Upgrade Your Rehearsals

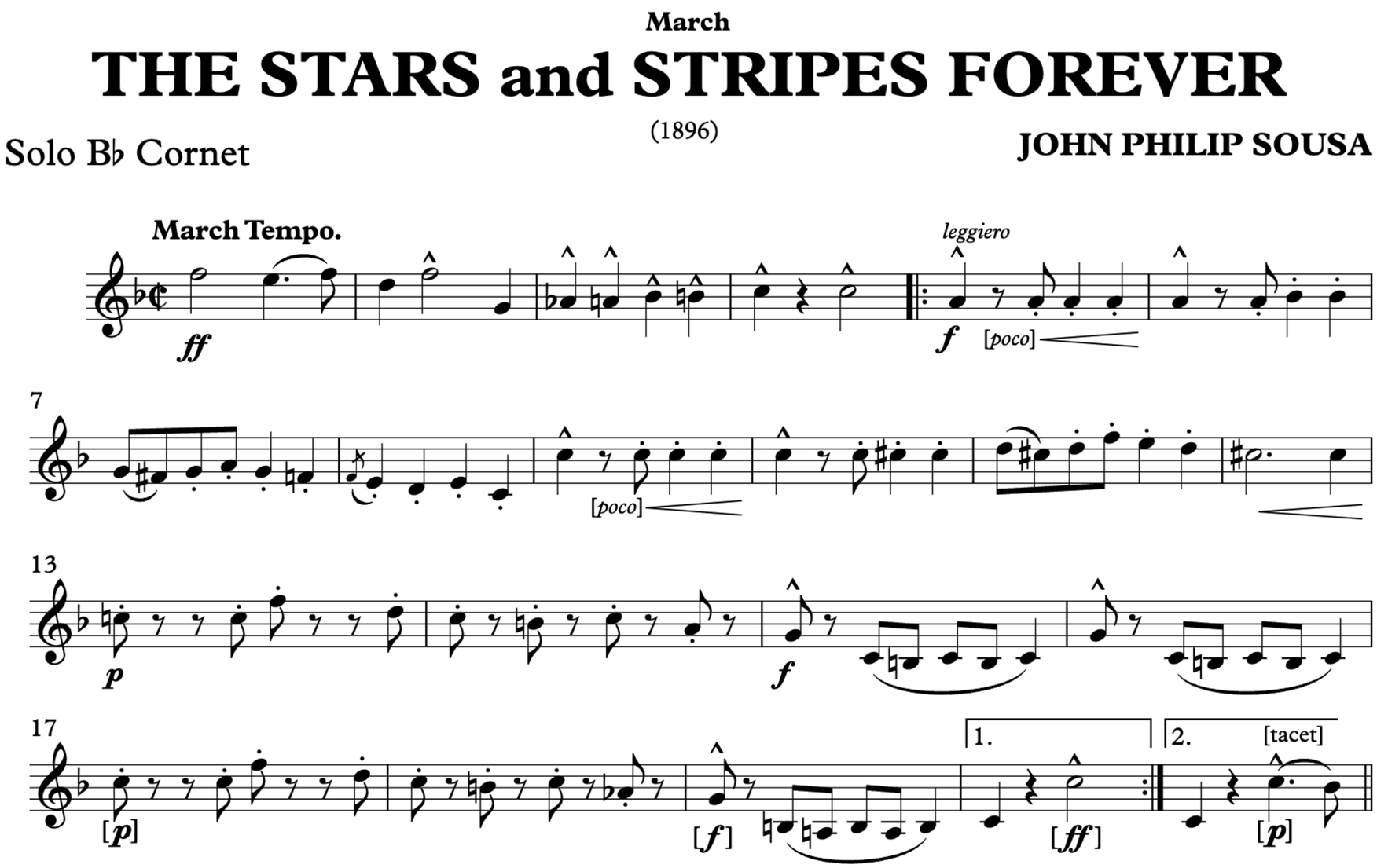
Strategies for Planning, Listening, and Leading

Scan for slides and materials from presentation!

Emmett O'Leary & Catheryn Foster

VIRGINIA TECH®

Teaching Cycle in Action



Teaching Cycles

- Moves in a process of whole-part-whole (aka macro-micro-macro)
- Invites students to focus on specific performance elements
- Recognizes that students can really focus on one thing at a time

