

Daily Rehearsal Plan: High School Concert Band

Repertoire: *Military Escort March* (Bennett/Fillmore) & *Reckoning* (Markowski)

Duration: 50 Minutes

Block 1: Warm-up, Fundamentals & Tuning (10–12 Minutes)

1. Dynamic Long Tones (March Phrasing)

- **Activity:** Circle of 4ths (whole notes).
- **Focus:** Apply the phrasing concepts from *Military Escort*.
- **Execution:** 4 counts of crescendo (p to f), followed by 4 counts of decrescendo (f to p). The goal is to keep the pitch center stable and the tone supported as the volume changes, preparing the ensemble for the dynamic swells in the march's trio section.

2. Rhythmic Scales (Markowski Transfer)

- **Activity:** Circle of 4ths major scale played to a driving rhythmic ostinato.
- **Focus:** Front-of-note clarity and rhythmic stability.
- **Execution:** Take the aggressive, syncopated 8th/16th note pattern from the trombones in *Reckoning* and apply it to each scale degree. Have the low brass play the pattern on the root while the woodwinds move up the scale. Focus on heavy but resonant articulation.

3. Ed Lisk Chord Sequence (I - V - I)

- **Activity:** Balance and blend using the Lisk chord building technique.
- **Execution:** Build a Concert Bb Major chord (I) from the bottom up (Tuba root, Euph/Horn 5th, Trombones/Saxes 3rd, upper woodwinds resting on the octave). Shift the progression to the F Dominant chord (V), then resolve back to the Bb Major chord (I).
- **Focus:** Listen down to the tubas to build the balance pyramid. Have the students identify whose pitch dictates the major/minor tonality (the 3rd) and adjust intonation before resolving.

4. Tuning

- **Procedure:** Standard Concert F and Concert Bb around the room.
- **Execution:** Tuba sounds the drone. Brass matches down to the low brass; woodwinds match to the principal clarinet and oboe. Make physical slide/barrel adjustments as needed.

Block 2: Repertoire Rehearsal (35–40 Minutes)

Part A: *Military Escort* (15–18 Minutes)

- **Focus:** March style, spacing, and dynamic contrast.
- **Isolate the Off-Beats:** Start with just the French horns and alto saxophones. Ensure the "tahs" are light, lifted, and not rushing the downbeat. Add the low brass downbeats to lock in the groove.
- **First Strain:** Rehearse for strict articulation. Ensure the counter-melody (euphoniums/tenor saxes) is balanced against the trumpets.
- **The Trio:** Apply the dynamic control practiced during the long tone warm-up. Bring the ensemble down to a true *piano* so the woodwind obligato and trills speak clearly without having to overblow. Run the breakout strain and focus on the accented stinger notes.

Part B: *Reckoning* (15–18 Minutes)

- **Focus:** Rhythmic alignment, aggressive articulation, and mixed meter transitions.
- **Low Brass/Trombone Ostinato:** Jump straight to the section where the trombone pattern from the warm-up appears. Run it slowly to ensure they are playing with a dark, focused sound rather than just blasting the rhythm.
- **Woodwind Layering:** Add the woodwind runs and hits on top of the brass engine. Check the vertical alignment, if the brass rush, the woodwinds will sound muddy.
- **Transition Work:** Isolate the trickiest meter changes or heavily syncopated transitions (e.g., moving from the 4/4 driving sections into any asymmetrical measures). Count-sing the transitions if the ensemble is tearing apart.
- **Run a Macro-Section:** Put the rehearsed chunks back into context. Run a large chunk of the piece to build physical endurance and let the students feel the musical flow before putting the horns away.

Block 3: Dismissal (1-2 Minutes)

- **Wrap-up:** Quick announcements, reminders for sectionals, and pack up.

Daily Rehearsal Plan: Middle School Mixed Choir

Repertoire: *Grow Little Tree* (Andrea Ramsey) & Solfege Skill-Building **Duration:** 45 Minutes

Block 1: Vocalization & Choral Tone (10–12 Minutes)

1. Physical Activation & Vocalizations

- **Activity:** Body stretches and unpitched vocal exploration.
- **Execution:** Start with neck, shoulder, and jaw releases. Move into lip trills, sirens, and "ghost noises" (high-to-low sighs) to safely engage the vocal mechanism and get the breath moving before asking for specific pitches. Middle schoolers' voices are changing; this safely warms up the upper and lower registers without tension.

2. Pitch Centering & Vowel Shapes

- **Activity:** 5-note descending scales (Sol-Fa-Mi-Re-Do).
- **Focus:** Unifying the section tone and establishing tall, resonant vowels.
- **Execution:** Sing on "Mah-Meh-Mee-Moh-Moo." Watch the physical mouth shapes, ensure students are dropping the jaw and keeping the sound forward rather than spreading the vowels wide. Stop and correct spread sounds immediately.

3. Chromatic Flexibility

- **Activity:** Ascending and descending chromatic warm-ups.
- **Execution:** Use a pattern like *Do-Di-Re-Ri-Mi / Mi-Me-Re-Ra-Do*. Move the pattern up and down by half-steps.
- **Focus:** Training the ear and vocal cords to navigate half-steps cleanly without sliding or "scooping" into the pitches. Reinforces good choral intonation tendencies (keeping ascending half-steps tight and descending half-steps wide).

Block 2: Musicianship & Literacy (12–15 Minutes)

1. Solfege Call & Response

- **Activity:** Echo singing with Curwen hand signs.
- **Execution:** Establish the key on the piano. The director sings a 3-to-4 note solfege pattern with hand signs (e.g., *Do-Re-Mi-Do*, *Do-Mi-Sol-Mi*). The students immediately echo it back in time.

- **Focus:** Ear training and kinesthetic connection to pitch. Start with stepwise motion and gradually introduce the specific intervals (leaps) they will see in the written exercise and the repertoire.

2. Practical Solfege Writing & Singing

- **Activity:** Written literacy transitioning to performance.
- **Execution:** Have a 4-to-8 measure melody written on the board (or distributed on whiteboards/handouts). The melody should be rhythmically accessible but utilize the intervals practiced in the call-and-response.
- **Step-by-Step:**
 1. Give students 2 minutes to physically write the solfege syllables under the notes.
 2. Checks work around the room.
 3. The choir chants the solfege syllables in rhythm without pitch.
 4. Establish the starting pitch and sing the exercise on solfege with hand signs.

Block 3: Repertoire Application (15–18 Minutes)

Part A: Text and Tone in *Grow Little Tree*

- **Focus:** Applying the tall vowels from the warm-up to the text.
- **Execution:** Have the choir speak the lyrics of a targeted section in rhythm. Addressing the word stress, middle schoolers often over-accentuate the ends of phrases. Ensure words like "tree" and "grow" are maintaining the tall 'ee' and 'oh' vowel shapes established in Block 1.

Part B: Melodic Rehearsal & Transfer

- **Focus:** Pitch accuracy and phrasing.
- **Execution:** If there is a tricky leap or harmonic shift in the piece, have the students sing that specific phrase on solfege first. Once the intonation locks in, immediately transfer it back to the lyrics.
- **Ensemble Work:** Work on the unison sections of the piece. Unison singing exposes every intonation and vowel inconsistency. Challenge the students to listen across the room and blend their sound into one single voice before splitting into parts. Work on shaping the dynamics so the musical line physically "grows" with the text.

Block 4: Dismissal (1-2 Minutes)

- **Wrap-up:** Collect whiteboards/pencils, give positive reinforcement on the solfege reading, and dismiss.