



Other Competitive Musical Worlds: A Comparative Look at Pipe Band Ensemble

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Some of us learn from
the mistakes of others.
The rest of us are the others.

~ Unknown



Today

- We'll look at the judging framework used by a selection of competitive musical forms outside the pipe band world; we'll focus on how they assess overall musical presentation, or “ensemble”
- We'll have a look at some of the scoring and judging approaches of the:
 - **Concert Band:** The National Federation of State High School Associations and their associated National Music Adjudication Coalition (U.S.)
 - **Orchestra:** Con Brio Festivals (British Columbia)
 - **Brass Band:** the British Brass Band Movement
- Relative to our current approach to pipe band ensemble assessment, do we identify:
 - Opportunities for improvement? Opportunities to do it differently?
 - Areas we might capitalize and make even greater?

Super added bonus (time permitting):
random observations from this investigation
– not related directly to judging



How *do* you become an adjudicator?

A recent exchange from an online British brass band forum [mouthpiece.com]

How do you become one? What do you have to do? Is there an exam, written work or certain level of banding you have had to have played at? Advice would be welcome?

sit in a box, drink coffee put ear plugs in and write anything you want

There are a few ways I have heard of, listed in no particular order:

- 1) Right place at the right time.
- 2) Be a well respected conductor / player.
- 3) Write to EVERY contest offering your services. (ad nauseum)
- 4) Write multiple press releases (at least 3 a week) telling websites and BB publications everything you are doing (in minute annoying detail) and know they will have to publish at least some of these, so by raising your profile.

What about being over 65, mainly deaf, not a working musician, and being able to stand up at the end of the contest and say that 'when this were written in 1937 it were a test then and its a test now'?

No quite so. I came across one adjudicator who seemed to write virtually the same for all the bands as I saw one or two sheets soon after. All generic stuff such as "letter C...nice control..... letter D..slight tuning problem within the ensemble....letter K..good Maestoso, don't overblow" -- I am sure all he had to do was effectively photocopy the sheet and fill in the band playing order at the top. Ah well at least it's better than saying "we was robbed"!

Close your eyes and take a blind stab at the results, disregarding all notion of performance and ignoring anything you have previously said you would like to hear from bands. A monkey flinging bananas at random targets could do a better job than most.

Learn the drums.

First thing to do is throw away any metronomes you may have - you won't ever be needing those again.

Next - purchase one of those special hearing devices they recommend to reduce noise pollution.

Finally, join a dating agency as any friends you used to have won't be for much longer!



National Federation of State High School Associations



- The NFHS Music Association: a professional organization of directors of high school music programs
- Since 1920, The NFHS has led the development of education-based interscholastic sports and activities -- helping those who oversee high school sports and activities
- Serves all U.S. The NFHS publishes playing rules in 16 sports for boys and girls competition and administers fine arts programs -- including music
- Provides program initiatives that reach 18,500 high schools and over 11 million students involved in athletic and music programs
- **Adjudicators:**
 - Strong focus on professional development: provides a multi-media Music Adjudicator Training Package (available for purchase by anyone, regardless of membership [\$50])
 - Adjudicators per event: 1 to 3 depending on importance of event
 - Musical generalists versus a series of specialists
 - Dual focus on delivering a result (judgement) and adjudication / education



The National Federation of State High School Associations - I

National Music Adjudication Coalition
CONCERT BAND OR ORCHESTRA –
Music Assessment Form



