

# **PRINCIPLES OF EXPRESSIVE PLAYING IN MUSIC:**

**Bringing Life to the Notes with Young Bands and Orchestras**

with Bruce Pearson



BRUCE PEARSON is a world-renowned music educator, author, composer, and clinician. He is the author of the ***Standard of Excellence*** Comprehensive Band Method which has been regarded as the most important contribution to the band music field in the last three decades and for his first contribution, ***Best In Class***. His new contribution, co-authored with Ryan Nowlin, the ***Tradition of Excellence*** Comprehensive Band Method, is a performance-centered curriculum that seamlessly blends time-tested and innovative pedagogy with cutting-edge technology. He also co-authored, with Dean Sorenson the ***Standard of Excellence Jazz Ensemble Method*** and the ***Standard of Excellence Advanced Jazz Ensemble Method***.

In addition to his method books, Dr. Pearson is well-known as a composer of many widely performed compositions for concert band and jazz ensemble. He has led clinics in all fifty of the United States and has been guest conductor and clinician, by invitation, of countries throughout the Pacific Rim, the Orient, Europe, and the Canadian provinces.

Bruce Pearson has taught at the elementary, junior high, high school and college level for over thirty years. Twice nominated for the prestigious **Excellence in Education Award**, he was recognized as “most outstanding in the field of music” for the state of Minnesota. In December, 1998, Dr. Pearson, “in recognition of his outstanding contribution to music education,” was awarded the prestigious **Midwest International Band and Orchestra Director’s Clinic Medal of Honor**. In 2001, he was awarded St. Cloud State University’s **Distinguished Service To Music Award** “in appreciation for lifelong contribution to music and music education.” In 2007, Dr. Pearson received St. Cloud State University’s “**Distinguished Alumni Award**.” That same year he was recognized as the first **Patron for the Maryborough Conference** in Queensland, Australia.

Dr. Pearson continues to serve as a guest lecturer, clinician, and conductor in addition to his work as a composer, arranger, and author.

# PRINCIPLES OF EXPRESSIVE PLAYING IN MUSIC:

## Bringing Life to the Notes with Young Bands and Orchestras

These notes are prepared so that you can add your own comments and therefore have a more complete view of today's clinic.

### Overview and rationale:

Transforming written notes to expressively-performed music is one of the primary challenges facing conductors and music teachers today. This clinic, for conductors and music teachers of young band and orchestra ensembles, will provide tips and teaching strategies that will help students learn to "make music."

Using a demonstration group, the clinician, will demonstrate the significant distinction between playing "technically well" and playing "technically well – with **PASSIONATE EXPRESSION.**"

### Objective:

By the end of this session you will be aware of tips and techniques of how an ensemble can learn to "speak as one voice" communicating and recreating the intent of the composer in an artistic performance.

### "Principles of Expressive Playing in Music"

#### 1. The Principle of Identifying and Shaping a Musical Phrase

##### a. Identifying Musical Phrases

- i. Complete Musical Thought or Idea
- ii. Harmonic Cadence
- iii. Rhythmic Cadence

**Tip** – "Never breathe in the midst of a musical phrase."

##### b. Shaping Musical Phrases

- i. I love making music.
- ii. I love making music.
- iii. I love making music.
- iv. I love making music.

c. Finding the Most Important Note of the Musical Phrase.

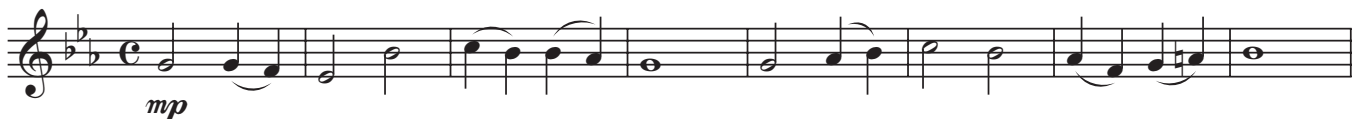


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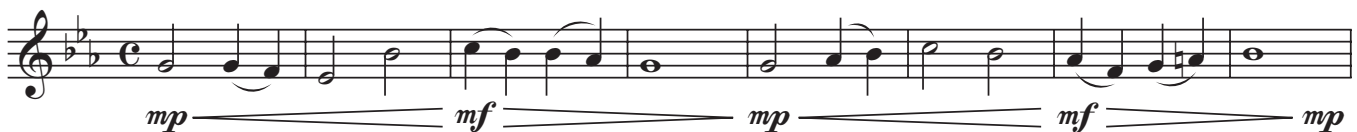
**Abide With Me**