Rhythm	Notes	Articulations
Dynamics	Balance	Blend
Phrasing	Intonation	

Rehearsing

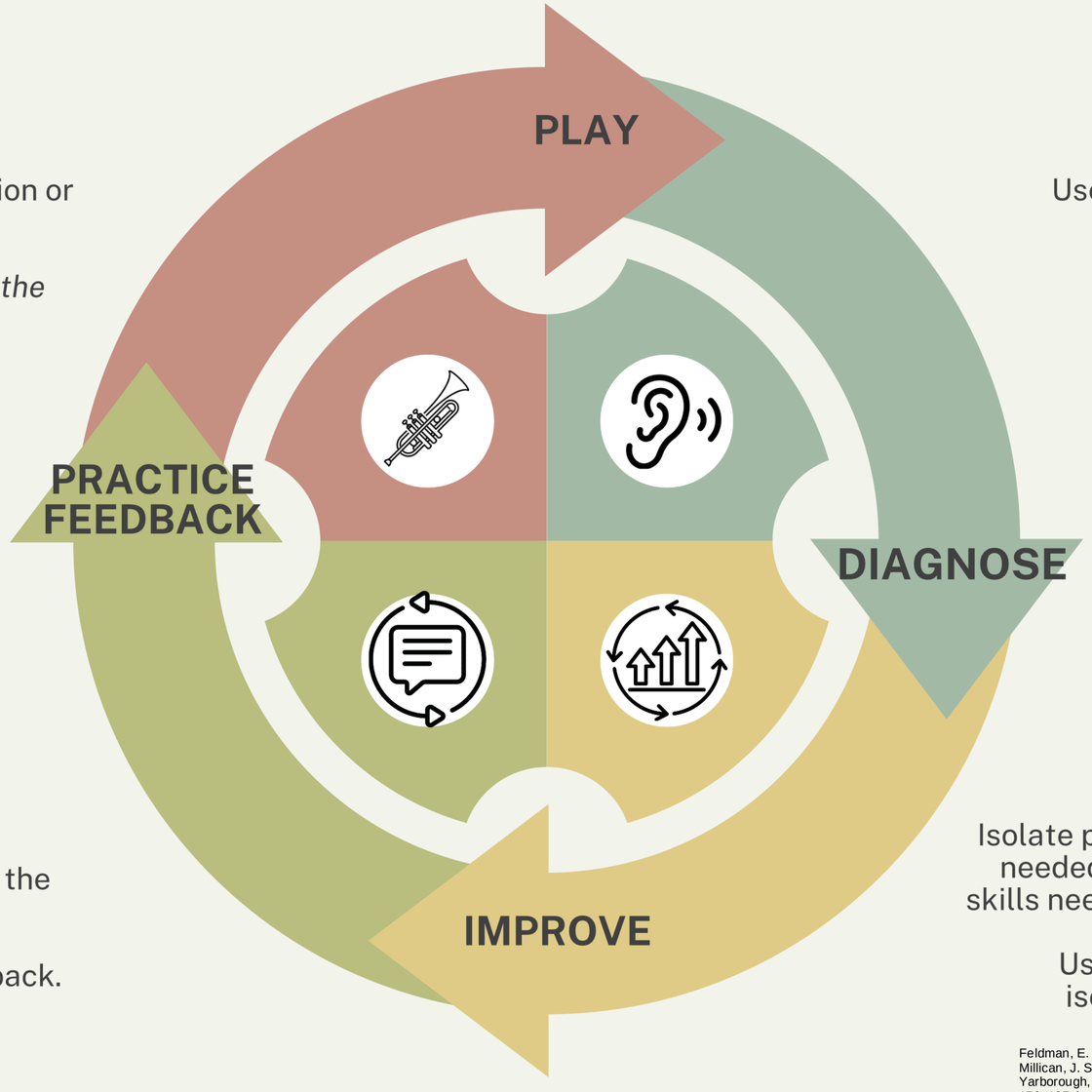
PLAY

Students perform a section or excerpt.

This provides context for the processes that follow

DIAGNOSE

Use error detection skills to identify issues.



PRACTICE AND FEEDBACK

Build toward performing the full section again.

Provide actionable feedback.

IMPROVE

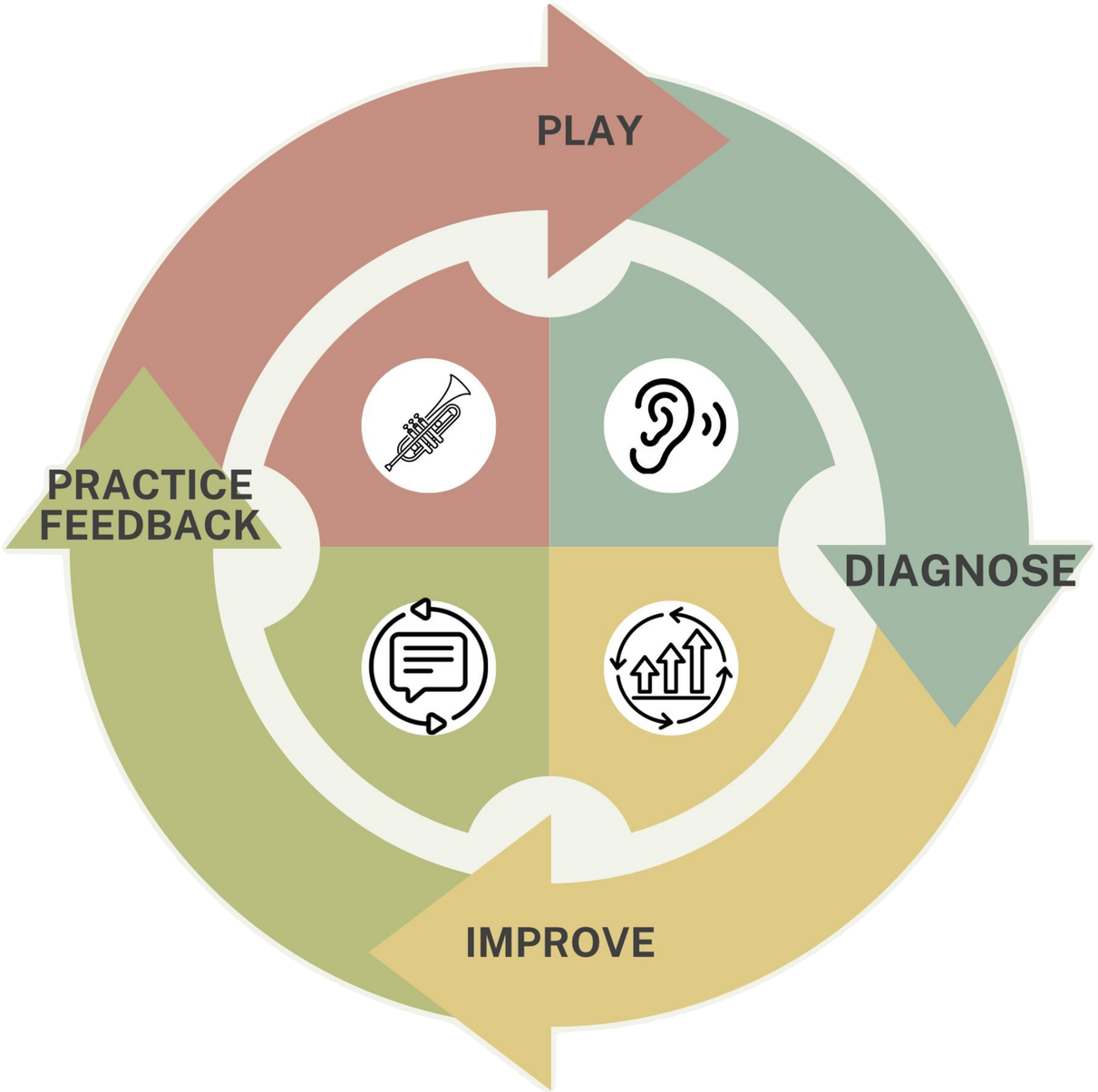
Isolate performance elements as needed and build. Foundational skills need to be established first!

