

**NOTES ON BEING
A
PIPE MAJOR**

SECTION 2

**TUNE SUITABILITY
GROUP PRACTICE**

**The TEXT BOOK and DVD “THE LANGUAGE OF MUSIC”
published by the RSPBA is an ideal reference book for further study on this subject.**

**Copies can be obtained at online shopping
www.shepherd-bagpipes.com
or www.rspba.org**

R T SHEPHERD MBE

TUNE SUITABILITY AND GROUP PRACTICE

“Music is universal and can be thought of as a language of communication and can also be compared with other forms of language.”

R T SHEPHERD MBE

In this section, we will concentrate the group’s effort as an exercise in *“A programme of controlled development”*

From the earlier description regarding qualifications of the Pipe Major we stated as necessary requirements

1. A basic knowledge of the Theory of Music
2. The ability to give guidance to the Drum Corps to achieve a musical performance

To improve technique and achieve a musical presentation for the novice and lower grade band it would be necessary for the Pipe Major to develop a strategy on how he / she could best meet these requirements. This strategy would involve a close study of the form and structure of the music.

As an aid *to help develop a strategy, to study the form and structure* I would recommend an idea to compare music with everyday language and use basic fundamentals associated with grammar

Immediately basic comparisons spring to mind.....

Letters of the alphabet.....syllable’s.....*note notation*.....

Words.....*rhythmic patterns*.*musical motives*

Incomplete sentence.....punctuation.....*a musical phrase*.....*the cadence*

Diction / pronunciation.....*emphasis*.....*grace notes*

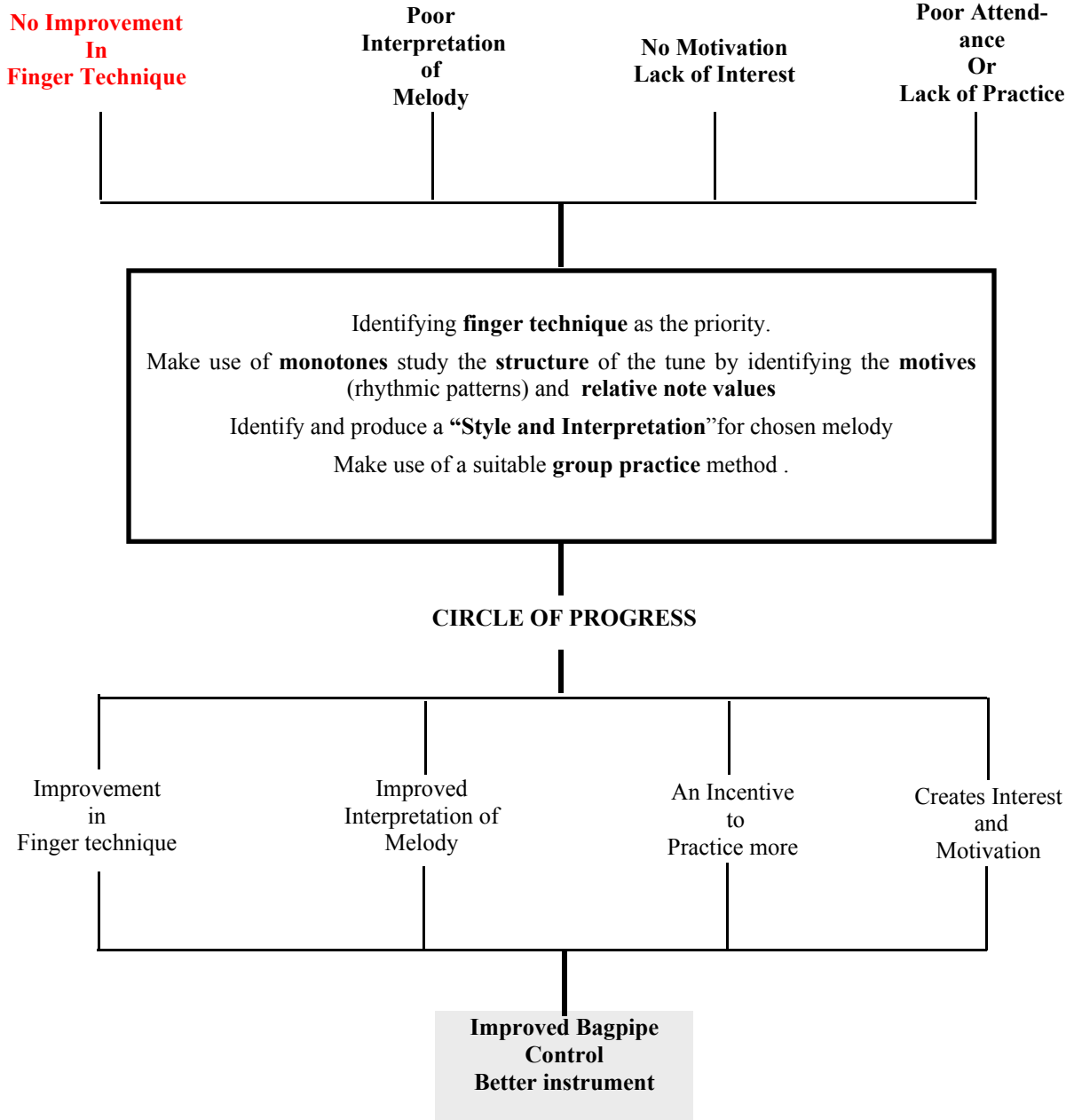
Articulation and expressing words.....*rhythmic definition*

