

Individual Intonation Evaluation

One way to improve ensemble intonation is through individual practice with an electronic tuner. Through this practice, the student will start to discriminate between good intonation and poor intonation. More importantly, they will soon learn to distinguish intonation as being flat or sharp. If students are able to make these distinctions and adjust to them, then ensemble pitch will improve as each individual improves.

Being able to see their intonation visually with a tuner can help the student start to identify their instrument's and their own pitch tendencies. The following exercise will help in two ways. It will provide a "behind the instrument" practice opportunity to improve intonation, and will help their partner develop a mental picture of what being "in tune" is.

Steps to Pitch Sheet Evaluations:

1. Have two students go to a quiet area with their instruments, an electronic tuner, and two pitch sheets.
2. Player #1 tells player #2 what the lowest note they can play on their instrument is. Player #2 then writes that note in the note name column.
3. Player #1 then plays this note for approximately 5 seconds without looking at the tuner. The student should do their best to play this note as steadily as possible with good posture, air support, and the best possible tone.
4. Player #2 will then record the tuner results next to this note on the sheet by indicating how many cents away from being in tune the note was. Record the notes that are flat in the flat column and the notes that are sharp in the sharp column.
5. Player #2 will then write the name of the next note. Repeat the process by ascending chromatically until the highest note that can be played with good tone quality is reached.
6. After player #1 is done, the students switch roles.
7. After the process is completed, examine the results of the evaluation by adding up each column. Once the totals have been completed, start working on improving the notes that are the farthest out of tune.
8. Repeat the entire process once per week for three weeks. If done correctly, and if the student has worked diligently, the totals at the bottom should get smaller, thus better intonation.

