
Fixing Pitch in Middle School Band

Posted by cedington - 2008/03/10 19:20

Anyone have any helpful hints/exercises on dealing with this issue?

Thanks!

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Re:Fixing Pitch in Middle School Band

Posted by normandea - 2008/03/12 05:32

Make sure the kids have decent mouthpieces and reeds.

Play with characteristic sound of the instrument, no overblowing.

Proper posture.

Play with a full breath.

Play long tones.

Stress the concept of warm air.

Encourage listening while playing, strive for good blend of the group timbre.

Use a strobe only as a tool at the beginning, then stress listening skills.

Some days will be worse than others. Kids are kids!

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Re:Fixing Pitch in Middle School Band

Posted by admin - 2008/03/16 20:30

Agreed!

Don't overplay! Develop a characteristic concept of sound.

Tune?!?!?!?

Chorals

Choose literature that isn't too difficult. Find the comfort zone as far a difficulty. Make sure many of the pieces you are working on are in the students ability level.

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Re:Fixing Pitch in Middle School Band

Posted by normandea - 2008/03/19 12:31

Chorales only work if the ensemble is playing with a good characteristic tone that is associated with a reasonably competent wind band. Hearing the fundamental with good depth of tone is so necessary for chorale warm-ups to be effective.

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Re:Fixing Pitch in Middle School Band

Posted by admin - 2008/03/19 20:07

Yes, I guess in reality I lean towards "expressive" pieces of music that are often below the performance ability of my high school ensembles to teach tone quality. Air for Band, Romanesque (the only Swearingen I would touch) Also, works like Salvation is Created and an occasional choral transcription have value as performance works in teaching a "concept of sound"

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Re:Fixing Pitch in Middle School Band

Posted by normandea - 2008/03/19 20:13

Balladair by Frank Erickson is also a great piece to teach tone quality and expressive playing. 66 Festive and Famous Chorales for Band by Frank Erickson is a wonderful collection of chorales Frank arranged for wind band. They provide a perfect opportunity to work on musicianship, phrasing, balance and intonation.

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Re:Fixing Pitch in Middle School Band

Posted by normandea - 2008/03/21 06:53

I'll just add on to what we were discussing earlier. Once control of tone, blend & balance, rhythm, and dynamics are (reasonably) achieved, intonation is a matter of adjustment. Singing really helps as well (kids hate it). Some of it is also the "buy-in" by the students as well. They won't be (reasonably) in tune unless they WANT to be in tune.

Out of tune = :S

In tune = :)

Grossly out of tune = :woohoo:

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Re:Fixing Pitch in Middle School Band

Posted by normandea - 2008/05/05 18:51

There has to be a proactive approach to middle school band tuning. That means teaching the correct mindset and attitude, and always playing the right way (as discussed earlier). The young musicians need to be encouraged to taking chances in pitch adjustment while playing. That means it will probably get worse before it ever gets better. I would prefer

students taking chances rather than taking a passive approach.

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Re:Fixing Pitch in Middle School Band

Posted by sjhendee - 2008/05/12 09:39

Duh,

Having great instrumentation ie: Tubas, Trombones, Bass Clarinet, Bari Sax etc. contributes greatly to good pitch. Often times especially in Middle School, bands can be too top heavy or too loaded with a particular instrument (alto sax). Those instruments that are overbalanced, (ones that are higher in pitch) can have an undue negative influence on pitch.

Advice: work on switching overbalanced instruments to some of the "color" instruments like oboe, bassoon, euphonium, tuba etc. You'll be happy you did, students get the excitement of playing on a unique instrument and your HS feeder will adore you. :silly:

Steve Hendee

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