Style of speaking.....*style and interpretation*.....*melody line*

BUILDING THE FOUNDATION

We will concentrate the groups effort in achieving a programme for controlled development after recognizing the “Circles of Imperfection and Progress” defined in section 1. (The Pipe Major at Work)

In example 1... where we discussed.
 “THE CIRCLE OF IMPERFECTION”



CONSIDERATIONS

When assessing the suitability of a tune to learn, it is desirable that the Pipe Major has a preconceived idea of the standard he/or she would like to achieve.

The objective of a pipe band performance should be to uplift and stimulate the listener who may not necessarily be a piper or drummer

The Pipe Major has to consider how best the selected melody will involve and obtain a full emotional response from the listener.

A prescribed “Style and Interpretation” (Manner of Performance) derived from the recognition of rhythm, melodic patterns, and drum presentation with dynamics and influence should be planned.

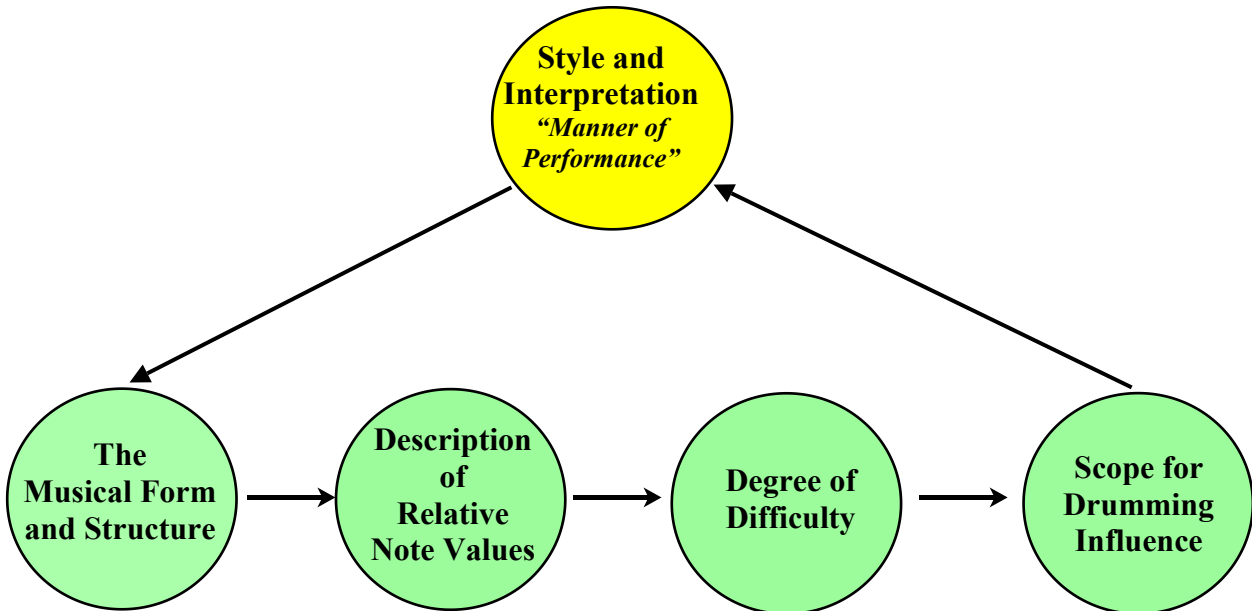
Note.