DATE _____ ORDER OF APPEARANCE _____ FESTIVAL/CONTEST LOCATION _____

ENSEMBLE NAME – SCHOOL – CITY – STATE _____

	DIVISION	CLASSIFICATION	ADJ STATUS	ENSEMBLE SIZE
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DIRECTOR _____

SELECTIONS - Title(s) and Composer(s) _____

SCORE	AREAS OF REVIEW (+ Good/ - Needs Improvement/ blank = OK)	COMMENTS
SOUND QUALITY (30.0)		
30.0	Tone Quality (15.0) <input type="checkbox"/> Natural (<i>for this age group</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> Free (<i>of tension</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> Vibrant (<i>has energy</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> Blend <input type="checkbox"/> Control Pitch (15.0) <input type="checkbox"/> Accuracy <input type="checkbox"/> Intonation	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;">Assessment is relative to experience</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">Compelling descriptors of tonal characteristics</div>
TECHNICAL ACCURACY (30.0)		
30.0	Technique (15.0) <input type="checkbox"/> Attacks <input type="checkbox"/> Releases <input type="checkbox"/> Accents <input type="checkbox"/> Articulation/Bowing <input type="checkbox"/> Missed Notes <input type="checkbox"/> Challenge of Music Rhythm (15.0) <input type="checkbox"/> Accuracy <input type="checkbox"/> Steady Pulse <input type="checkbox"/> Tempi	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;">The score matters</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">Musical difficulty is acknowledged</div>



The National Federation of State High School Associations - 2

MUSICALITY (35.0)		<p>“Ensemble” most evident here</p> <p>Heaviest weighting in scoring</p> <p>Highly subjective areas acknowledged</p> <p>Rating scale: explicit guidelines</p>
35.0	<p>Interpretation, Musicianship (15.0)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Correct Style Application</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate Repertoire</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Balance <input type="checkbox"/> Expressivity</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Artistry <input type="checkbox"/> Nuances</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Sense of Ensemble</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Communicating with a Sense of Purpose</p> <p>Dynamics (10.0)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Use Of Full Range (<i>ff-pp</i>)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Use of Subtle Dynamic Changes</p> <p>Breath/Mallet/Bow Management (10.0)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Phrasing <input type="checkbox"/> Supports Tone</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Carefully Planned and Executed</p>	
STAGE DEPARTMENT (5.0)		
5.0	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Attitude <input type="checkbox"/> Confidence</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Appearance <input type="checkbox"/> Posture</p>	
<p>ADJUDICATION SCALE – By Rating: 1 = (Superior) 2 = (Excellent) 3 = (Good/Average) 4 = (Fair) 5 = (Needs Improvement)</p> <p>By Score: 90–100 = (Superior) 80–89.9 = (Excellent) 70–79.9 = (Good/Average) 60–69.9 = (Fair) Less than 60 = (Needs Improvement)</p>		<p>(Cont. on back)</p> <p>Score or Rating <input type="text"/></p> <p>_____ Adjudicator (print) Adjudicator (sign)</p>



Con Brio Music Festivals – British Columbia



- **Festival mandate:**
 - To offer a festival environment centred on active learning through participation that supports and encourages education and participation in the musical arts
 - To provide an opportunity for amateur musicians and their directors to meet, perform, exchange ideas and develop new skills
- **The festival and adjudication:**
 - About 1300 participant attendees per festival
 - On the first day each ensemble receives a 30 minute adjudicated performance followed by a one hour workshop
 - Adjudication continues through the festival; participants attend workshops designed to build on the strengths of each ensemble - one adjudicator per event, per workshop
 - Participating Directors are offered an opportunity to attend professional development workshops presented festival faculty
 - Participant financial commitment: A non-refundable deposit of \$1,000.00 is required with this registration form to secure a space in the festival for the first ensemble. Add \$250.00 for each additional ensemble. A subsequent deposit of \$100.00 per registrant required
 - Massed bands (!): “To close the festival, all of our participants come together to create three ensembles: The Festival Massed Chorus, and the two Festival Massed Bands. Sunday morning begins with the Massed Choral voices working together to raise the roof with their voices and is followed by the foundation shaking sound of the Massed Bands.”
- **Sponsorship** supports the festival: Long & McQuade, Yamaha, etc
- **Advance Music Manuscript:** “To ensure that adjudicators are able to provide a detailed and informed evaluation, you are required to provide two conductor’s scores/choral octavos for each selection played/sung for adjudication. These are to be handed to your guide immediately before the performance.

