

**Charlotte High School Band  
Necessary Student Practice Equipment**

**Dr. Gary T. Sullivan**

Parents (and students) spend hundreds to thousands of dollars on musical instruments. The development of the primary musical skills of rhythm and pitch are best achieved through the assistance of two other items: the metronome and the tuner. These are so vital (and relatively cheap through the aid of modern electronics) it is hard to understand why students will try to accomplish musical skills without them. Without a metronome, students can become weak rhythmic performers and often have difficulty with sight-reading skills. Without a tuner, students practice to a shifting pitch and rarely develop any sense of absolute pitch. In addition, many instruments deliver “pitch distortions” due the design or manufacturing processes utilized to build a given instrument. A tuner is necessary to correct these tendencies.

**Metronome**

Metronomes are used for much more than selecting tempos. Technical passages must be learned slowly and in time. When music is learned, perfectly, students should only then “click up” to the next highest tempo. Without a metronome, students tend to play things quickly while slowing down through the technical sections. This type of practicing will create rhythmic problems for the student. Additionally, the parts are never learned, properly. In the preparation of music in full rehearsal (and individual solo learning) a tempo chart should be prepared and the learning will progress logically toward the faster tempos in technical sections. Metronomes will assist students in the avoidance of rushing through the slower and more expressive sections. A simple metronome that provides a loud pulse and a dial to easily select tempos is best. Expensive metronomes with complex metrical set-ups, etc., are not necessary. Avoid “credit card” metronomes. They don’t have the “bulk” to produce a good sound and they tend to be fragile and difficult to use. Select the old fashioned mechanical switches and easy to use dials.

**Tuner**

A tuner is vital for the establishment of a consistent relative pitch. Students should “set-up” their instrument to the pitch standard of A=440 right after they “warm-up.” (“Warmed-up” means two things. It is the state where the student’s embouchure and sound producing muscles are producing sound consistently. “Warmed-up” also means that the instrument has reached the temperature of equalization where the outside air is taking away the heat of the instrument at a constant rate while the student warms the inside of the instrument with air.) A tuner should be easy to use and always set to A-440. It is best to check all tuners with a tuning fork or other tuner. Some tuners will produce variable reference tones. Though these tuners are more expensive and nice to have, they are not necessary. The needle that deflects sharp or flat is best. The Korg CA-30 is the most common, widely available, and works well for all instruments. It is automatic, so the student can tune to any number of pitches without adjustment.

**Percussionists supply** snare sticks for concert and marching, one pair of timpani mallets, one pair of yarn mallets, one pair of bell mallets. Mallets should be kept in a personal stick bag or briefcase. (The metal cases are great and cost around \$20.00 at places like Lowes and Menards.)

## **Reeds**

Reed players need to have at least five (5) conditioned and ready to play reeds. These should be rotated. Reeds are not ready to play “out of the box” and a very fine piece of sand paper needs to be used to adjust the reeds. Reeds need to be soaked in water after they are purchased. The reed player needs to spend time outside of class. Double reed players require more advanced instruction in reed making and adjustment. The actual tuning of the double reed instruments is through the reed. Clarinets should use at least a Mitchell Lurie 3 ½ or 4 or a Vandoren 3 – ½ - 4 strength reed. (V-12 are “hand select” French cut quality reeds.) Bass Clarinets use La Voz medium, Ray Maier medium – medium hard or Vandoren. Saxophone use La Voz, Hemke, or Vandoren.

## **Woodwind Mouthpieces and Ligatures**

Students need to have a quality mouthpiece matched with the proper ligature.

1. Clarinets must should move (eventually) to Vandoren B-45 mouthpieces and D. Bonade (French – LeBlanc) Ligatures. (Avoid cheap copies with similar numbers. They are not the same.) We have had problems with the plastic ligatures and are moving away from them.
2. Low clarinets will be provided with Selmer HS Star mouthpieces and matching ligatures.
3. Saxophones must play Selmer HS Star mouthpieces – hard rubber – no metal mouthpieces. The metal mouthpieces are designed for a commercial, jazz, or pop music sound—not the correct classical saxophone sound. Ligatures must match the mouthpiece (they are specific to the instrument.)