Use rehearsal strategies to isolate and develop skills.

Feldman, E. & Contzius, A. (2016). *Instrumental music education: Teaching with the musical and practical in harmony.* Routledge.
Millican, J. S. (2012). *Starting out right: Beginning band pedagogy.* Scarecrow Press.
Yarborough, C. & Price, H. E. (1989). Sequential patterns of instruction in music. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, *37*(3), 179–187. https://doi.org/10.2307/3344668

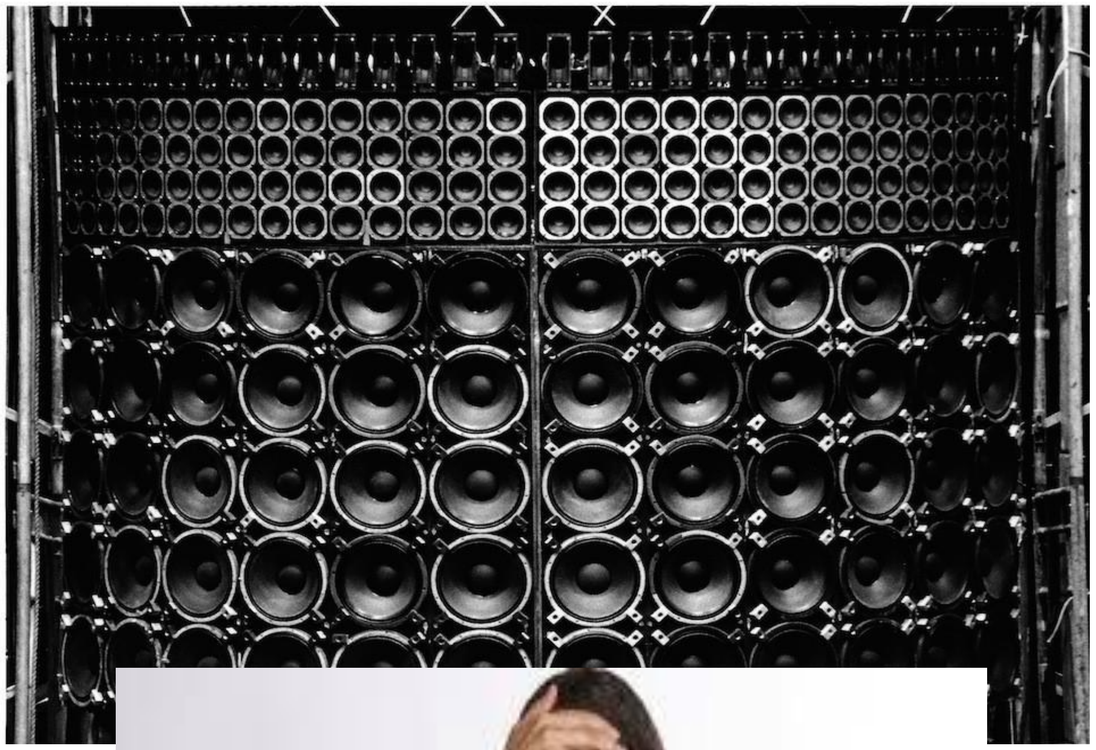
Overview

- Error Detection
- Rehearsal Strategies
- Feedback
- Planning with Teaching Cycles



Error Detection & Effective Rehearsals

- “Wall of sound”
- Pacing
- Classroom Management
- ”Do it again!”



Ability

Not related to…

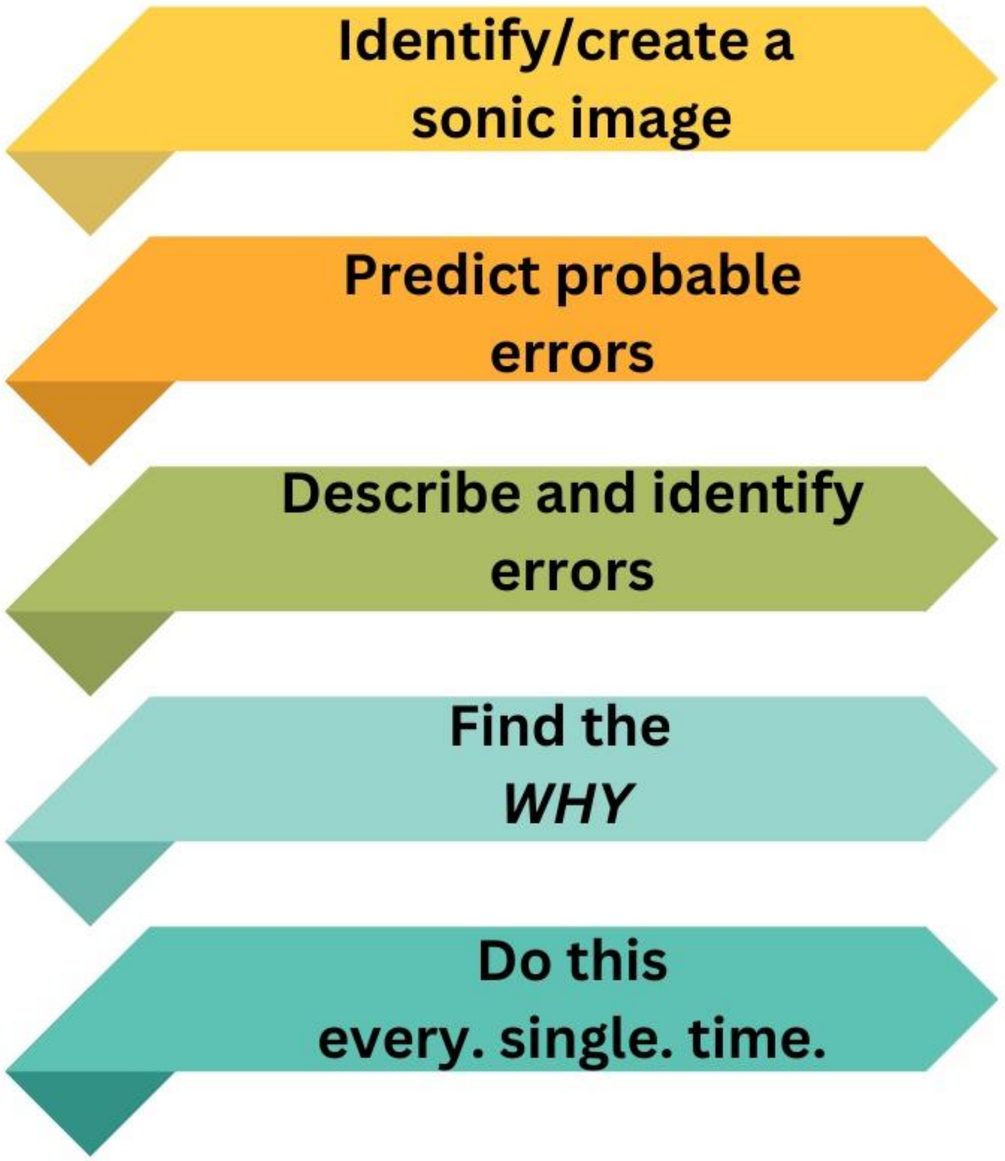
- Number of instruments played
- Ensemble experience
- Ability in music theory
- Skills in sight singing or ear training
- Years of private instruction prior to entering college