Although it will be necessary at a later stage to construct a melody and take into consideration a combination of styles with various rhythms. At this stage we are only making a study of the mechanics, on how to improve and develop a correct strategy the novice and lower grade band could use, to improve technique and achieve a musical presentation for any chosen rhythm.

To help achieve these considerations, it is always a good idea to prepare a

“TUNE SUITABILITY CHECK LIST”

covering the following elements.



DESCRIBING “STYLE AND INTERPRETATION”

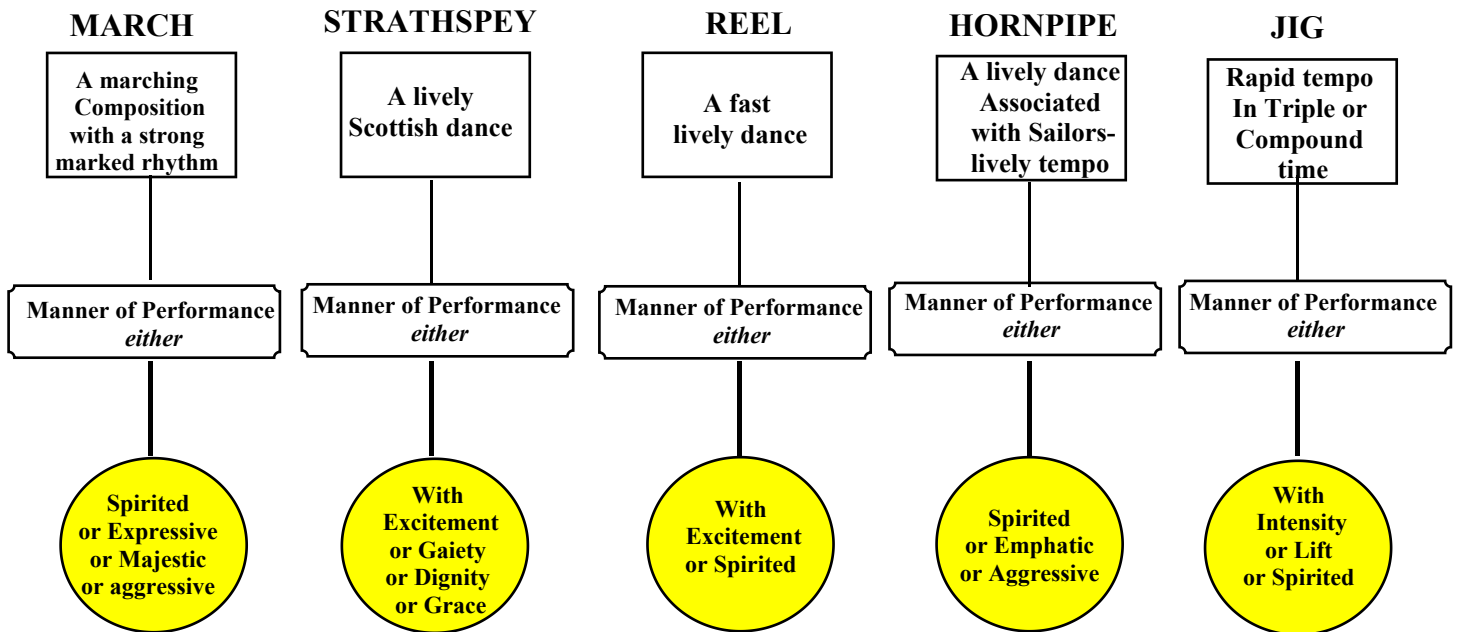
Your conclusion should be a presentation with an “interesting style and interpretation” that the listener can relate to
 E.g. Aggressive rhythm....majestic rhythm.....descriptive slow air.....strathspey idiom with gaiety or with grace and dignity.....A strong exciting reel.....a jig either emphatic and aggressive or relaxed with a swinging pulse, and so on.....

