

Programming for a Small Band

(Or, I have no horns again this year. Now what?)

A little about me.....

- BA in Music - CSU Stanislaus
- MM in Instrumental Conducting - CSU Long Beach
- Currently teaching in Patterson Joint Unified School District
 - High School Band, Guitar, and Piano
 - Elementary Band, Strings, and General Music
- 17 years teaching, 11 at current district
- Brass player - Tuba
- Happily married with 2 awesome kids :)



A little about my program.....

- Concert Band
- Marching Band
 - Football Games
 - Parade Competitions
- String Orchestra
- Choir
- Percussion Ensemble
- Colorguard
- Piano
- Guitar



General Philosophy

- Know your student's strengths and weaknesses and program accordingly
- Don't be afraid to challenge them, but have realistic expectations
- Meet them where they are and then build
- A small band is no different than a big one, you just have less room to hide errors
- Selecting quality literature will give them a vehicle to learn the skills and concepts they need to excel as musicians
- Don't be afraid to pick 'fun' music to play. Aren't we supposed to be enjoying making music?



How small is small?

- What exactly constitutes a “small” band?
 - For some, 40 might be small
 - What if you have 30?
 - Or 20?
 - Or even less than that?
- How small is “too small”?
 - Is there such a thing?



My first concert at Patterson HS - Dec. 2007

3 Flutes

4 Clarinets

1 Bass Clarinet

1 Bassoon

3 Alto Saxes

1 Tenor Sax

1 Baritone Sax

4 Trumpets

1 Trombone

1 Baritone

3 Percussion

23 musicians



My last concert at Patterson HS - Dec. 2017

7 Flutes

7 Clarinets

1 Bass Clarinet

1 Bassoon

5 Alto Saxes

43 musicians

2 Tenor Saxes

1 Baritone Sax

6 Trumpets

3 Trombones

2 Baritones

1 Tuba

7 Percussion



Challenges of a small ensemble

- Incomplete Instrumentation
 - Lack of low brass, horns, double reeds
- Lack of Private Instruction
 - Rural areas
 - No easy access to private instructors
- High Exposure to Error
 - Nowhere to hide mistakes or developing musicians



Overcoming the challenges

- Literature Selection
 - The **MOST IMPORTANT** thing we do!!!!
 - This is our curriculum. The literature we select for performance is the vehicle we use to teach our students the skills and concepts they need as developing musicians
- Set them up for success
 - Play to your strengths and disguise your weaknesses
 - If you have two trumpets, don't program the Vienna Philharmonic Fanfare



Overcoming the Challenges con't

- Some options:
 - Flex Band Arrangements
 - Transcriptions
 - Works with limited instrumentation
 - Adjusting existing works to meet your needs



Flex Band Arrangements from Hal Leonard

- 5 parts, plus percussion
- You can assign instruments to different parts based upon your need
- Includes string parts if you want to add them
- Examples
 - Fanfare for the Third Planet by Richard Saucedo
 - Star Wars: The Force Awakens arr. by Johnnie Vinson
 - Kentucky 1800 arr. by Robert Longfield
 - The Liberty Bell by arr. by Jay Bocook
 - A Charlie Brown Christmas arr. by Paul Murtha



Build-A-Band from C.L. Barnhouse

- Similar to Flex Band
 - 5 parts plus percussion
 - Parts are assigned at your discretion based on instrumentation
 - Includes string parts
 - Examples
 - By Dawn's Early Light by David Shaffer
 - American Patrol by F.W. Meachum, arr. by Ed Hucceby
 - The Thunderer, arr. by Scott Stanton



Bravo Music - <http://bravomusicinc.com/>

- This is a publisher based in Japan. They offer a variety of publications from Japanese composers
 - Flexible Series
 - Same concept as Flex Band and Build-A-Band
 - Dual Grade Series
 - Each part has an advanced and beginning part. This way, you can have less experienced players and more experienced players together and each has an appropriate part
 - They also publish instructional materials and method books



Arrangements/Transcriptions

- Robert Longfield
 - Editions with condensed instrumentation
 - These are not truly “arrangements”. I would call them “reorchestrated” to accommodate modern wind band instrumentation
 - Look for lots of cross-cueing on solos
 - Holst Suites 1 and 2
 - El Camino Real by Alfred Reed
 - Five Little Dances by Paul Creston
 - Allegretto from Symphony No. 7 by Beethoven
 - Appalachian Spring by Copland

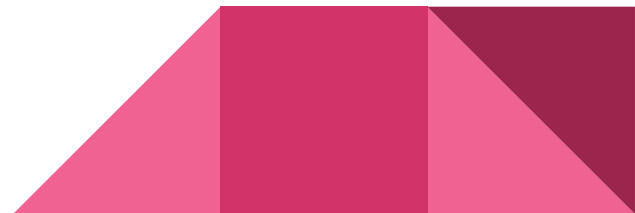


Composers that write for reduced instrumentation

- Richard Saucedo
- Todd Stalter
- Brian Balmages
- Gary Gilroy

This link is for a spreadsheet I have created with compositions that are well suited to smaller groups. It is by no means comprehensive, and I invite everyone to add to it.

