

## Analysis on Problems in Rehearsal of Wind Bands and Reasonable Suggestions

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### Abstract

Wind ensemble, which plays an extremely important role in the field of music, can be called the indispensable and important pillar in the field of music. To finish wind ensemble, painstaking rehearsal of members of a whole wind band is inevitable. A successful wind band ensemble performance needs not only the basic playing skills and excellent music perception ability of all members including the conductor but also all the wind band members' good teamwork and perfect utilization of the team's advantages. In this paper, I put forward some reasonable suggestions on some problems in the rehearsal of wind band based on my practice and experience in the rehearsal of wind band, in the hope of effectively helping the development of China's wind bands.

**Key words:** Orchestra; Rehearsal problems; Rationalization proposals

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### INTRODUCTION

A wind band first originated from military music, which was used to send signals and enhance troop morale in military affairs at the earliest. With the continuous development and progress of the timbre and intonation of wind instruments, military music not only is used to send signals and enhance troop morale but also becomes wind

music, which is an important pillar in the field of modern music. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, China established its first orchestra, marking the important start of the development and progress of China's wind music art and also the important turning point that Chinese music field forwardly integrated with western music field. After this, China's wind band advanced and developed continuously. In recent years, there is great progress in both the technical level and professional skills of China's wind bands and many wind bands of China have occupied a space even in the world music field. The development of wind bands cannot be separated from the professional and scientific organization and rehearsal, so professional, creative and artistic rehearsal is very important for a whole wind band. The rehearsal of the wind band is very demanding for its manager, who should not only have extremely high musical accomplishment but also have the spirit of selfless contribution. However, there are still numerous problems in the rehearsal process of China's wind bands. This paper mainly discusses the problems caught in the rehearsal process of the wind band and gives reasonable and effective suggestions, in the hope of helping the development of wind bands of China.

### 1. INDIVIDUAL'S BASIC SKILLS

A wind band gives a performance in the form of a team. A problem caused by any individual in a performance will cause a problem in the performance of the whole wind band, so each individual in the wind band must control solid basic skills to achieve a perfect ensemble effect. As for the training of basic skills of a wind band, it is mainly required to emphasize the problems below:

#### 1.1 Breathing Training

Breathing is very important for the performance of wind band. In the breathing training, one should relax one's body and naturally exhale and inhale in a rhythmical way. If one

feels strained or blocked in breathing, one could lie down for training and slowly and steadily take breathing exercise according to the playing requirements. If a bandsman cannot timely eliminate the feeling of tension in breathing training, the bandsman may breathe with difficulty and thus affect the playing effect. There should be a short pause between exhaling and inhaling during breathing training. It is required to guarantee a flexible and fluent conversion between inhaling and exhaling. Besides, breathing training can be combined with the long sound because the playing of long sound can effectively consolidate a bandsman's breathing ability. However, as the playing of long sound needs strong techniques, it is very demanding for a bandsman's control over breathing muscle to obtain a satisfactory playing effect of long sound.

### 1.2 Fingering Training

A bandsman can give play to the function of a musical instrument only after he/she has the correct fingering ability. As the premise of playing, fingering is extremely important in the playing of a wind band. When participating in fingering training, one must ensure one's fingers to be soft and flexible, the whole fingering training process to be connected and powerful and the fingering movement of each finger to be completed perfectly under the conscious control of the bandsman. Besides, finger trembling and inflexibility in the fingering training process should be avoided. It is also required to attach importance to key touching, which is an important step in the fingering training process. Many bandsmen hold the musical instruments tightly to avoid air leakage because they are too nervous in the wind instrument playing process, resulting in excessively stiff fingers and inflexible key touching. Thus, it is required to emphasize the flexibility of fingers and muscle in the fingering training process, maximally simplify the fingering movements and completely prevent surplus movements from affecting the performance.

### 1.3 Tongue Training

In tongue training, one should not protrude the tongue too fast or too slowly but do it step by step. Fast and continuous tongue training can easily cause tongue muscle rigidity; as a result, the tongue muscle will become inflexible. However, excessively slow tongue training will affect the movement of lip muscle and thus affect the intonation and timbre of playing. During tongue training, a syllable should be divided into tones for tongue training. Besides, one should be the flexible and agile movements of tongue, close coordination among the tongue, breath and lips and avoid mutual obstruction during the tongue training. When one can easily finish the basic monophonic tongue training and ensure relaxation in tongue muscle, one can further conduct the continuous multitone tongue training and gradually increase the speed to the satisfactory state.

