

Tips from W L: 2011 Music Ensemble

The biggest concern in the area of Music Ensemble continues to be one of Balance and Blend. Not to say that Intonation and Tone quality do not rank 1st on the list, they do!

TIP #1: Play with a great sound. Incorporate Tone Quality long tone exercises into your basic Visual block. Try to eliminate just the Visual block you taught in band camp. You need to move and play to reinforce all of the basics both Visual and Music in your warm up. Tune! Match! Listen!

TIP #2: Percussion Balance with the winds, both battery and front ensemble, seems to dominate balance issues. Sometimes the issue is staging. I feel sorry for the battery when they have fff parts written and the drill has them inside the front hash or in front of the winds. That is a recipe for disaster. This usually happens with the most exciting part of the show and I tell them to play “mp” to balance with the winds. You should see the look on their faces☹.

Try this: Turn your back on the group or close your eyes and just listen. Do not watch your band. Fix what you are hearing not what you are seeing. Make sure what you are hearing is what you want the audience, judges, to hear. Fix it! If you cannot change the staging for correct balance; re-write the parts, changes sticks and or mallets, turn the electronics down (sometimes the easiest fix is the hardest to get across).

TIP#3: Insist, plead, beg—do whatever it takes for all of your students to play all of the time in rehearsal. You cannot work on music ensemble issues if they perform one way in rehearsal and another when it’s show time. Every rehearsal, chunk, set to set or run-through is a performance. Good luck.

Did I mention Tune. It’s getting colder by the day. Pay close attention to pitch.