Brand, M., & Burnsed, V. (1981). Music abilities and experiences as predictors of error-detection skill. *Journal of Research in Music Education, 29*(2), 91– 96.

Cycle of Pedagogical Skills

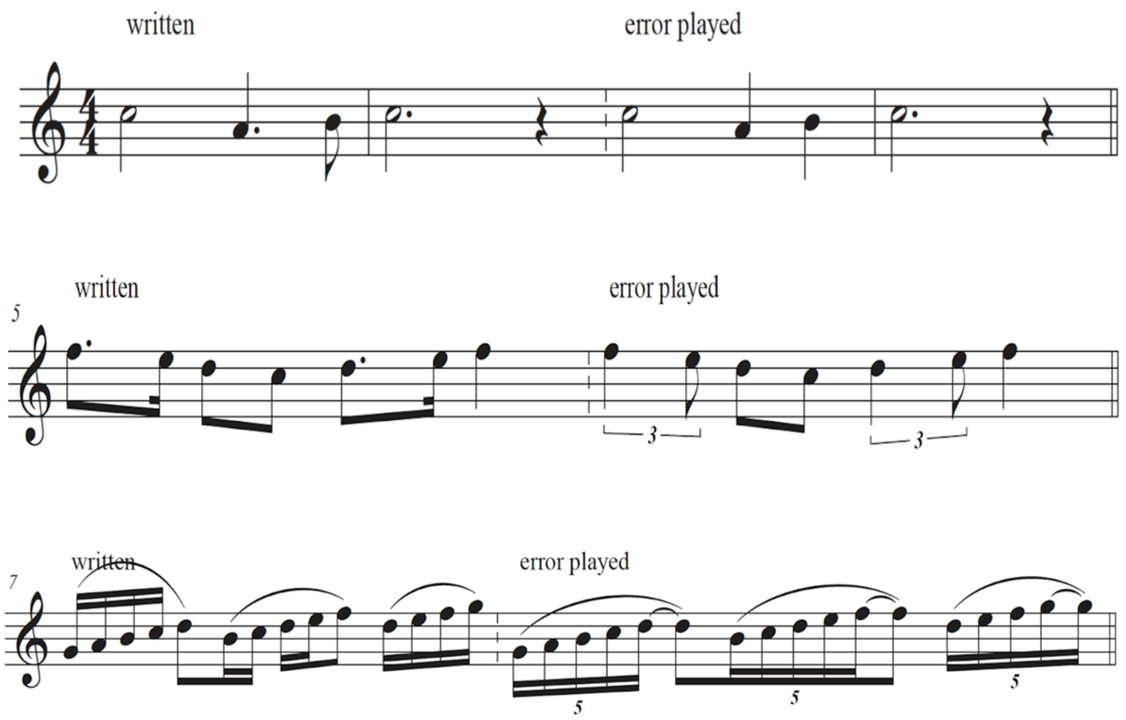
- **Error Prediction**
  - Where are performers most likely to make a mistake?
- **Error Prevention**
  - How can we put it a stop to the error before it occurs?
- **Error Detection**
  - Where are the mistakes occurring, and how specific can we get to the measure, the beat, and the performer?
- **Error Correction**
  - What actionable feedback can we give to our students that will *fix* the problem?
- **Error Diagnosis & Analysis**
  - Become a reflective practitioner