The following table illustrates possible examples of “style and interpretation”

DESCRIPTION	MEANING
With Spirit	...Lively and Bold
Expressive	...Good Articulation
Majestic	..Dignified and Imposing
With Dignity	...Composed and Serious
With Grace	..Attractive and Refined
With Excitement	...Lively and Bold
With IntensityStrong Emotion and Vigorous
With Lift	...A Swinging Style
Aggressive	...Forceable and Strong

When deciding on the “Style and Interpretation” of the melody the Pipe Major should discuss the drum presentation with the Lead Drummer, so as to determine points in the melody where the drum could help to influence and assist expression..Possible problems that could be encountered should also be highlighted.

With the Pipe Band, the potential for different styles is normally limited to March, Strathspey, Reel, Hornpipe and Jig



Remember different musical styles are recognisable because of emphasis given to particular elements in the construction of the music, which in turn ensure a “Distinctive Manner of Performance”

The Relevance of RELATIVE NOTE VALUES

As we develop this text it should become apparent the important role relative note values (“especially the short note”) have to play in the creation of expression and integration..

“Also the application of correct note values with added embellishment leads to good articulation and expression”

The influence of “Relative Note Values” on expression can be highlighted by tapping out the following monotone exercises

It is important that the tempo is maintained by foot tapping on the numbers (the beat notes)

A possible conclusion ; it is easier to create an expressive presentation, when a melody contains “short notes” provided the performers have the technical ability to “establish the “relative note values”

Hence when considering the “Degree of Difficulty” of the melody always consider the

1. The technical difficulty
2. The difficulty of producing a expressive presentation

WHY STUDY THE FORM AND STRUCTURE OF THE MELODY

To be a successful Pipe Major it is absolutely necessary to recognise and pick out

- The phraseology of the melody(making use of the cadence)
- The rhythmic patterns that make up the phrase (known as the motives)
- Highlight the motives where drum presentation could help to influence the chosen “Style and Interpretation”
- Identify carefully connecting notes that highlight and establish important pulses or beats,

When conducting workshops, it has been my experience how reluctant pipers are to use the monotone. I strongly advise the continual use of a monotone as an aid to help “Identify the Musical Form and Structure” of the selected melody.

To illustrate the importance of making a planned study of the form and structure of a melody, I have chosen for a practical example, the tune “Cullen Bay” first composed by I Duncan, around 1975 and currently now in my opinion being played by many lower grade bands, with little attention to “Style and Interpretation”. In all probability bands have chosen this tune because of its strong melody and its apparent lack of “technical difficulty” in other words an easy tune to learn, but is this true.....

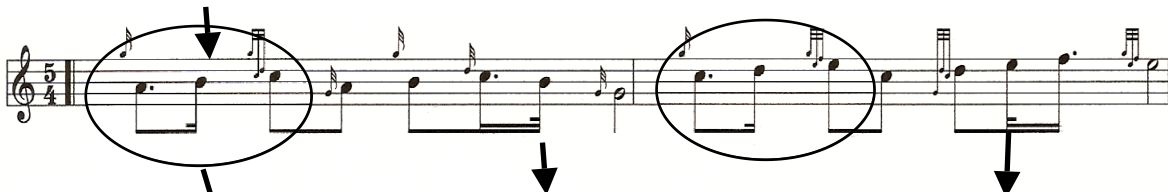
Let us choose the” Style and Interpretation”.....to be SPIRITED (lively and bold)

First impression indicates a straight forward simple tune despite its “assymetric time signature”



But, on closer inspection of the structure of this melody

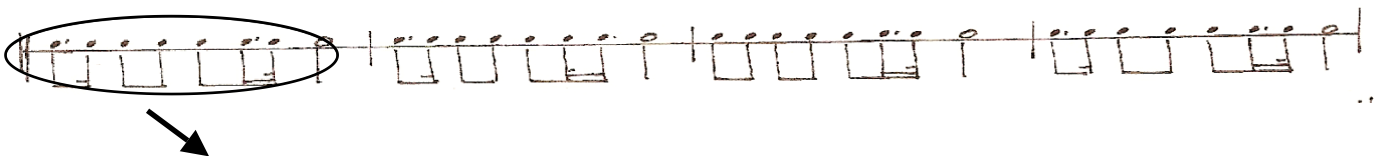
*Let us Identify the note groupings and the “relative note values”
Highlight the motives (note groupings) which could have an impact on the Expression
And Communicate with the Drum Leader regarding the tunes suitability for creating a drum presentation*



Use of 1/32 note, accuracy required to make an impact on expression

Opening bar opens with ascending sequence of notes without introduction. The B (connecting note) could be critical. This three note rhythmic pattern is repeated many times throughout the tune. The third note of the sequence is proceeded with a doubling, an added difficulty for the novice piper, care must be taken not to lengthen the short note to justify the embellishments. **A case for customising ?A case for pipers practicing the monotone ?**
A study of the monotone below shows how the rhythmic patterns are repeated throughout the melody, this proves that diligent practice on any of the selected “rhythmic pattern” would have its dividend. But the difficulty remains in highlighting the phrases and cadences because of its repetitive rhythmic pattern.

