

What Adjudicators Want To Hear, Preparing Your Band for Success

by Paul Copenhaver

Listed below are some random thoughts from a number of clinicians given at various adjudicator clinics:

1. Bill Mack on the role of the adjudicator: “The job is to evaluate and educate, not eliminate. The criteria for a I [Superior] rating: [1] Right Notes [2] Characteristic Sounds [3] Good Intonation [4] Good Balance.”
2. Adjudicators are taught to use a 3C’s approach to evaluating ensembles: **Compliment**, **Criticize**, and to provide a **Course** for improvement.
3. Howard Dunn [Southern Methodist University]: “Usually the success or failure of a band at an evaluative festival is predetermined at the beginning stages of instruction. How students are prepared from the beginning stages of instruction until they become members of your high school organization is of foremost importance.”

Develop systems:

- Tone production
- Articulation
- Pitch matching
- Meter understanding
- Rhythmic symbol recognition
- Uniform counting system
- Music Terms Recognition
- Dynamic marking recognition and execution
- Individual pitch sense
- Use of metronome and tuner



Use and develop these systems [fundamentals] from the beginning stages, through the intermediate stages of instruction, and on to the high school level. Rehearsals without a high level of preparation, energy and concentration waste everyone’s time.

How do you choose music for your festival performance? Does it reflect the highest quality possible?

- Reputation of music
- Composer’s reputation

- Editor's/Transcriber's reputation
- Publisher's reputation
- Frequency of performance
- Evaluation respected teachers/peers
- Personal evaluation

Other considerations:

- Does the music help create a balanced festival program?
- Is it represented on an established list?
- Does the music demonstrate the “strengths”[sections, soloists] of your ensemble? Do you have contrasting styles?
- Does the music represent more than one composer and/or arranger?
- Is the music appealing to: students, adjudicators, audience?

Hierarchy of elemental or fundamental development:

- Tonal concept
- Intonation
- Rhythmic recognition and performance accuracy
- Dynamics
- Timbre
- Linear clarity/Precision

Performance Suggestions:

- Leave early, Arrive at site early
- Check and double-check equipment
- Band's music/Adjudicators' scores
- Delegate
- Use parents, peers, administrators

Warm-Up Room:

- Relax!
- Warm up and tune using established system
- Be positive!

Stage:

- Enter in a business-like manner
- Use the same set-up you always use
- Remove extra chairs and/or stands
- Play something together/don't tune
- Be aware of posture/instrument 'carriage'
- No gum!!!

- Announce or have someone announce your selections
- Leave in a business-like manner

Selecting Music:

- Music must be a challenge, but should not be out of reach
- Investigate old works as well as newer works
- Refer to various state lists
- Listen to recordings

Warm-Up:

- Relate to what you're rehearsing [key, rhythm, etc.]
- Not just Bb concert scale
- Chorales

Style:

- Marcato versus legato
- Attack and release
- Phrasing
- Articulation
- Reading around the notes

4. Miscellaneous Thoughts:

- Cover all percussion parts. If a selection requires 6 percussionists, and you only have 3, don't play it.
- Consider your band's endurance or stamina when choosing a festival program.
- Play marches.
- Practice sight-reading. Have a system.
- "Tocatta for Band" [Erickson], "Emperata Overture" [Smith], and "Bandology" [Osterling] are all more difficult than you think.
- Don't tune on stage.
- "Air for Band" [Erickson] is also more difficult than you think, but for different reasons.
- Have students learn to play in tune by matching pitches in context with other pitches, not by reconciling a needle or light to zero on a meter. Players need to learn to tune by "ear," not by "eye." [Richard Clary, University of Kentucky]
- Most bands play too loudly too much of the time.
- Many percussion sections play too loudly too much of the time, thus, forcing the remainder of the band to play too loudly.
- Good posture and 'instrument carriage' count for a lot.

5. Music *[in no particular order of difficulty]*

- Three Ayres from Gloucester [Stuart]

- On a Hymnsong Philip Bliss [Holsinger]
- Incantation and Dance [Chance]
- Where Never Lark or Eagle Flew [Curnow]
- Into the Light [Bocook]
- Hounds of Spring [Reed]
- Masque [McBeth]
- American Riversongs [LaPlante]
- When the Stars Began to Fall [Allen]
- Sea Songs [Vaughan Williams]
- An Irish Rhapsody [Grundman]
- Chorale and Shaker Dance [Zdechlik] or Chorale and Shaker Dance II
- Encanto [Smith]
- A Hymn for Band [Stuart]
- Awakening Hills [Saucedo]
- Overture for Winds [Carter]
- West Highlands Sojourn [Sheldon]
- Farandole [Bizet/Bocook]