Error Detection Strategy

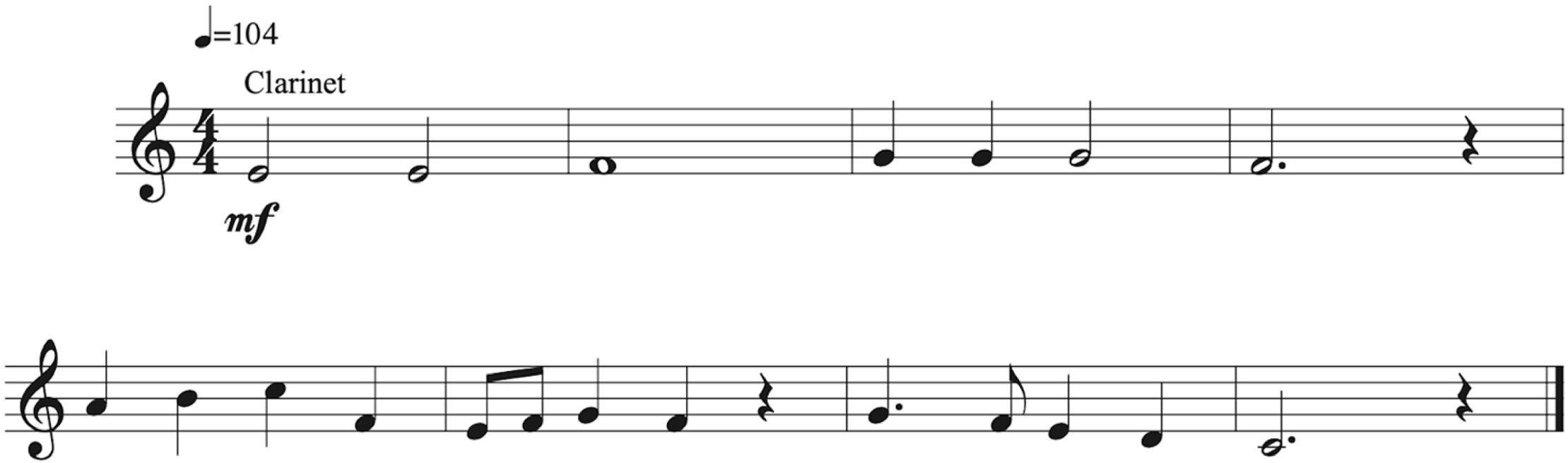


Common Rhythmic Errors

- Long tones
- Dotted notes
- Shorter value notes (eighth, sixteenth)
- Syncopation
- Tied notes
- Rests
- Tempo and timing