Let us now study the monotone



Notice the repetitive rhythmic pattern in the first four bars. This is repeated virtually through out the melody which creates difficulty for drummers to produce a presentation that would help to influence the chosen interpretation.

The possible outcome could result in a drum presentation....tracking the melody....lack of variation in intensity...poor dynamics

Summary of the **“TUNE SUITABILITY CHECK LIST”**

TUNE CULLEN BAY

Style and Interpretation	Spirited (lively and bold)
Form and Structure	<p>Repetitive rhythmic pattern of ascending and descending sequence of notes Repetitive rhythmic bar Strong embellishment on the weaker pulses Difficulty in assessing either a 2 then 3 pulse phrase Or a 3 then 2 pulse phrase There is scope for customising</p>
Relative Note Values	Variety of note values with critical short notes to ensure an Expressive Presentation
Degree of Difficulty	<p>Technical difficulty....low(fairly easy) Creating Musical Appreciation and Presentation.....high(difficult)</p>
Scope For Drumming Influence	Difficult to achieve a Drum presentation with influence because of the repetitive bar patterns

The Conclusion

To assist the articulation and expression of your chosen “Style and Interpretation” it is permissible to customise the embellishments in the music, such as avoiding heavy embellishment on connecting notes, or weaker pulses, question if you can achieve technical efficiency, **ensuring** an integrated “expressive musical appreciation”
 Remember music should move forward with accent and rhythm.
 consider carefully the two degrees of difficulty

1. Technical Difficulty.
2. Difficulty in creating a Musical Appreciation and Presentation.



A Method of Group Practice

When learning a new tune the Pipe Major should first prepare a *Tune Suitability Checklist* and recognise the group's effort as an exercise in "*programme for controlled development*" as illustrated in section 1. (The Pipe Major at Work)

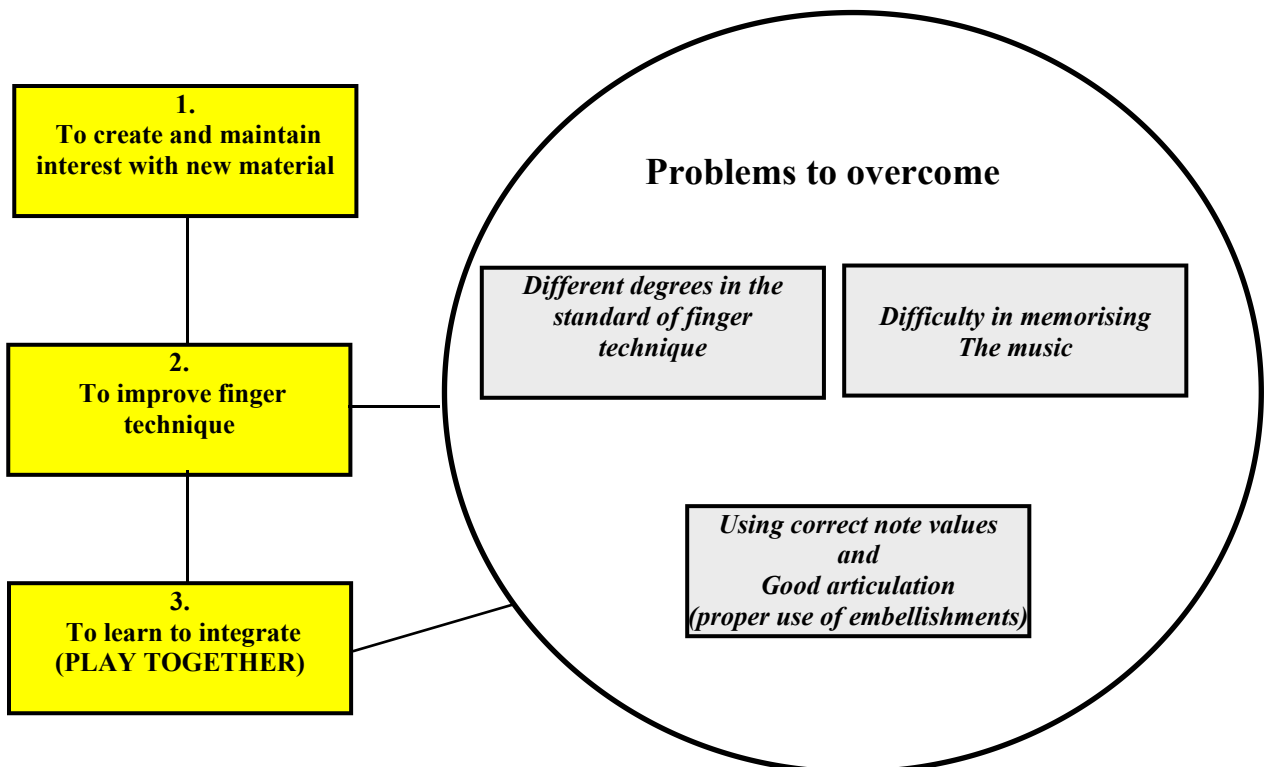
A useful tool we will use for this method of group practice is the comparison of **Music Notation** with the **Written or Spoken Word** made in the "**Language of Music**" describing.....