[Con Brio Festivals](#)



Con Brio Festivals Score Sheet - I

		<u>Orchestra</u>				
		Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Superior
SOUND QUALITY	Tone Quality					
	Individual					
	Ensemble					
	Woodwind					
	Brass					
	Percussion					
	String					
	Intonation					
	Individual					
	Ensemble					
	Woodwind					
	Brass					
	Percussion					
	String					
	Unison					
	Harmonic					
	Blend					
	Balance					
						/30

Explicitly stated and straight-forward markers of sound quality

Sound quality given heaviest weighting in scoring

/30



Con Brio Festivals Score Sheet - 2

MUSICALITY	Interpretation						
	Phrasing						
	Expression						
	Dynamics						
	Sensitivity/Nuance						
	Style						
	Tempi						
							/25
TECHNIQUE	Articulation						
	Attacks						
	Concentration						
	Fluency						
	Note Accuracy						
	Posture/Position						
	Releases						
	Rhythmic Accuracy						
							/25

Explicit signals to judge related to subjectivity: it's OK to use your judgement

A potentially relevant comment in a pipe band context



Con Brio Festivals Score Sheet - 3

GENERAL	Music Selection								
	Suitability	A remarkably subjective area of assessment accounting for 20% of the result							
	Variety								
	Instrumentation								
	Stage Behaviour								
	Attitude	If we are striving for "performance" should we consider what the audience sees, too?							
	Appearance								
Discipline								/20	
Fair 50+ Good 65+ Excellent 76+ Superior 86+									
Rating scale: explicit guidelines								/100	



The British Brass Band Movement

Rivalry is fierce: opponents are listened to, even when they are practising, by the members of other brass bands and 'spys' are often sent out to find out their repertoire and if any new players are joining the band.

There is also 'poaching' of players where one band will offer someone a better position if they leave their current ensemble. However, the principles, and indeed the high degree of competition between each band, remains the same as they were in 1853.

~ [Research Study](#), University of Glasgow



British Brass Bands



- **History:**
 - The brass band dates to the early nineteenth century and England's Industrial Revolution: The movement began as an effort to provide the working class, primarily in the northern industrial provinces of England, a social and cultural outlet. – colliery bands and mills were typical sponsors (i.e. The Black Dyke Mills)
 - [About 1,000 bands in the UK today](#) (down from an estimated 10,000 in pre-war days)
 - Fragmented system of national organization – no one over-arching governing body
 - [Some rules standard](#), though not all – individual events determine rules and regulations
- **Highly competitive:**
 - Deep rivalries: competition standing as the lifeblood of the brass band
 - Time commitment is extensive; with top bands rehearsing at least three nights a week in championship season (and often every night the week before the competition)
 - Youth brass band competitions are similarly well established, providing quality players for the adult bands
- **Competition framework:**
 - Bands organized into five sections much like a football league: Championship section, 1st section, 2nd section, 3rd section and 4th section.
 - Competitions are held throughout the year at local, regional, and national levels, and at the end of each year there are promotions and relegations (based on performance success at designated events)
 - Two major championship events: the National Championship and the British Open Championship
 - Championship section first prizes between £2000- £4000
 - Top three money winning bands in 2010: **1.** Fairey (Geneva) - £15,850, **2.** Tredegar - £11,250, **3.** Hepworth (Cookson Homes) - £10,500
- **Adjudication:**
 - Between one and three adjudicators, depending on importance of event
 - Adjudicators are “overall” experts – not a specialist in one instrument or area
 - Adjudicators are concealed from competing band “in a box” – a tradition dating back over a hundred years and still controversial

[Start here for additional info](#)



Brothers from a Different Mother: British Brass and Pipe Bands

“The media treats brass banding with a lazy **contempt** - not because it knows any better, but because we have never managed to persuade them otherwise.”

~ 4barsrest.com editorial

"There is, for want of a better phrase, **an image problem**," concedes Philip Biggs, editor of the Brass Herald.

"People think brass bands and think of coal mines, cloth caps, marching down the street."

"Those connotations are long out of date, he says. If it was good enough for Elgar, Vaughn Williams and Holst, who all wrote works for brass, it should be good enough for all serious music fans. The repertoire is actually very, very rich."