William Henry Monk  
arr. Bruce Pearson

Written:



Played:



from *Great Warm-Ups for Young Bands*. Published by Neil A. Kjos Music Company, San Diego, CA.  
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**Tip** - “Crescendo on all notes leading to the most important note within that phrase. Decrescendo on all notes leading away from the most important note within that phrase.”

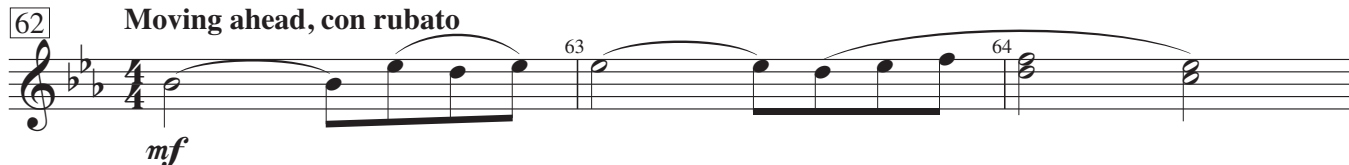
## 2. The Principle of Note Movement

### Pressure

Ryan Nowlin

Written:

62 **Moving ahead, con rubato**



Played:

62 **Moving ahead, con rubato**



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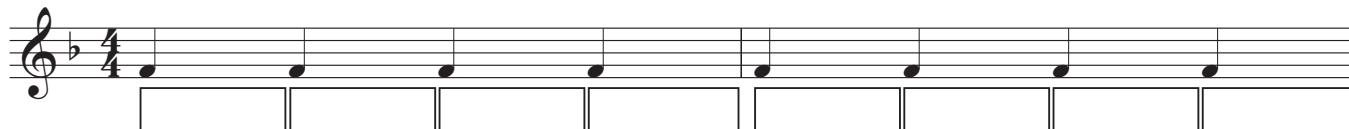
**Tip** - “Crescendo during long notes at the beginning of a phrase - especially if followed by faster notes.”

## 3. The Principle of Note Shape and Length

### Romantic Shaped Notes

The Romantic-Shaped sound is one that includes notes held to their full value. This is a style named for the Romantic Period in which it was popular.

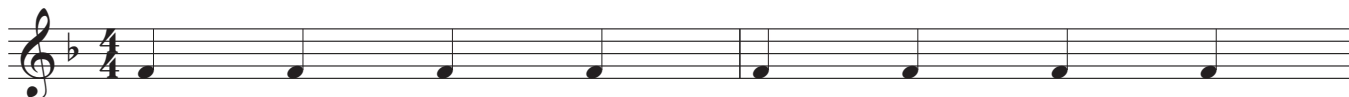
Written and Played:



### Classic Shaped Notes

The Classic-Shaped sound (applied in Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, and contemporary style music) is one that includes rounder notes with a value that is not quite full.

Written:



Played:



## Court Festival

William Byrd  
arr. Bruce Pearson

Written:



Played:



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**Tip** - "While note length is greatly influenced by tempo, most music played by ensembles today should be played using classic shaped notes."

### 4. The Principle of Dynamic Contrast For Notes

#### a. Syncopation

## March for a Celebration

Bruce Pearson

Written:



Played:



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Note: the numbers above the music indicate the relative strength of each note from weakest (1) to strongest (4).