- <https://goo.gl/APMWaH>



What if my band is REALLY small?

Chamber music

- Compatible Duets for Winds from Carl Fischer (E-ME)
- Compatible Duets for Winds Vol. 2 from Carl Fischer (M)
- Compatible Trios for Winds from Carl Fischer (ME)
- Compatible Quartets for Winds from Carl Fischer (E-ME)
- Quartets for All from Alfred (E-ME)

Jazz Combos

- If the instrumentation is suitable

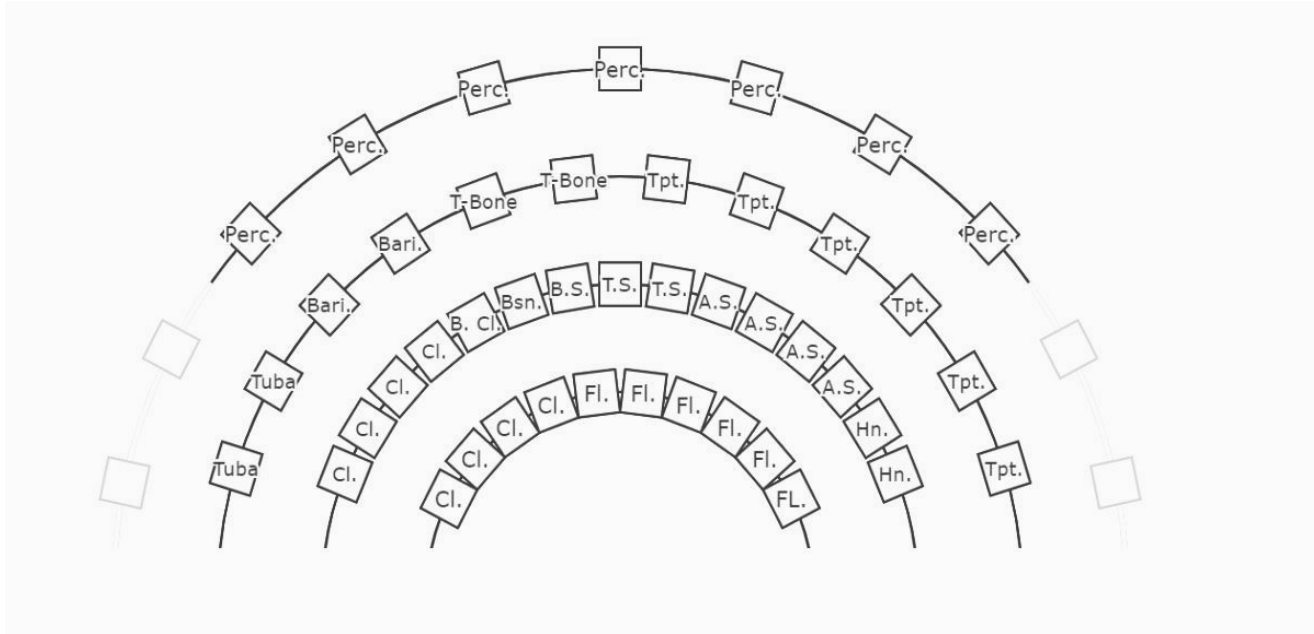


Seating Arrangements

- How you seat your group can have a dramatic impact on sound and listening
- I like to seat section leaders in the center of the row so that all the lead players form a spine down the center of the ensemble
- There is no “RIGHT” way to seat your band. Don't afraid to experiment with different arrangements to find the sound you like best.
- Very useful seating chart generator: <https://www.bgreco.net/band>



My Current Seating Chart



Tips and Tricks

- Eb Transposition
 - Eb instruments can read bass clef parts
 - Pretend the part is in treble clef and add three sharps to the key signature
 - This will allow alto saxes to cover trombone or bassoon parts
 - Be careful with accidentals
- Rewriting parts to cover missing instrumentation
- Talk to students about learning new instruments to improve flexibility
- Band Directors group on Facebook
 - Wonderful for professional development and getting questions answered
 - Search for 'Band Directors' and ask to join. You have to do a short questionnaire and then you will be approved



Building the program long term

- Build from the bottom up
 - A strong elementary program creates a strong middle school program which builds a strong high school program
 - Getting administration (site and district) on board is crucial for scheduling and funding purposes
 - Be patient. It will take time (several years) for changes to the program to bear fruit



Building the program long term con't

- Get current students to buy into what you are doing
 - Performances at school/community events
 - Give them the opportunity to perform WELL. Success breeds more success.
 - Travelling to events/competitions
 - Esprit de corps
 - Scholarship opportunities/College applications
- Get future students excited about the program
 - Recruiting visits to feeder schools
 - Joint concerts



Additional Resources

- <https://smallbandlit.wikispaces.com>
- <http://bravomusicinc.com>
- <http://www.bandexpansion.com>
- <http://drtw.net/wsp/smallbands.html>
- <http://www.osfabb.com>



Link to this presentation

- <https://goo.gl/xdyBCK>
- sjepson@patterson.k12.ca.us

