

# Tune Selection, Medley Construction, Band Practice Strategies

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# Tune Selection

- Important Point
  - Playing compositions within the ability range of the band
    - Simple tunes played well are more often more musically satisfying than difficult tunes played not so well
- Well considered arrangements of key-changes, mood swings, tempo changes, breaks, time signature changes
  - Must have initial impact, variations, tasteful use of slow passages and an exciting finish
  - Tasteful use of harmony
- Allowance for personal taste
  - No matter what you do, you cannot please everyone
- Try and use some known tunes
  - Too much new material will be lost on the audience

# Tune Selection

- Tune Types available
  - Marches
  - Hornpipes – pointed and round
  - Strathspeys
  - Reels – pointed and round
  - Airs
  - Jigs
  - Waltzes
  - Asymmetric Time Signatures (not recommended to lower grade bands for competition medlies)

# Tune Selection

- Three things to focus on
  - Opener
  - Building up to a slow air for mood change
  - Then building up to an exciting finish
- Opener Choice
  - March
  - Hornpipe – pointed or round
- Must have musical impact
  - Important to highlight the bands sound
    - Feeds back to the ability range, if everyone is comfortable with the standard of the tune then the sound and expression will be optimised
    - Sound always likely to be better at the beginning
    - Consider harmony but not always necessary
      - Depends on the rest of the medley

# Tune Selection

- Slow Air Choice
  - Must have harmony
  - Consider weighting of harmony and or counterpoint
    - Don't overpower the melody (same applies to all harmony)
- Medley Ending Choice
  - Must be musically exciting
  - Must be melodic
  - Some form of harmony advantageous
  - Consider an ending phrase
- Intermediary Stages
  - Once you have decided on the Opener/Air/Closer start thinking about the intermediary stages
  - Consider breaks and ending

# Medley Construction

- Once you have the opener/closer/air
  - Can decide on what comes after each tune
  - If you are finishing on a reel then it will more than likely be preceded by a strathspey
  - If you are finishing on a jig, then the strathspeys should follow the opener, followed by reels
- Strathspeys
  - Consider key changes
    - Identify key
  - If opener and 1<sup>st</sup> strathspey are in the same key then change key for 2<sup>nd</sup> strathspey

# Medley Construction

- Reels
  - If opener is round then consider pointed reels
    - Makes for good variation
- Jigs
  - Consider key changes between jigs
    - Identify key
  - If opener and 1<sup>st</sup> jig are in same key then consider changing for 2<sup>nd</sup> jig
    - Makes for good variation
- After Slow Air
  - Will either be strathspeys, hornpipe (pointed or round), or jigs

# Medley Construction

- Consider the following tunes for a medley using the process described
  - Opener's
    - Beverly's Wedding, The B52, The Man From Skye, The Waterhole
  - Air's
    - McLeods Oran Mor, Sine Bahn (Fair Jean), Cliffs of Doneen
  - Closers
    - Reels
      - Willie McKensies Reel, Sleepy Maggie, Tail Toddle, Dancing Feet,
    - Jigs
      - The Jig Runrig, Merrily Danced the Quakers Wife, Queen of the Rushes, Paddy's Leather Britches, The Hag at the Kiln



# Medley Construction

- Intermediary Stages

- Strathspeys

- Fiddlers Joy, A.A. Camerons Strathspey, McPhedrans Strathspey, The Smiths a Gallant Firemen, Seonaidh's Tune, Stirling Castle

- Depending on Closer Could Be

- Jigs
    - Strathspeys/Reels

- Also consider

- Hornpipes
      - e.g. Calum Iain, Man From Skye, The Waterhole
    - Waltzes

- Consider Structure

- Do the tunes go together musically

- Listen to each tune and assess
    - Does the medley have a good "feel"

# Medley Construction

- Consider Breaks
  - Counts into jigs, reels, strathspeys, airs
    - Makes it easier to get into the rhythm of the tune
- Consider Ending
  - Does finisher have a natural end or do you need to create a finish
    - Look at a few examples
- Consider Harmony
  - Look at a few examples
- Once complete, let an outside respected person have a listen and be prepared to listen and adjust as necessary
- Look and listen to P&D article “Where to Place Harmony In a Medley”

# Band Practice Strategy

- Early off season
  - Select tunes
    - Within the ability range of the band
      - Ability to concentrate on sound/expression
  - Learning on practice chanter
    - Playing over with P/M (2 bar phrases)
    - Learning to play complete tune with music
    - Learning to play complete tune without music
      - P/M's responsibility to ensure correct expression/phrasing/execution
      - Easy to forget expression when concentrating on memorising
      - Group playing on practice chanters
  - Transfer to pipes
    - Playing at home (or practice area)
    - Playing with band
      - Group playing on pipes for unison/expression/phrasing
    - Playing in performance
      - You always think you know a tune until you have to play it in performance
      - Can only be helped by practice

# Band Practice Strategy

- Early Off Season
  - Coordination with Drum Corps
    - P/M provide recordings of tunes asap
      - Drummers require more time
        - Composing scores (side + mid section)
        - Writing score out
        - Trying out with P/M
        - Adapting
        - Learning/Memorising
    - Chanter Drum Pad Trial
      - Any initial issues can be sorted out
      - Full band trial (PC/Drum Pad)
    - Leading to full band trial, pipes/drums
    - Refinements as necessary

# Band Practice Strategy

- Later Off Season (three four months before 1<sup>st</sup> competition)
  - New reeds selected and being blown in
    - Ensuring reeds are optimised to peak in competition performance
  - Players doing home practice to eliminate any mistakes
  - Practicing starts, breaks, expression etc at band practice
    - P/M, L/D doing one on ones as necessary with relevant players
- Approx 1 Month Before Competition Season
  - Start working on sound at every practice
  - Try and ensure band has been well tuned at practice
  - The less you play on competition day the better (within reason)
  - Know every player and how long you will get from everyones pipes
- Competition Day
  - Don't go to competition to practice – go to produce your best sound
  - Use methods discussed to produce your best sound
  - Don't tire players out before your performance
  - Keep your best performance for the circle not the practice field
- Good Luck
  - PP&PPPPP