~ [BBC interview](#), September 2010

“One of the great glories of the brass band movement has been the **treasure trove of wonderful trophies** that contests have accumulated over the year...

Not only are they to be cherished and looked after by bands who win them, but surely the time has come to catalogue and photograph each of them before they are lost ...

The current fad for presenting shatterproof glass doorstops and trophies that would be better off sitting on the shelf of a pub darts player is depressing too. There is nothing to cherish in a piece of Perspex or plastic.”

~ 4barsrest.com editorial



Common Concerns of British Brass Bands†

- The Concern of bands receiving **early draws**, particularly number one and two
- The lack of **consistency in adjudicating**
- The need for **more explicit and helpful** remarks.
- Too often adjudicators' stage **comments differ from their actual result.**
- The **assessment of adjudicators** (Who judges the judges).
- The problem of putting **all the bands in the correct order.**
- Own-choice contests – **assessment of difficult and easier pieces** (recommended as a question of judgement – best performance should always win)
- Concerns about **how bands can legitimately raise questions** over the behaviour or ability of adjudicators.
- Why is it considered 'to be good practice', for **adjudicators to be informed in advance of the event**, of the titles of pieces to be used in 'own choice' contests?

Sound familiar?

[†Association of Brass Band Adjudicators](#)



British Open 2010 Adjudicating Approach

	FAIR					GOOD					VERY GOOD					OUTSTANDING					SCORE
	-	-	-+	+	+	-	-	-+	+	+	-	-	-+	+	+	-	-	-+	+	+	
Pitch/correct notes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
Rhythmic accuracy and clarity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
Tempi	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
Dynamic range	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
Ensemble precision	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
Tuning/intonation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
Sound quality	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
Balance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
Quality of soloists	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
Artistic expression/musicality	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
Penalty points (leave blank unless penalty imposed)						5	4	3	2	1											

Short clarifying comments if necessary.

Explicit statement related to penalties (e.g. penalty: going over time limit)

Even brass bands use the word "artistic"

TOTAL



British Open 2010: Criteria for Allocation of Scores - 1

Criteria for allocation of marks

Please note there are higher (+) and lower (-) descriptions for each section

	FAIR	GOOD	VERY GOOD	OUTSTANDING
Pitch/correct notes	+ A brave attempt with rather too many major errors.	+ Fine in most technical details but some quite frequent noticeable small errors.	+ Virtually all details totally correct. Nothing major of concern.	+ Totally accurate, with no discernable errors. All details audible and executed to perfection.
	- Very noticeable and constant errors.	- Mostly clean but too frequent errors rather spoil the performance.	- A generally clean performance with one or two quite noticeable errors that do detract.	- An outstandingly accurate performance with only the tiniest of slips.
Rhythmic accuracy and clarity	+ Some quite noticeable rhythmic <u>insecurities</u> .	+ One or two rhythmic sections not played with enough clarity, but generally fine.	+ Virtually all details totally correct. Nothing major of concern.	+ Outstanding rhythmic playing, executed with total conviction from start to finish.
	- Disappointing attention to rhythmic detail.	- Whilst the impression is positive some lack of rhythmic detail detracts.	- Some slight cause for concern and possible lapses in clarity.	- A full grasp of all details executed with style and verve.

Clearly stated criteria

“executed with total conviction from start to finish”

“executed with style and verve”