### 1.4 Mouth Shape Training

Mouth shape training mainly aims to control the stability of lips and the control ability of lip muscle. Generally, a bandsman only needs to slightly adjust the mouth shape when playing wind instrument, so the stability in lips must be guaranteed. During the mouth shape training, one can enhance the ability to control lip muscle through playing training but must guarantee that the mouth shape for each playing must be standard in the process of mouth shape training. After a period of mouth shape training, one can combine the playing of long sound with training.

### 1.5 Training of Playing Consciousness

It is very vital to train a bandsman's playing consciousness. If each bandsman can establish the playing consciousness, the performance of a whole wind band will be greatly improved. Thus, it is required to constantly shape a bandsman's playing consciousness during the basic skill training. Many bandsmen may get weary of studying the excessively monotonous and tedious training content, so the basic skill training can be divided into four stages and practice the long sound, scale, arpeggio, part of etudes and a whole track etc. at different stages. In this way, a bandsman can gradually form the playing consciousness and further improve the specialized skills in the training process. When all the bandsmen of a whole band have the playing consciousness and become mature, the music expressive force of the whole band will be naturally sublimated.

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## 2. REHEARSAL PREPARATION FOR ENSEMBLE

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Ensemble rehearsal is the key point for the rehearsal of a wind band. The playing of a wind band needs all its members' ensemble so the rehearsal preparation of each bandsman of a wind band before the ensemble is very critical. The rehearsal preparation for ensemble is to coordinate different musical instruments, part and sound effect and make a full and comprehensive preparation so that the ensemble of a whole wind band can be perfect and consistent and the musical performance effect of a wind band can be perfect. Each bandsman should clearly understand his/her position and function in the wind band playing and actively unify and balance the playing so that the playing of a whole wind band can be perfect. The following problems should be considered during the rehearsal preparation for ensemble.

### 2.1 Open Score Copying

Open score copying is that bandsmen separately copy their respective playing parts from the score according to their own musical instruments. Any clef, time signature, tone mark, paragraph mark and single tone etc. in a score must be copied. Any mistake during the open score copying is not allowed and the open score copying must be correct

and clear. Especially, it is required to guarantee correctly copying symbolic elements such as line, musical note and duration in the copying process. As for pauses in the open score, it is required to clearly indicate the number of bars for pause. If a bandsman's musical instrument still needs to pause in the next bar, the paragraph mark to be paused should also be clearly indicated and the number of bars should be recalculated. If an open score cannot be finished in one piece of score paper, stop copying in the place with a pause in playing and then continue to copying the open score on the next page; in this way, the playing cannot be affected by turning the score paper during playing. Whether an open score is correctly and reasonably copied directly relates to whether the ensemble rehearsal of a wind band is perfect, so each bandsman must carefully copy their open scores and any carelessness in copying should be prohibited.

### **2.2 Tone Tuning of Musical Instruments**

It is required to emphatically notice the tone tuning of musical instruments during the rehearsal preparation for ensemble. The size of articulatory configuration of a musical instrument determines pitch during the playing of wind instrument. The same type of musical instrument may vary in pitch. If the pitch of a musical instrument itself is inconsistent with the playing of a whole wind band, the whole wind band's playing will be affected. Therefore, accurate tone tuning for each musical instrument is needed before each ensemble rehearsal of a wind band so as to prevent any pitch problem in musical instruments from affecting the rehearsal of the whole wind band.

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## **3. ENSEMBLE REHEARSAL**

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Ensemble rehearsal is an extremely complicated rehearsal process and also a process to train the comprehensive quality of a whole wind band. In the process of ensemble training, it is required to not only train the long sound, rhythm change, breath unification, timbre and intonation of ensemble but also attach importance to the ensemble coordination of a whole wind band. Next, I will discuss the several problems needing attention in the ensemble training.

### **3.1 Long Sound Training**

In the initial period of long sound training, the rehearsal should be started from the relatively easy tone. In the rehearsal process of long sound, each bandsman should keep uniform breaths, correct pitch, steady sound and moderate strength during playing so as to avoid non-standard articulation or vibrato in the playing process of long sound. During the ensemble of a wind band, the conductor plays an extremely important role and each bandsman determines the time to start or terminate their playing according to the conductor's gestures. For this reason, each bandsman must pay attention to the

conductor and start or terminate their playing according to the conductor's instructions in the playing process of a wind band. A bandsman can practice the scale ascending and descending within an octave during the long sound training and then can participate in the strengthen training of long sound after laying a solid long sound foundation. As for the strength training of long sound, a bandsman can practice fortis according to the conductor's gestures. During soft playing, the bandsmen must effectively control the strength of long sound to avoid obvious pitch changes in the playing process. Besides, the strength training of long sound can also be combined with mouth shape training and breathing training. In addition, bandsmen should clearly understand the concepts of fortis and pianissimo in the long sound training.