Single Note as a Syllable, and the *Motive as a Word which could have more than one syllable*.

"musical motive" defined, as the smallest collection of notes which makes a rhythmic pattern.

The *gracenote* (embellishment) is likened to *diction or pronunciation* and *rhythm* is the same as being *articulate and expressing words*

The aim of a group practice should be.....



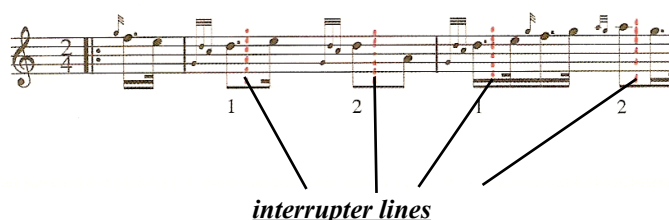
FOOD FOR THOUGHT (The Working Principle using the "Motive")

Different degrees in the standard of finger technique

1. The variation in the standard of finger technique in any group will be *minimised* when the task set, is simply to accomplish *playing a small unit of music*. We recognize the smallest unit in music notation is the single note, but should be aware of the "musical motive" defined in musical notation, as the smallest collection of notes which makes a rhythmic pattern.

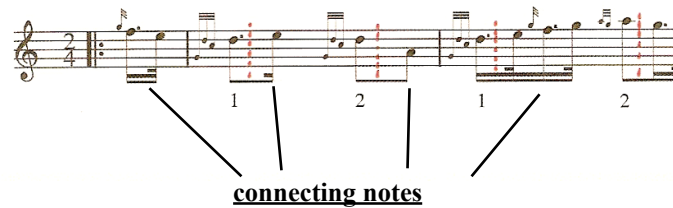
So for group practice, rather than use the normal method of indicating and attempting to play in phrases, we will concentrate on smaller units by sub-dividing **the phrase** into **motives**.

This is easy done by inserting vertical dotted lines named "*interrupter lines*"



Where do we insert the interrupter lines ?

When the rhythm is in “simple time” it is normal (but could vary)for the interrupter lines to be placed immediately after the beat note. The notes between the interrupter lines I call the connecting notes. The connecting notes (syllables) could be 1,2 or 3 in number. The relevance and importance of the connecting will soon become apparent as they are used to “open the door” and introduce the beat note (the pulse of the melody) consequently their relative note values are all important, especially the short notes.



Rules associated with connecting notes

Never stop on a connecting note, you may stop and breathe on the interrupter line.

“Always ensure the beat note / pulse is a point of arrival in the music”

Creating Expression and Articulation

Working with the motive /word, allows us to make use of other comparisons of **Music Notation** with the **Written or Spoken Word** made in the “**Language of Music**” such as.....

Using correct note values and Good articulation

Consider a word derived from more than one syllable, the sound of that word and the way it is expressed depends on how its syllables are emphasised,often in language there are similar words which have different pronunciations, this is entirely due to how the syllable’s are stressed. Similarly by comparing the musical motive to a word, the connecting notes act just as a word with one or more syllables. Therefore we could **Conclude** the expression of a particular motive / word is dependent on the accurate placement of the relative note values and the strategic use of embellishment.