## **Brass Mouthpieces**

Brass teaching will focus on a dark, classical, or “orchestral” approach to tone. Bach mouthpieces are preferred—avoid the imitations. No plastic mouthpieces are allowed.

1. Cornets and trumpets should play Bach C cup mouthpieces of the proper size are required. Students should advance through 7C – 5C – 3C –(possibly 1C).
2. Trombones and baritones must play Bach 6 ½ A, 6 ½ AL, or 5GB mouthpieces. Equivalent Schilke mouthpieces work for the low brass. No 12C low brass mouthpieces allowed.
3. French horns should play on the Farkus mouthpieces. They come in a variety of sizes and cup depths.
4. Tubas should play on Conn Hellerberg mouthpieces or other provided. Avoid plastic mouthpieces inside and out.

## **School Equipment Issued to Students**

All school equipment is issued to students in good playing condition. It is expected that equipment will be properly maintained and that any damage be reported to Dr. Sullivan – immediately. Students are responsible for repair costs past the normal wear and tear of instruments issued to them until the instrument is returned. Students must oil valves, wipe off keys, swab woodwinds, etc. For instance, playing a brass instrument without proper lubrication is abusive to the instrument. Instruments are very personal and should not be loaned, borrowed, or experimented with. School equipment is to be played and handled by the student to whom it is issued--only.

## **Instruments**

To preserve the quality and uniformity of sound in the band, all equipment used must meet the approval of Dr. Sullivan. Please check before you are “sold” an instrument. He is willing to protect you and lend his experience & expertise to point you in the right direction. An instrument might look wonderful and blow freely, but could have uneven scales or notorious maintenance problems that would limit musical performance. Many manufacturers have several lines. Some manufacturers turned out great horns at one time, but the newer models are not as good. Many horns, now made off shore, are not as good. Some are fine. It is expected that all instruments will be maintained in top working condition. The following list a few of the best brand choices:

Flutes	Armstrong with silver head joint, Haynes, Powell
Oboes	Loree (others possible)
Clarinets	All clarinets must be wood. Selmer Signet would be the minimum level of quality. It is hoped that students will progress to the Buffet R-13. (The E-11 is a cheaper instrument and not the quality of the R-13, but a secondary choice.) Wood clarinets: Buffet R-13 (best choice), E-11 (cheaper choice), Signet 100 – beginner – intermediate.
Bass Clarinets	School Noblet or Selmer
Saxophones	Yamaha or Selmer Mark Series
Cornets	Cornets will be used in preference to trumpets. Trumpets may be used on trumpet parts, but generally not on cornet parts. Selmer Bach Strad Medium-Large Bore (important) is the brand of choice.
French Horns	Holton Farkus
Trombones	Bach 42B with F attachment (standard or open wrap) Thayer valve--option
Baritones	Yamaha YEP or Wilson

## **Other Basic Equipment**

1. Swabs to remove moisture from woodwind instruments after rehearsal.
2. A proper reed case to keep reeds from warping. (Never leave reeds on mouthpieces.)
3. Mouthpiece cap to guard the mouthpiece from damage.
4. Cork grease to lubricate all corks.
5. Al Cass valve oil for all valved-brass
6. Schilke slide grease for all brass.
7. Super Slick cream, Super Slick oil, and slide water bottle for trombones.
8. Mouthpiece brush and snake to clean brass instruments.
9. Trombone slide rod and cheese cloth for slide care.
10. Polishing cloth of the proper type for all instruments.
11. Cornets need to provide a metal straight mute – Tom Crown is preferred.
12. Horn and trombone mutes are school issued.

## **Storage Area Procedures**

The instrument storage area is for the daytime storage of equipment – ONLY. Instruments must be stored in a closed case and the lock locked. Please don't leave instruments in your slots and avoid “hanging out” in the storage area. Please respect each other by not getting into each other's equipment.