

Survey of Beginning Instrumental Band Methods Used in Conjunction with “Smartmusic.”

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Abstract

This survey analyzes some of the most popular beginning instrumental band method books and their success (or lack thereof) when used in combination with Smartmusic computer software. The most successful band methods can be integrated into MUSI 202 – Brass Techniques. Using Smartmusic, students can perform and record their assignments with an electronic interactive accompaniment. Student performances are instantly evaluated mistakes are identified, and the program offers solutions. Each method book has differing repertoire and accompaniment quality. Music education majors at UW Eau Claire need basic training in Smartmusic and the music department's various techniques classes are a great way to introduce and establish Smartmusic skills.

Method Books Used

- Measures of Success
- Tradition of Excellence
- Standard of Excellence
- Accent on Achievement
- Band Expressions
- Foundations for Superior Performance
- Essential Elements 2000
- Sound Innovations 1
- Rubank
- Belwin 21st Century Band Method 1

Step 1

The evaluators identified and secured the ten most current and popular method books that are Smartmusic capable.

Step 2

A rubric was created to assess the success of each method book. The researcher and mentor looked at each book simultaneously.

Step 3

The mentor and mentee each evaluated each book from both the student and educator perspective. The rubric results are available below in the packet.

Step 4

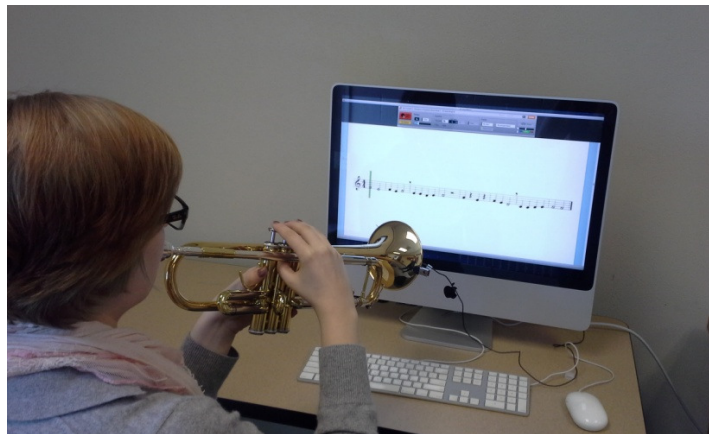
After completing rubrics for all of the method books, the results of the evaluation were compared and compiled into a ranking.

Method Book Ranking

The ranking of the method books can be located in the attached packet. The method books are ranked according to the rubric, which details repertoire, accompaniment quality, diversity, ability to engage and supplemental material.

Findings

The results of the rankings confirmed some of the research expectations. Newer method books are superior in some ways to older resources. The rubrics show that the newer method books have more familiar and diverse repertoire, better accompaniments, are more engaging, and provide more detail regarding each specific instrument. Some method books have history components as well as supplemental materials that cover improvisation, composition, and theory.



Above: Brass Tech student Cassie Venske uses Smartmusic in association with an electronic version of the method book we found to be one of the best.