Rhythm Example



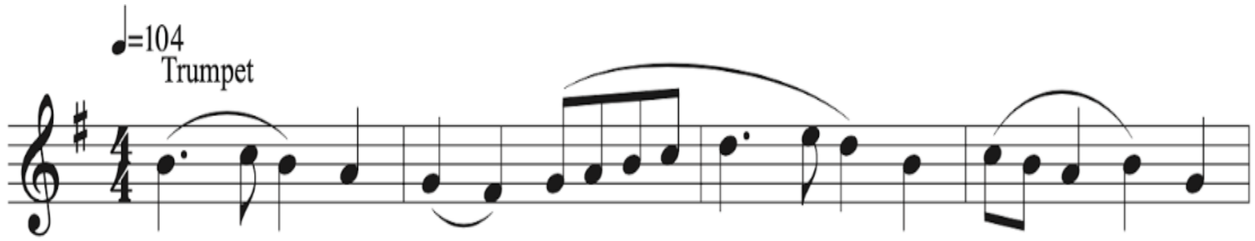
Error-free

With errors

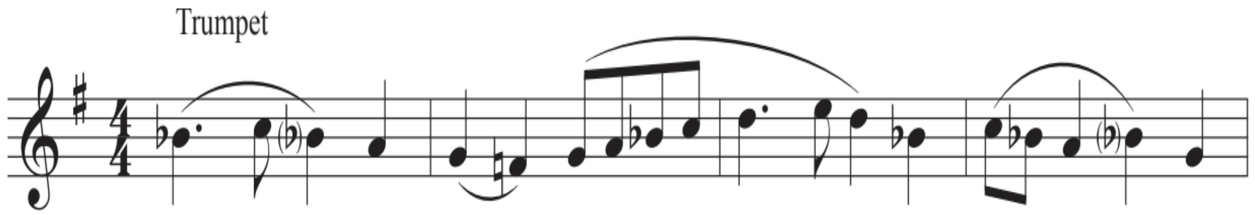
Common Pitch Errors

- Key
- Accidentals
- Brass Partials

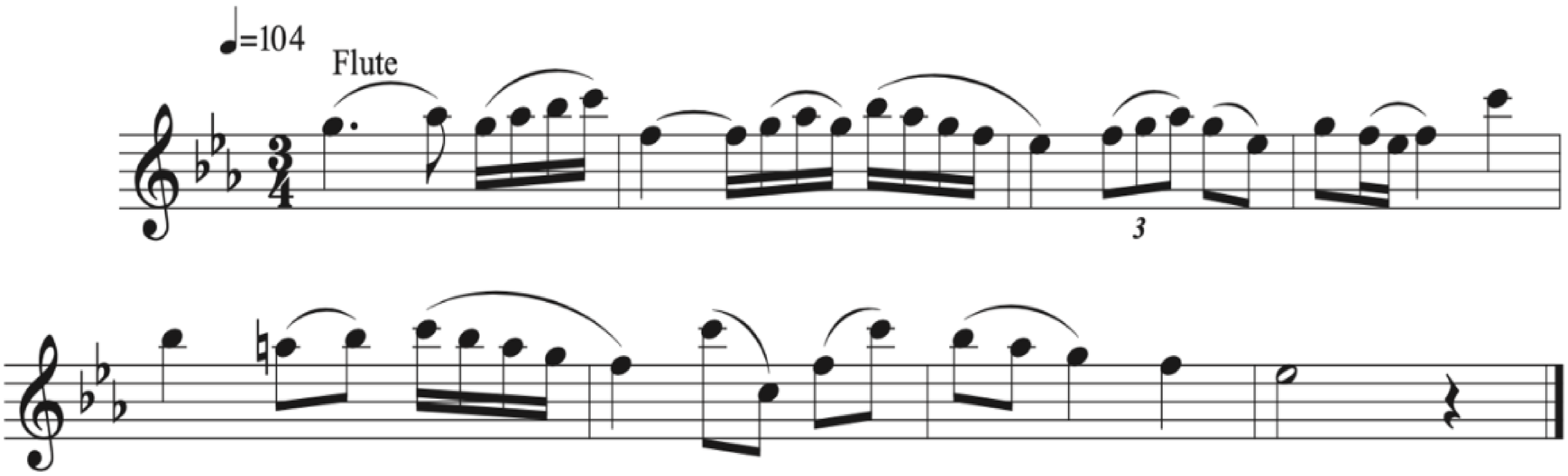
Written



Played



Pitch Example



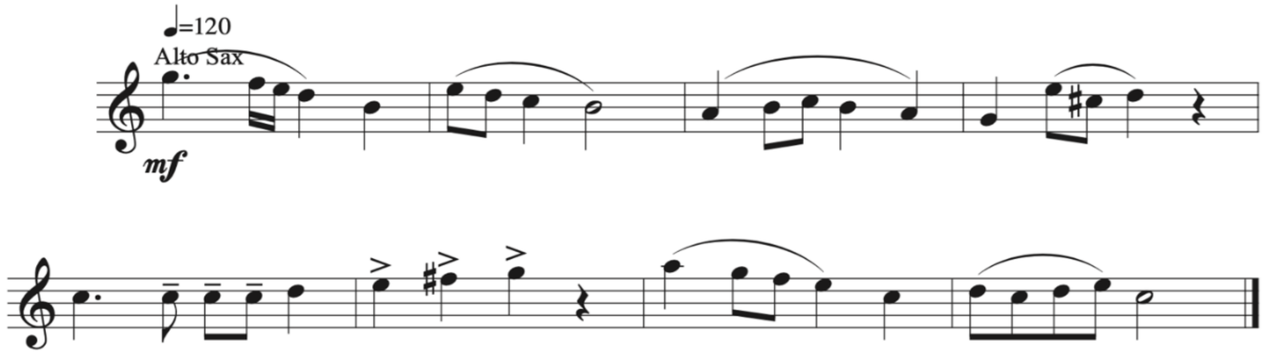
Error-free

With errors

Common Articulation Errors

- Accent
- Staccato
- Marcato
- Tenuto
- Slur

Written



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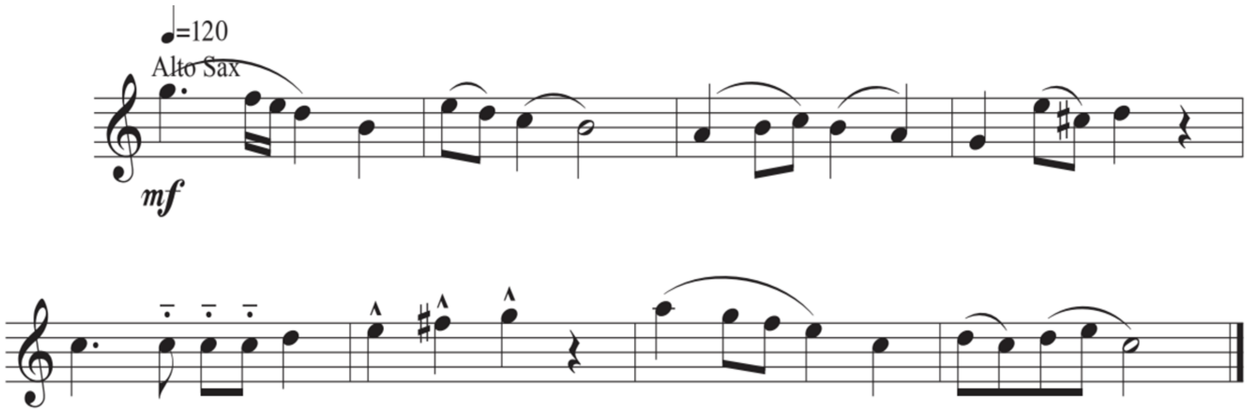
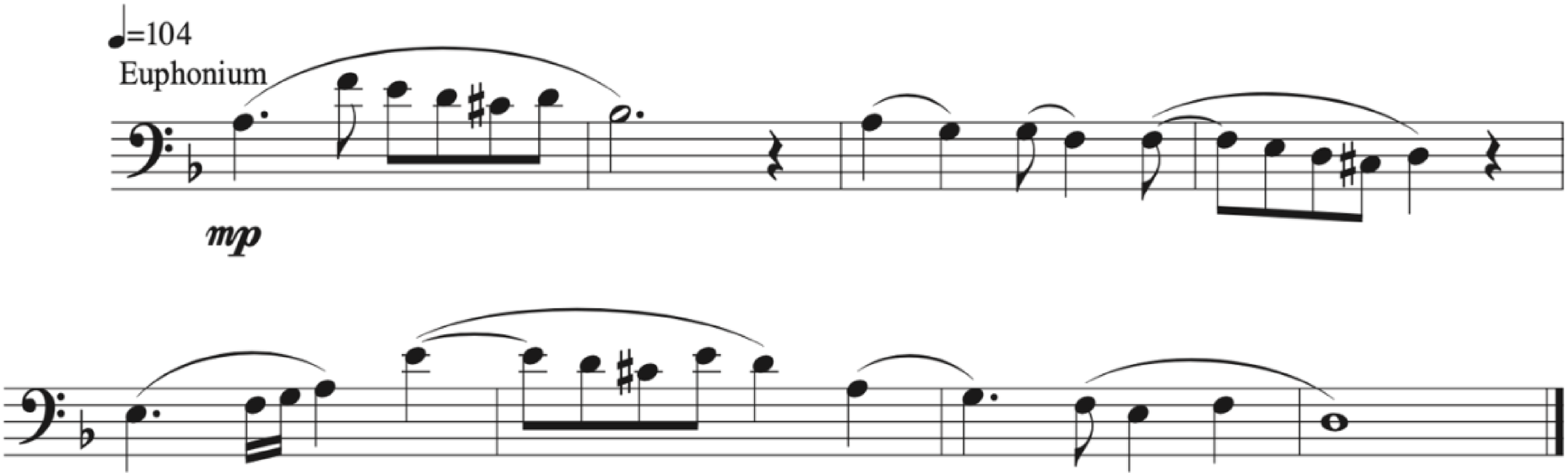