### **3.2 Training of Rhythm Change**

Rhythm change is an indispensable part in the playing process of a wind band and requires bandsmen to have extremely high ability to control rhythm. During the ensemble rehearsal of a wind band, it is required to train bandsmen to perfectly control the rhythm changes and rhythm change points so that rhythms can be changed perfectly in the playing process. Besides, the triplet problem must be emphasized during ensemble rehearsal. In case of a triplet, the conductor only needs to correctly command the bandsmen so that bandsmen can gradually control the feeling of rhythm change in the rehearsal process and thus achieve the perfect and fluent playing.

### **3.3 Maintaining Breath Unification**

Breathing application is usually neglected by the manager in the ensemble rehearsal of a wind band. However, breathing application, which is the foundation for ensemble rehearsal of a wind band, should receive much attention. Each bandsman should scientifically use breaths during the ensemble rehearsal and guarantee uniform breaths in rhythm, strength, speed and other aspects. During the training of breath unification, the thoracoabdominal breathing training method is one of the effective methods. Besides, it is required to notice that different breathing ways are needed for phrases with different lengths, strengths and speeds in ensemble rehearsal. In order to achieve the breathing unification of rhythm rehearsal of a whole wind band, the conductor should correctly understand, deeply analyze and judge the score. During the ensemble rehearsal, the conductor must give correct guidance to each bandsman in breathing accordingly. In addition, a bandsman must guarantee sufficient breath during inhaling. Even though the air inhaled cannot be use up in finishing a phrase, a bandsman must guarantee sufficient air. Only bandsmen with adequate breaths can achieve a perfect ensemble performance.

### **3.4 Timbre Integration**

When a wind band is giving a performance, the degree of timbre integration determines the degree of perfection

of the whole performance. Thus, the bandsmen must attach importance to the timbre integration during ensemble rehearsal and guarantee the harmony and natural integration of timbres generated by all musical instruments of a wind band. Timbres can be gradually integrated and permeated into a wind band's playing and syllable training process. To perfectly integrate each timbre into the playing process, it is very demanding for bandsmen, which should not only hear the sounds of their own musical instruments but also try to coordinate with the sounds of other musical instruments. In this way, they can lay a good foundation for the perfect timbre integration during playing. The most proper voice register or part can be selected as the standards for timbre integration according to each track in ensemble rehearsal, and this can effectively improve the degree of timbre integration of the whole wind band.

### 3.5 Intonation Training

The performance of a wind band is a form of ensemble with various musical instruments. As it involves a great variety of musical instruments, it is easy to cause a difference in intonation. To solve this problem, the conductor usually tunes the sound before performance. However, to solve this problem thoroughly, it is required to train bandsmen's ability to perceive intonation; a bandsman should not only perceive the intonation of his/her own musical instrument but also perceive the intonations of other ones. Before tuning, a warm-up for all musical instruments of a band is needed so that bandsmen can have a general knowledge of the intonation of the whole band; thus, the intonation of the whole band can be improved effectively.

### 3.6 Ensemble Coordination

Ensemble coordination is the factor with the greatest impact on the performance of a whole wind band. Imperfect coordination among bandsmen of a whole wind band will lead to a wind band's failure to finish a performance. During the rehearsal of a new track, bandsmen should get familiar with and learn the track and try to synchronously learn the rhythm of the track according to the metronome. When each bandsman masterly learns a score, the ensemble rehearsal can be carried out. In an ensemble rehearsal, a bandsman should not only learn the timbre and intonation of his/her musical instrument but also learn the timbres and intonations of

other musical instruments. Besides, bandsmen should try to achieve their mutual coordination and mutual integration in musical instruments, and try to prevent the situation that a musical instrument or a bandsman cannot get integrated into the performance to thus cause incongruity. Such good teamwork cannot be realized overnight. In order to achieve the perfect coordination among musical instruments in the ensemble process by a wind band, the whole band must spend much time and energy in continuously running-in. Thus, the good teamwork can be gradually formed in the ensemble process. Besides, a wind band conductor should also perfectly control the articulation time and playing methods in the commanding process. After all of them are done, good teamwork by a wind band in ensemble can be achieved and a really perfect wind instrument performance can be completed.

The ensemble of a wind band is a musical performance with an extremely high artistic appreciation and aesthetic value. China's wind band performance has been advancing and developing since China's first wind band was founded in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. A wind band is a musical band which gives performances through integration of various wind instruments. To achieve a perfect ensemble by a wind band, not only each bandsman must be very excellent in both playing skills and professional quality but also the whole band must be perfect in intonation and timbre coordination etc. Therefore, the bandsmen and conductor of a whole wind band must be trained for a long time to attain such good teamwork.

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