

Applying rhythm teaching methods in an instrumental ensemble

by

Michael Lance Quilling

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A Report

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Major Professor  
Dr. Frederick Burrack

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## **Abstract**

Finding a systematic process for teaching rhythms in the instrumental setting presents a set of challenges. Numerous inhibitors such as time constraints, student engagement and motivation, and various degrees of proficiency amongst students all play a part in the overall success toward rhythmic competency. The video presentation for this Master of Music report provides a teaching demonstration utilizing techniques acquired from my studies as Kansas State University. Using rhythm readiness sheets modeled by Dr. Jay Gilbert and specific rehearsal techniques taught by Dr. Frank Tracz, this presentation exhibits a process for teaching rhythms that increases retention of rhythmic patterns for my students enabling engagement of the entire class in the learning process. Thoroughly explained on the videos is the lesson plan, followed by an example of the routine that was repeated daily in the twelve-minute warm-up portion of the rehearsal. The clip used to demonstrate the routine was recorded after three weeks of rehearsal with students being asked to reflect on their progress. A noticeable improvement in rhythmic performance was observed when applied to a related piece. The strategy revealed several hidden learning outcomes, such as improved independence in performance, utilization of listening skills to distinguish how various patterns fit within an established pulse, increased student motivation, and the teacher's guidance toward positive rehearsals with attainable goals. The result was a higher level of ensemble performance showcasing the growth of the ensemble's overall musicianship. The rhythm readiness sheet by Dr. Jay Gilbert is not copyrighted or published, however expressed written consent was granted by Dr. Gilbert and can be found in Appendix A.

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## **Explanation of the Teaching Demonstration**

The teaching demonstration video highlights a systematic process of teaching rhythms in various meters through the utilization of rhythm readiness sheets. This technique of teaching rhythms acquired from Dr. Jay Gilbert, begins with establishing a consistent pulse. Once a steady pulse has been achieved, the students move on to the next four measure rhythmic patterns that contains increasingly complex rhythmic excerpts. The strategy of using this rhythm sheet technique is incorporating specific rhythms that may become problematic extracted from studied piece. This process allows the students to practice these extracted rhythms together as a class and enables transfer of rhythmic knowledge and acquired skills gained directly into the music. These sheets have proven to be effective with reinforcing rhythms for my students, as well as in saving valuable rehearsal time.

To demonstrate the process for incorporating the rhythm readiness sheets, high school students from different grades and ability levels were given the sheet and then taught each line. In the video, I present the process of introducing the rhythm sheet to the class and show, step by step, how to navigate through the various rhythmic patterns. Once the students' levels of comprehension were apparent, the music was handed out and the sheet was eventually incorporated into the warmup portion of the rehearsals. After three weeks, the students were recorded playing the multi meter piece with various complex rhythms. It is easy to hear in the video that the students have a solid grasp of the various meters, and because of the time saved using the rhythm sheets, the students were able to focus on other musical concepts such as phrasing and musicality. A copy of the rhythm sheet can be found in the Appendix B section.

## **Appendix A- Rhythm Readiness Sheet Consent**

Consent for use (via email)

On Fri, Sep 1, 2017 at 5:50 PM, Lance Quilling <lquilling@usd434.us> wrote:

Hello Dr. Gilbert,

I'm seeking permission to include the rhythm readiness sheet that you introduced to our Advanced Rehearsal Techniques class at K State. I implemented this concept in my own band and chose to feature it in the demonstration of teaching presentation that I completed for my master's degree. I have referenced you in the presentation video and with your permission would like to publish the presentation for others to view on the KREX site. I have created a few of my own sheets based on your concepts and they have proven to be extremely beneficial.

Thank you,

(Reply from jay.gilbert@doane.edu)

Hi Lance,

I give you permission to use the rhythm Readiness Sheet as part of your project for the Masters of Music degree graduate report.

Best Wishes,

Jay Gilbert

# Appendix B- Rhythm Readiness Sheet

Argentum Sheet

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

7 1  
8

1 2 1 2 3

2

1 2 1 2 1 2 3 1 2 1 2 1 2 3

3

1 2 1 2 1 2 3 1 2 1 2 1 2 3

4

1 2 1 2 1 2 3 1 2 1 2 1 2 3

5

1 2 1 2 1 2 3 1 2 1 2 1 2 3

6

1 2 1 2 1 2 3

7

1 2 1 2 1 2 3 1 2 1 2 1 2 3

8

1 2 1 2 1 2 3