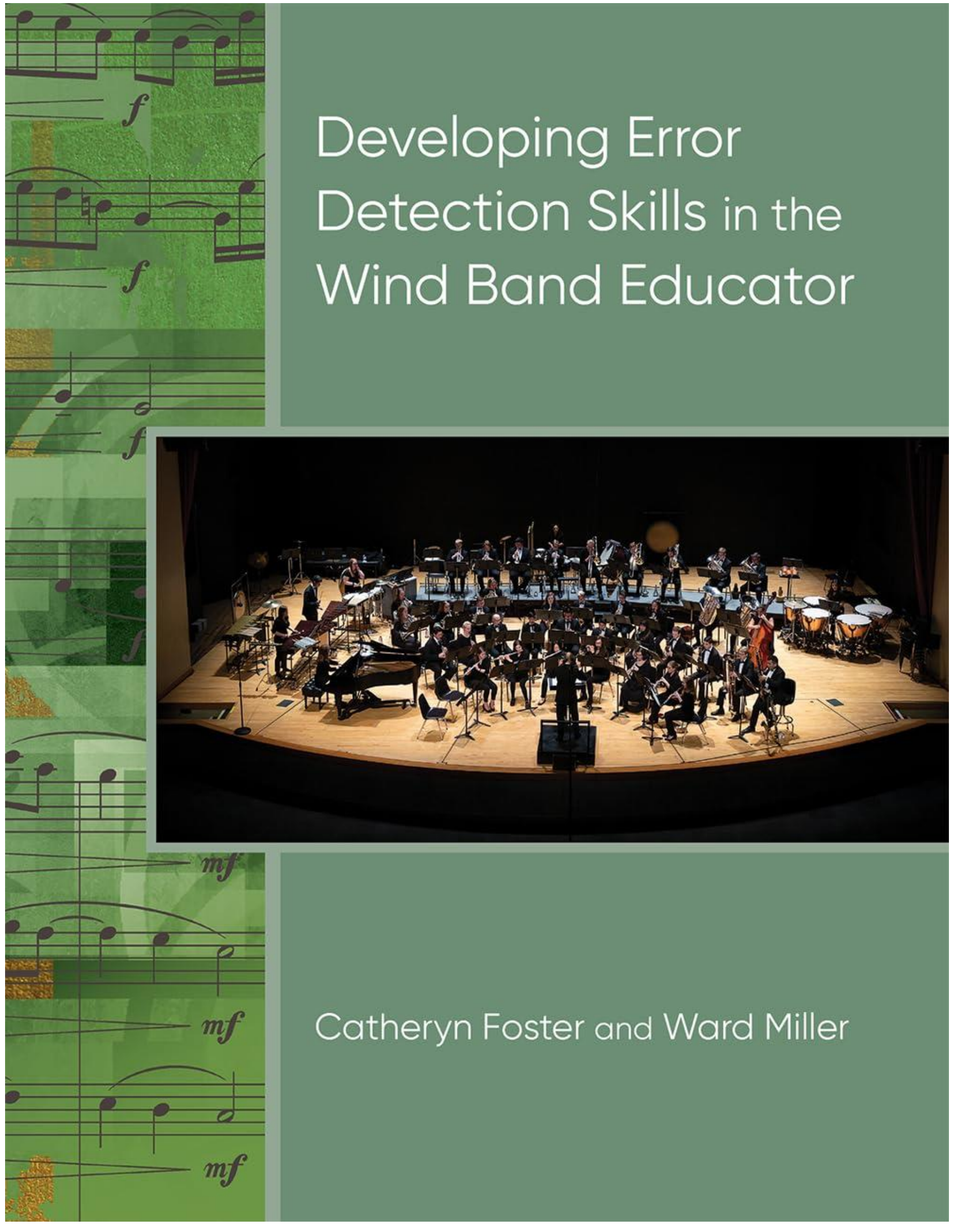
Articulation Example



Error-free

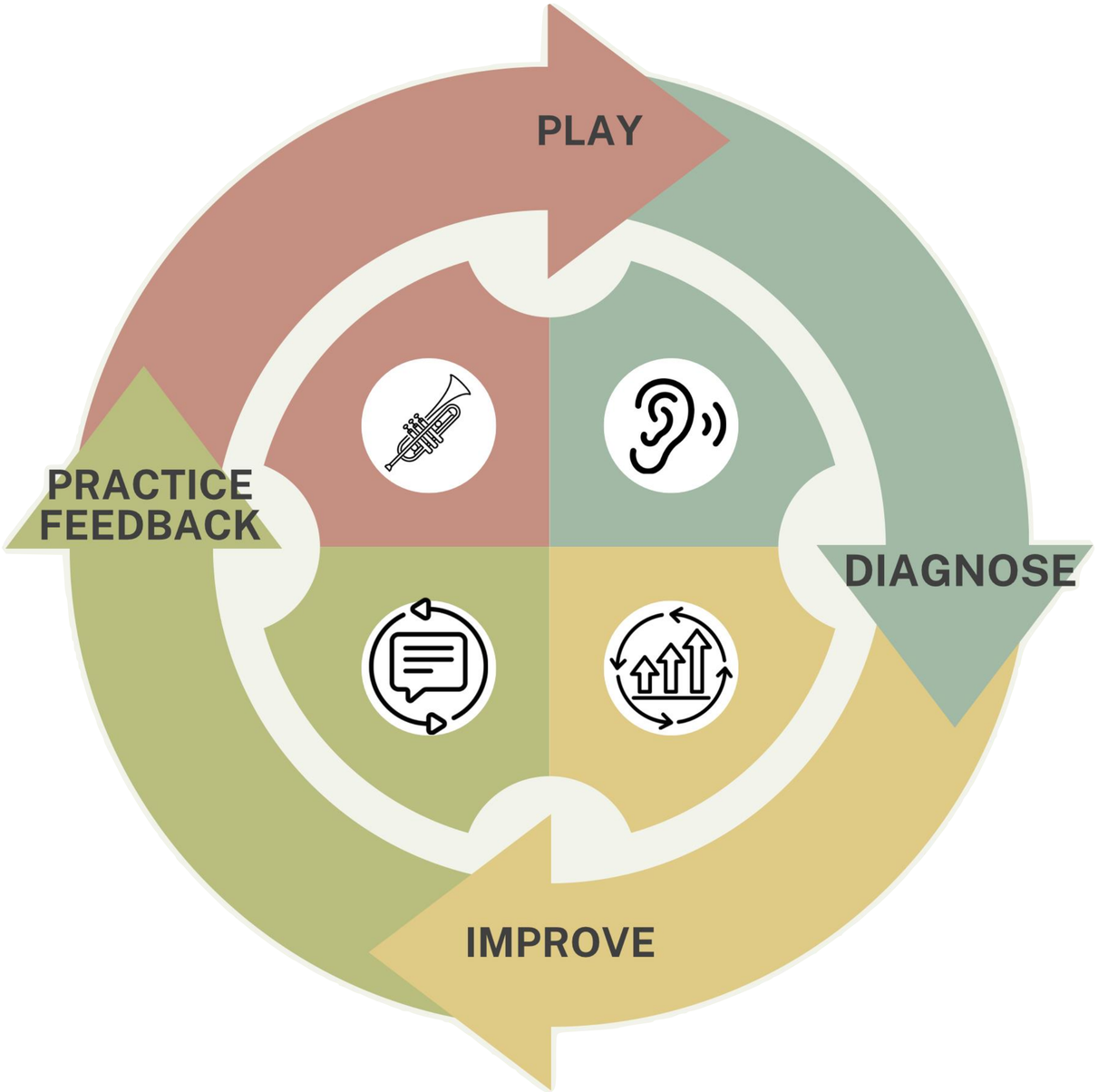
With errors

