

Chief Tips #2: Cold Weather Playing and Tuning.

There are many variables which influence sound waves in cold weather. I want to make this as clear as I can without going into the physics of sound, temperature and humidity issues.

Here are some things to consider with Cold Weather and Tuning.

This is the short version.

1. Wind instruments go Flat
2. Metallic percussion instruments go Sharp
3. Keyboards, synth are fixed pitch @ A=4440

OK, you see the problem. What do you do?

1st—Warm up the Tuba's (seriously-this means getting warm air in them from the time they are unloaded)

2.—See how close you can get the Tubas in tune with the vibes. Be careful—if you only push in the main tuning slide without adjusting the individual valves also, you just created another problem.

3.—Make a decision as to how close you can get the Tubas to the vibes or How many cents are we going to tune the winds flat, 12 cents or 20 cents (if you can get the tuba up that high) Sometimes you have to just say, we are tuning 20 cents flat and we will not be in tune with the vibes.

4—Adjust your electronic keyboard to match the winds. Remember this is a fixed pitch instrument. You may have the capabilities of adjusting this to match the winds. Very important detail.

So you are now ready to tune the band. Make sure and get the instruments near your performance temperature. Use as many tuners as you have to double check tuning during your music warm up. I usually tuned each instrument at least 3 or 4 times, on several notes, during a competition warm up period of 30 minutes. Have section leaders, staff or others tune while you are warming up in your arc.

Keyboards: I kept blankets over all the keys just to try to keep the pitch somewhat constant after leaving warm up to pre-stage.

Winds: You're off to the field. Keep warm air in the horns all the time. Yes, all the time. Even when you come on the field. Play a warm up and keep adjusting. Keep air moving through the instruments during the 3:15 pre-stage time. Put the horn on your face and keep the instrument warm and ready to make great sounds.

NOW—the most important tip. **READ TIP # 1.** If you have trained your students to match and blend then they will play in tune no matter what the weather conditions. You might not be in

tune with the pit but all judges understand this. At least you will play in tune, as an ensemble, and that is what's important.

Woodwind Trick: Synthetic Reeds do work! Check the different strengths to produce the quality of sound you want. Cane reeds close up and do not respond as well in cold weather.

Changing instruments for a solo: 3 choices here

1. have another student keep the instrument warm, use a different mouthpiece
2. plug in a heating pad or electric blanket and keep the instrument warm
3. Don't change instruments! Do you really think the judges care if it's a flugel horn or a trumpet? They do care that the flugel started off 40 cents flat and took the entire solo to get up to pitch.

Best of luck with the hand warmers .

Chief Tip #3: You're out of time---Clean what you got!