British Open 2010: Criteria for Allocation of Scores - 2

Criteria for allocation of marks

Please note there are higher (+) and lower (-) descriptions for each section

	FAIR	GOOD	VERY GOOD	OUTSTANDING
Ensemble precision	+ Ensemble precision needs some serious attention as frequent lapses cause concern.	+ Most ensemble moments played with precision and style, but some poor moments do concern.	+ Generally very good precision with all sections of the piece having a sense of unanimity.	+ Immaculate precision from beginning to end. A unanimous effort delivered with the utmost clarity and élan.
	- Poor sense of ensemble cohesion throughout.	- Several sections of concern where the sense of ensemble wavers.	- Ensemble precision is of a high level but one or two moments detract from an otherwise very good showing.	- Highly impressive sense of ensemble with discipline and musical cohesion in abundance.
Tuning/Intonation	+ Frequent tuning issues are a major disappointment in the performance.	+ A high level of general tuning but with frequent lapses in exposed sections or extremes of dynamics	+ Generally no areas for concern save for the odd moment, either individually or in the full band.	+ Totally convincing with little or no areas of tuning problems whatsoever.
	- Very disappointing lack of attention to this facet of the performance.	- Tuning is a negative factor in the appreciation of the performance.	- Very good intonation but marred by a few poor moments that detract.	- Very impressive solo and section playing from start to finish.
Sound quality	+ Band sound is not one of the strengths of the performance, perhaps harsh or thin sounds dominate.	+ A well sounding band but a few features just detract from the overall impression.	+ An impressive band sound with rich tones and lyrical beauty.	+ Tremendous brass band sound, enhanced by total control, balance and a sublime quality.
	- Not a beautiful sound, with lack of blend, warmth and quality.	- A band sound that lacks a little quality but still maintains a consistently good level.	- Very pleasing band sound with only a few colours missing.	- Outstanding sound quality which leaves a lasting impression

- immaculate precision
- a unanimous effort
- delivered with clarity and élan
- ensemble with discipline and musical cohesion



A Comparative Summary?

In his opening remarks, Derek stated that there was **no secret mystique about how adjudicators judged performances.**

They simply hoped to hear a good standard of performance containing the basic quality essentials of sound, tuning, rhythm and balance.

Only when these vital ingredients were achieved did additional items such as interpretation and musical shape enter the equation.

~ Malcolm Brownbill, [Association of Brass Band Adjudicators report](#)



Random Thoughts

- **Sight reading competitions** – an interesting concept
- **Publishing / copyright matters** – big-time:
 - 7.04 Penalty: For Copyright Infringement – Disqualification. Participants who fail to comply with or knowingly violate copyright law may be penalized up to and including Disqualification (Colorado Bandmaster’s Association Adjudicator's Handbook)
 - “Photocopied scores or octavos will not be accepted for adjudication unless accompanied by a letter of consent from the copyright owner or publisher” – Con Brio Festival registration note

**NFHS MUSIC ADJUDICATION FORM
LARGE ENSEMBLE**

Order of Appearance: _____ Date: _____ Program/Event No.: _____

Event: _____ Class: _____
(concert band, mixed chorus, etc.)

School Name: _____ Location-Contest/Festival: _____

Director: _____ Number in Ensemble: _____

Selections	Composer	Publisher
1. _____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____

- Ontario Band Association **Conflict of Interest Policy** (extract) – Stated reasons for the policy:
 - The funds controlled by elected representatives of the Ontario Band Association may be substantial.
 - The board members of the Ontario Band Association are band directors and others involved in instrumental music who are often personally involved in activities sponsored by the Association.
- **Free Online Theory Program:**
 - [Offered by the Canadian Band Association](#)
- **Promotion:** onsite photographer at major competitions – formal photos for sale to groups [post-performance photo stop at a place like Maxville]
- **Audience engagement:** “student score sheets” provided to audiences to learn, practice listening and better connect with the music – simple event/art form PR



Appendix: PPBSO Pipe Band Ensemble Score Sheet

PIPERS' & PIPE BAND SOCIETY OF ONTARIO

BAND ENSEMBLE

Games: _____ Date: _____ Contest: _____
 Adjudicator: _____ Signature: _____
 Competitor: _____

Rank Awarded

<p>Tonal Integration:</p> <p>TUNING/CLARITY* PITCH* VOL/ BALANCE* INTONATION* TIMBRE/QUALITY* STABILITY</p>	<p>Musicality</p> <p>* EXPRESSION * PHRASING * *DYNAMICS * RHYTHM * TEMPO</p>
<p>Technical Integration:</p> <p>INTRO * TRANSITION * FINISH * INTRA CORPS UNISON* INTER CORPS UNISON *</p>	<p>Quality / Musicianship of Arrangement</p>

OVERALL ASSESSMENT:

