

There is nothing wrong with playing out of tune — as long as no one has to hear it.

This comment was made in the last issue of the *Kjos Band News*. That article, the first in the two-part series, focused on the “principles” of playing in tune. This article will focus on the “process” of tuning the band and playing in tune.

Playing in tune for a band is often problematic, for it is not an isolated skill, but requires good tone production, good listening skills, knowing the instrument and its pitch tendencies, knowing how to make the necessary adjustments and knowing the effect of dynamics (volume) on intonation. Good intonation is an issue of judgment based on aural and musical perception.

Before focusing on the process of tuning the band, a few principles of good intonation need to be restated:

- The art of playing in tune requires good tone production and good listening. You can't tune a poor tone, either individual or ensemble.

- Tune only after the instruments and musicians are warmed up.

While it is the student's responsibility to play in tune, it is the director's task to teach the students how to play in tune. Students need to understand the concept of *intonation beats* and how to eliminate them. To that end, select two trombone players to assist in demonstrating this concept. Have one trombone player attempt to match the pitch of the other by moving the slide in or out until all intonation beats are eliminated. Repeat the demonstration and have the band members raise their hands to indicate when the intonation beats have been eliminated. When the intonation beats are eliminated, the two musicians are playing in tune. The use of trombones and trombone players allows the other band members to see and hear the effect of the adjustments. This is also a good way to demonstrate the effect of lengthening and shortening the instruments.

Once students understand this concept,

Published bi-annually by the
Neil A. Kjos Music Company
4380 Jusland Drive
San Diego, California 92117
(858) 270-9800
Fax: (858) 270-3507
email@kjos.com
www.kjos.com
© 2004 Neil A. Kjos Music Company

KJOS Neil A. Kjos Music Company • www.kjos.com

Tone production is produced through good posture and air support.

Good Listening requires mouths closed and ears open. Be constructive but critical of what you hear.

Intonation Beats are the waving vibrations we hear when two notes are not in tune

Tuning the student trio which means tuning to those on each side of you.

and when the instruments and musicians are warmed up, the band is ready to begin the tuning process.

It is recommended to tune the band both vertically and horizontally. To tune vertically, band members must understand if their instrument belongs to the Soprano, Alto, Tenor, or Bass group. See the chart below.

The Process of Tuning the Band

Vertical (Bottom to Top) Tuning

1. Provide the principal tuba player with an electronic tuner and ask him/her to slur up to a second line (bass clef) B^b playing the notes F-G-A-B^b. Sustain the B^b.

2. Instruct the rest of the band to sing the syllable "MO," matching the pitch of the tuba player. Have them sustain their singing until it is their turn to play their instrument.

3. Have the rest of the bass section tune to the tuba player eliminating all intonation beats. This is followed by the tenor, alto, and soprano sections. Give each section ample time to tune accurately.

Horizontal Tuning

1. Provide the principal tuba player with an electronic tuner and ask him/her to slur up to a second line (bass clef) B^b playing the notes F-G-A-B^b. Sustain the B^b.

2. Instruct the rest of the band to sing the syllable "MO," matching the pitch of the tuba player. Have them sustain their singing until it is their turn to play their instrument.

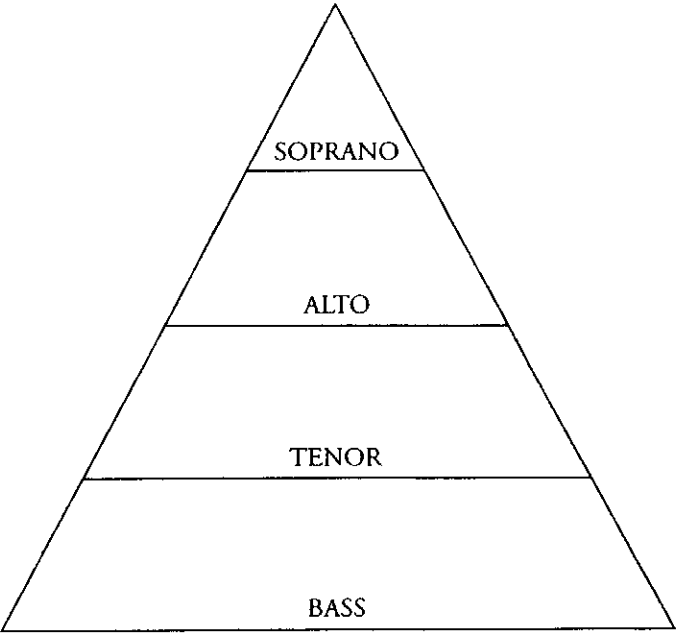
3. Have the principal players of each section tune to the tuba player eliminating all intonation beats. This is followed by the 2nd, 3rd, etc. chair player tuning to the tuba player.

4. Finally, have each band member *tune their trio* (the student and those on both sides) which eventually links the entire ensemble.

Using both the vertical and horizontal tuning process will assist the students to rely more on their ears than their eyes for good tuning. Electronic tuners may play an important role in assisting the tuning process but should never replace the student's ability to tune "by ear."

If both teachers and students are aware of the principles of playing in tune and apply the process of tuning the band, there will be a dramatic improvement in the band's intonation.

Bruce Pearson is an internationally-known author, composer, clinician, and conductor. He has taught at the elementary, junior high, high school, and college levels for over thirty years. In December of 1998, Bruce was awarded the prestigious Midwest Clinic Medal of Honor in recognition of his outstanding contribution to music education.

Soprano Voices			
<u>Woodwinds</u>	<u>Brass</u>	<u>Percussion</u>	
Piccolo	1 st Trumpet	Bells	
Flute		Xylophone	
Oboe		Snare Drum	
1 st Clarinet		Triangle	
		Cymbals	
Alto Voices			
<u>Woodwinds</u>	<u>Brass</u>	<u>Percussion</u>	
2 nd Clarinet	2 nd Trumpet	Marimba	
3 rd Clarinet	3 rd Trumpet	Chimes	
1 st Alto Saxophone		Wood Block	
		Tambourine	
Tenor Voices			
<u>Woodwinds</u>	<u>Brass</u>	<u>Percussion</u>	
Alto Clarinet	Horn	Tenor Drum	
2 nd Alto Saxophone	1 st Trombone	Tom-Tom	
Tenor Saxophone	2 nd Trombone		
Bass Voices			
<u>Woodwinds</u>	<u>Brass</u>	<u>Percussion</u>	
Bass Clarinet	Baritone	Timpani	
Bassoon	3 rd Trombone	Bass Drum	
Bari. Saxophone	Tuba		