

Band Tools

by M. Max McKee

For over 20 years, graduates of the American Band College program have talked about the ways in which ABC helped them fill their personal teaching toolboxes. This comes about because ABC features over 20 of the world's finest clinicians, teachers, conductors, composers and soloists every summer here in Ashland, Oregon.

Candidate study in Ashland from June 19 through July 5 is analogous to a language immersion course. In less than three weeks, masters candidates attend more than 70 sessions in which 24 of the world's top clinicians, soloists and conductors present multiple clinics on every instrument as well as extensive coverage of rehearsal techniques from every angle. When you couple that with sightreading and performing nearly 200 band compositions in public settings under the grand masters while over 150 candidates appear on the podium for video assessment by those same grand master teachers, the results are truly amazing.

Extensive distance learning to create high-end projects in the month that follows provides a method of synthesizing many aspects of the immersion course. But that's just the beginning.

Over the last 4 years our virtual toolbox has filled up with real-world teaching devices that directors around the world can use right where they live. Note what we currently have available that you can use:

1. Embou-Sure
2. Warmups That Work
3. Help Sheets
4. Bandworld Online
5. Quickly, The Drum Assigner
6. Cadenze! Band Organizer
7. Auditions Made Easy
8. Ultimate Pursuit
9. The Partial Worker
10. The Rehearsal Tech Tool

The first three are paper-based tools. **Embou-sure** is our diagnostics tool to analyze embouchure problems on each

of the instruments. It incorporates a simple set of guidelines, a diagnostic chart and a CD with dozens of bad examples as a means of learning all embouchure problems on each instrument through recognition of bad and good sounds. It's been around since the mid-80's and thousands of directors use it.

Warmups That Work was published in the late 90s and contains a compilation of dozens of chorales and technique-based pages written especially for problem solving. Many of the chorales are performance-quality compositions and our "Chorale on a Scale" appears in all 12 keys to help students cross-simulate from one key center to another. At only \$5 per book, cost is low.

Our **Help Sheets** set was created to provide special help for each section of the band on an individual basis. Common pitch tendency problems to horn tuning to alternate fingerings are covered on single sheets that can be duplicated as needed.

Since 1985 **Bandworld Magazine** has provided virtually thousands of useful teaching aids. In print from 1985-2004, we still offer back issue sets of the 94 in-print magazines. Now, every issue (nearly 30 since 2004) and its complete content remains forever online. You can access thousands of pages of articles on dozens of band-related subjects, many with sound files and full band arrangements. There are also nearly 1000 band recordings of BW Top 100 choices dating to 2002 as well as 10 hours of video. It's all at www.bandworld.org. Only \$4.99 a year on sale!

The remaining 6 tools are computer-based and extremely powerful. **Quickly, The Drum Assigner** is a free computer program that allows you to assign percussion parts for band pieces while developing pride in that section. Separately, we offer a database of 500 well-known band compositions for which all percussion section usage has been analyzed.

Cadenze! Band Organizer is one of our latest tools that allows directors to track and manage every aspect of student info, fund raising, even your band library.

It comes with a free database of 37,000 titles to which you simply add your own library reference number!

Auditions Made Easy is being used by state organizations and regional festivals nationwide. It incorporates an on-line method to adjudicate audition files via approved judges anywhere in the world.

Ultimate Pursuit is the central computer-based learning environment that all ABC masters candidates use to learn fingerings, pitch problems, band literature (audio), related music theory and 25 other areas, all with extensive feedback, self-testing, etc. Now, in the coming months we are offering two new tools in UP about we think everyone will be excited: **The Partial Worker** and **The Rehearsal Tech Tool**. The ability to create 4-part chords using real instrument sounds with real-world pitch problems and to instantly try solutions with immediate feedback promise a whole new way to make big mistakes before trying it on students in a band situation!

All of this is or soon will be available to you. Use this publication to interface with us at <http://www.bandworld.org>



M. Max McKee

Max is Executive Director of The American Band College masters degree program of Sam Houston State University, in which over 200 candidates from over 40 states and 4 foreign countries are enrolled. He was Director of Bands at Southern Oregon University from 1967 to 1994. Max received the Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic's Music Industry Award, the A.A. Harding Award by the ASBDA and the Sousa Foundation's Medal of Honor.