the melody, cut your volume 30% from the posted dynamic
- II. Harmonic balance: more bass than tenor, more tenor than alto, more alto than soprano (pyramid balance)
- III. Crescendo: 25% soprano, 50% alto, 75% tenor, 100% bass

Blend: has to do with volume, tone and pitch becoming one with others

- I. To make your sound “disappear”
 - A. Adjust volume
 - B. Adjust tone
 - C. Adjust intonation
 - D. Play precisely

Intonation: has to do with alignment of sound waves and overtones

- I. Listen for beats or waves (disturbances in the force)
 - A. Slower beats = better in tune; no beats = in tune
- II. Make chords “lock” by lowering or raising your pitch (lower 3rds 14¢ in major chords, raise 16¢ in minor)
- III. All musicians have two tuners, one on either side of the head (using an electronic tuner is eye training, not ear training)

Melodic/harmonic motion: has to do with how notes/chords lead to, or away from, other notes/chords

Phrasing: as with spoken language, music is usually “spoken” in phrases with careful attention to breathing, length, shape and inflection of musical “thoughts”

Style: has to do with articulation and note length as determined by genre

Nuance: subtle differences in expression

Artistry



Dynamics: markings are much like speed limit signs; they show the posted **limit**, but the trained driver/musician knows to adjust for conditions. Ensemble “conditions” are listed above. Keep a heightened awareness of what is happening around you in the group and constantly adjust for conditions.