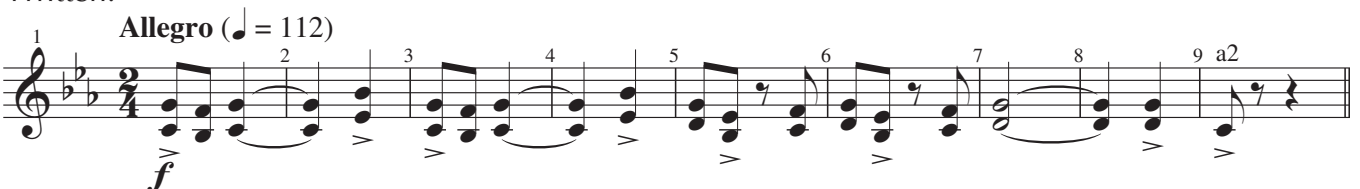
**Tip** - "The notes preceding and following the syncopated note should be played somewhat shorter than written and softer than the syncopated or emphasized note. The syncopated note should be played nearly full length and louder than the notes preceding or following it."<sup>1</sup>

#### b. Tied Notes

## Pompeii Unearthed

Ryan Nowlin

Written:



Played:

**Allegro** (♩ = 112)

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**Tip** – “When two notes are tied, the figure is given a *bold* accent.”<sup>2</sup>

### c. Slurred Notes

## Slurring March

Bruce Pearson

Written:

Played:

**Tip** – “When two notes are slurred, the second note should be played with less volume than the first note.”<sup>3</sup>

## 5. The Principle of Note Grouping

## Shipwrecked

Ryan Nowlin

Written:

Played:

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**Tip** - "Upbeats provide more movement and are more musically expressive than downbeats. By stressing the upbeats, ever so slightly, the performance of music can be more satisfying and musical."

## 6. The Principle of the Inner Voices

### *Enchanted*

Ryan Nowlin

Written:

**74 Entranced (in the same tempo)**

mf mp mp mf

Played:

**74 Entranced (in the same tempo)**

mf mp p p

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**Tip** - “Whenever inner voices have a rhythm that contrasts when the primary melody is static, those inner voices take on the character of the primary melody at that time.”

## 7. The Principle of Tension and Release and Musical Anticipation

Some of the compositional techniques that composers use to create tension and release are: tempo (accelerando/allargando), volume (crescendo/decrescendo), melody and harmony (dissonance/consonance).

### a. Tension and Release

#### *Shipwrecked*

Ryan Nowlin

Written:

61 Same tempo (in 2)

mp

62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69

Detailed description: This is a musical score for three staves in 4/4 time, marked 'mp'. The first staff contains a melody of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4. The second staff contains a bass line of half notes: G3, F3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2, G2. The third staff contains a bass line of quarter notes: G3, F3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2, G2. The piece ends at measure 69 with a final chord of G2, F3, E3, D3.

Played:

61 Same tempo (in 2)

mp

62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69

Detailed description: This is a musical score for three staves in 4/4 time, marked 'mp'. It is identical to the 'Written' version but includes performance markings. The first staff has a dynamic marking 'mp' and a hairpin that tapers from measure 61 to 62 and then flares back up to measure 63. The second and third staves have hairpins that mirror the first staff's dynamics. The piece ends at measure 69 with a final chord of G2, F3, E3, D3.

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**Tip** - “Embrace dissonances for they provide ‘sparkle’ to the music.”

b. Musical Anticipation

**Tapestry**

Bruce Pearson

Written:

Musical score for the 'Written' section, measures 66-77. The music is in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats. It features a crescendo from *mf* to *ff* in measures 66-71, followed by a decrescendo to *p* in measures 72-77. Measure 77 ends with a fermata.

Played:

Musical score for the 'Played' section, measures 66-77. This version includes performance directions: *accelerando* in measures 67-70, *allargando* in measures 70-71, and *ritardando* in measures 72-77. The dynamic markings and crescendo/decrescendo lines are the same as in the 'Written' section.

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**Tip** - “By first increasing the tension (through use of a *crescendo* and an *accelerando*) thus creating greater anticipation and then delaying the release, a more exciting, passionate performance results”

To all attendees:

The clinician thanks you for your attendance and hopes that his suggestions will help your students make passionate music.

## Work Cited

1. VanderCook, H.A. *Expression in Music*, 18.
2. Ibid., 20.
3. Ibid.

## Suggested Reading on this subject

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