The Monotone as a Teaching Aid

To allow you to monitor and demonstrate to the group,always create a monotone as a Teaching Aid

Creating the Monotone

Always indicate the interrupter lines , connecting notes and the beat notes by using the following symbols

interrupter lines

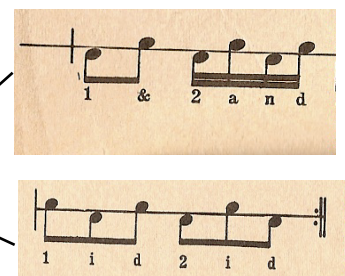
As previously mentioned.....vertical dotted lines

connecting notes

if in simple time label the notes using&,...a,...n,.. d....an

Compound time incorporate the letters....i...d

beat notes....indicate using numbers...1,2,.....

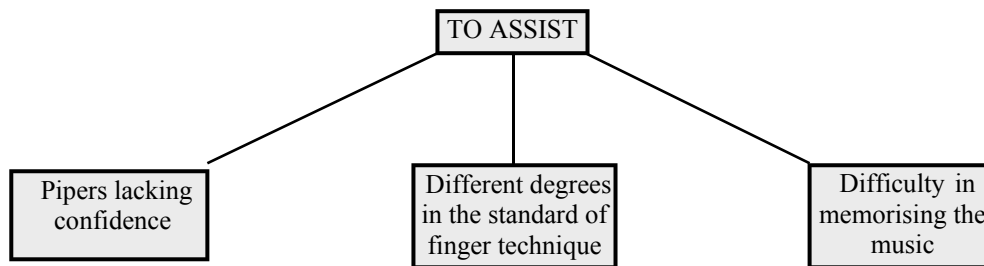


Making use of the Monotone

To learn to integrate (PLAY TOGETHER)

By tapping out the monotone and a foot tap on the beat note /pulse **maintaining a strict tempo you will be able to monitor and / or demonstrate** the accurate use of connecting notes required to ensure an expressive appreciation of the “**Musical Motive**” and also increase the awareness of “**integration**”

GROUP PRACTICE



1. Seat the players in a semi-circle with the strongest/best player on the Pipe Majors left with the remaining players ranked to this position according to their ability and confidence. it will become apparent this will allow the weaker piper to gain confidence and develop his/her technique.

2. Furnish each player with a copy of the tune with the motives/words and phrases marked

an a 1 an 2 & 1 a an a 2 an a



3. Establish the “rules for the piper”

Foot tap on the BEAT/PULSE, identified by the Numbers 1,2
Never stop on a connecting note, you may stop and breathe on the interrupter line.

4. Player (1) - would individually play the first motive/word, followed by the next player and then he next and so on, until all Players have correctly played the chosen motive.

Ensure that all remaining pipers, are silently fingering the motive / word whilst awaiting their turn. This will allow the least confident piper (according to his/her seated position) to have extra opportunity to hear and practice the individual motive/word before being asked to play, the Pipe Major should take the opportunity to conduct the accuracy of the note values using the monotone and describe the “structure” of the rhythmic patterns e.g. Ascending, Descending, repeating itself and so on.....

5. The exercise would be repeated but this time with either two or three players playing collectively. soon the players involved will develop their sense of integrating and will soon be able to highlight their on shortcomings.

6. The above procedures would be repeated playing the second motive then the third and so on until the phrase is complete.

7. With the Pipe Major making use of the monotone, the pipers would be encouraged to play 2- motives continuously, followed by 3-motives continuously and so on, until the complete phrase is accomplished with a degree of competency and collective integration.

When building up the number of motives being played continuously, allow the weaker pipers to develop at their own pace. sometimes as an aid, the motive will also have to be broken into syllables, making use of the analogy

from **Music Notation** with the **Written or Spoken Word** made in the **“Language of Music”** describing.....
“comparing the musical motive to a word, the connecting notes act just as a word with one or more syllables”

Likely Achievements

- 1. Enjoyable practice with each player performing at his/her own level of competence**
 - 2. Integration comes naturally**
 - 3. The melody will be memorised much faster**
 - 4. Individual faults easily identified, especially use of relative note values combined with embellishments**
-
-