

# Expressway to Score Knowledge

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For the Busy Director

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## INTRODUCTION

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### **Score Study in the Real World**

- How do you approach a new score?
- How do you "learn" the music?
- Do you have a process?
- How much time do you study before the first rehearsal?
- Does it depend on the piece?
- What gets in the way of thorough score study?

### **Benefits of Thorough Score Study**

- Communicate your concept of the piece
- Get your eyes out of the score
- Open your ears
- You are simply better equipped to respond to the sounds you hear

## PROCESS

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### **Determine When to Study**

- Find the best time for you to study
- Summer is ideal, but how do you know if your kids will be able to play the piece?
- The key is to have some time to really focus, and a process to make the best use of that time. Schedule it, if necessary.

### **Tools**

- Erasable Colored Pencils (Red, Green, Blue, Orange)
- #2 Pencils (mechanical pencils break too easily)
- Electric Pencil Sharpener
- "Magic Rub" Eraser
- Post-it Notes (Lots of Post-it Notes)
- Yellow Pad/Notebook
- Pocket Music Dictionary (Or, I guess, Google on your phone/tablet)
- Metronome

### Step 1 – Examine the Preface (see slide)

- Program Notes
- Biographies
- Instrumentation (Alto Clarinet, Soprano Sax, Trumpet/Cornet splits, etc.)
- Special Considerations (Such as Stage Set up, Percussion Notation, etc.)

### Step 2 – Examine the First Page of Music (see slide)

- Print Size (Can you read the music at arm's length?)
- Score Layout (Anything unusual?)
- Transposed or in Concert Pitch?
- For many pieces, the layout of the percussion parts will be a major consideration

### Step 3 – Number EVERY Measure

- Along the bottom, in pencil (see slide)
- Start over for each movement, as applicable
- Make sure students have measure numbers in their parts
- Rehearsing without measure numbers is very inefficient

### Step 4 – Peruse

- Flip through the score looking for form and other big-picture items
- Place Post-it notes at all structural points (double bars, repeats, fermatas, significant meter or tempo changes, key changes, G.P., etc.)

### Step 5 – “Think” Through the Piece

- How long can you go before listening to a recording?
  - *Recordings are very useful resources, but not a substitute for true study*
- Try “thinking” through the music (audiation, “mind's ear”, internalization)
  - Start at the beginning, set a reasonable reading tempo, and go (don't stop)
  - Use your musical skills to develop a basic aural concept of the music
  - Every piece is different, so this process is adaptable
  - Challenge yourself to take in more music (like we teach our students to take in more air). Keep your eyes scanning the page.
  - Absorb what you can about rhythm, melody, texture, dynamics, contrasts, direction of line, overall shape
  - Experience and practice will improve this skill
  - If you have piano skills, use the piano on subsequent readings

### Step 6 – “Chords of Truth”

- Now that you have identified structural divisions in the piece and developed an aural concept of the music, conduct some targeted analysis
  - Analyze the chords and progressions at each structural point (where you placed your Post-it Notes)

- Spell out the chords vertically, in pencil, under the lowest voice of each chord (see slide)
- Draw arrows in the music indicating pitch adjustments that players will need to make (see slide)
  - Major Triad: 5<sup>th</sup> up 2 cents, 3<sup>rd</sup> down 14 cents
  - Minor Triad: 5<sup>th</sup> up 2 cents, 3<sup>rd</sup> up 16 cents
  - Dominant Seventh Chord: add the 7<sup>th</sup>, down 31 cents!

### **Step 7 – Tension and Repose**

- Tension: Music increasing desire for resolution (harmonic, melodic, rhythmic...)
- Repose: State of rest, resolution (compelling music explores this relationship)
  - Take another trip through the score, placing tabs above what appear to be the “high” and “low” points
  - These will become coordinates for a line diagram reflecting tension and repose
  - After several sweeps through the score, you will accumulate a better sense of the relative highs and lows

### **OUTLINE**

aka *Synthesis Analysis* (see slide)

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### **Paper Size & Multi Movement Works**

- Letter Size for shorter, legal size for longer
- Separate page for each movement
- Larger paper allows more space for detail, a more nuanced line diagram
- 11 X 17 might work for oversized scores (the idea is that you keep this outline in the score for “next time”)

### **Determine the Hierarchy (see slide)**

- This is a suggested template based on a typical concert band piece
- This will vary, depending on the director, the piece, the student
- A Bach transcription may require harmony to be placed at the top
- A rhythmically complex opener may require rhythm to be placed higher

### **The Structural Timeline**

- Based on the tabs you placed in the score, draw corresponding vertical lines on the outline template (see slide)

### **Chart Tension and Repose**

- Lightly, in pencil, add coordinates to your timeline based on the “high” and “low” points you determined earlier. This will take several sweeps, depending on the complexity of the piece (see slide)

### **Complete the Outline (see slide)**

- Follow the hierarchy: big picture to small detail, then add rehearsal notes
- You may find certain elements easier to complete, so follow your instincts
- Now that you have a better concept of the music, your focus should narrow to specific details (such as rhythmic cells, articulations, solos, etc.)

### **Fully Marked Score (see slide)**

- Meter/Structural markers in blue
- Things I NEED to show in red (cues, breaths, new tempo)
- Tension and Repose in pencil at the top
- Analysis and tuning adjustments in pencil (at the source)
- Page numbers along the bottom in pencil
- Rehearsal issues on a Post-it note (and/or separate yellow pad)

## **APPLICATIONS**

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### **Large Ensemble Rehearsal**

- Thorough score markings allow you to respond more quickly, anticipate issues, and conduct more musically
- Identified and labeled problem areas
- Outline not only organizes the piece, but serves as a quick-reference sheet for rehearsal and lesson planning
- Outline can be stored with the score and used in future years (saving time later)
- Have the students complete an outline for their part, or based on what they hear in the full ensemble, or after listening to a recording

### **Solo and Ensemble Music**

- Adapt the outline to serve a solo or chamber piece (elements/hierarchy may change)
- More attention can be placed on melody, phrasing, specific technical and intonation challenges for that student
- Encourages students to think beyond notes and rhythms, to create a well-conceived, thoughtful interpretation the entire piece

### **Music Theory**

- Great tool for teaching form, key relationships, texture and direction of line
- Studying a piece they are playing in band makes it more relevant, more "real"
- Student may begin to think more like composers, conductors, theorists
- As an assignment, ask the students to construct an outline of their favorite pop song, jazz tune or march

*References, templates, full PowerPoint and follow up analyses available at [www.tamukbands.com](http://www.tamukbands.com)*

American Riversongs (1988)

PERRE LAPLANTE (B. 1943)

	Title (Date)				Movement				Composer (Dates)			
	0	12	20	72	108	120	128	165	213	249	G.P.	
Form	A				B				C (A?)			
Meter	6/8 →				3/4 4/4 3/4 4/4 4/4				2/4			
Key	B <sup>b</sup> M				E <sup>b</sup> M				F <sup>b</sup> M			
Harmony	Mainly Dominant/some color											
Rhythm	JJJJ				F F F L L L L				F F F F			
Style	Light/Dance-like 6/8				Lyrical, connected				Crisp, playful			
Texture	Thick, but transparent				Melody/Leads/Accomp Solo / section solo				Starts thin, gradually thickens to the end			
Rehearsal Notes	Est. style and 6 feel, balance + directions phrases				Air, long line + phrasing. Tuning				Crisp articulation, maintain as texture thickens			
									playful quality *Lag at 181			

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