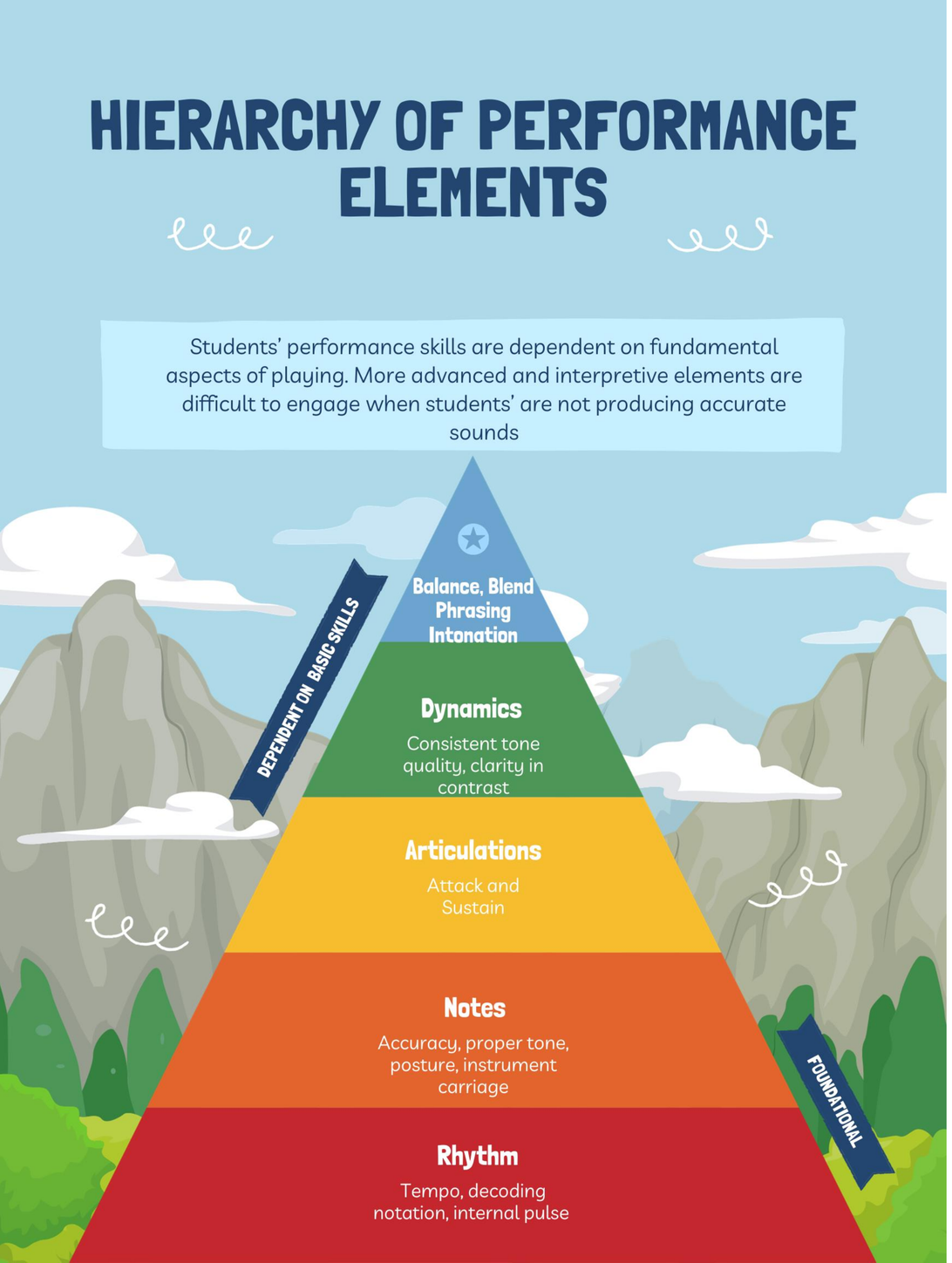
Resource


Developing Error Detection Skills in the Wind Band Educator
Catheryn Foster and Ward Miller

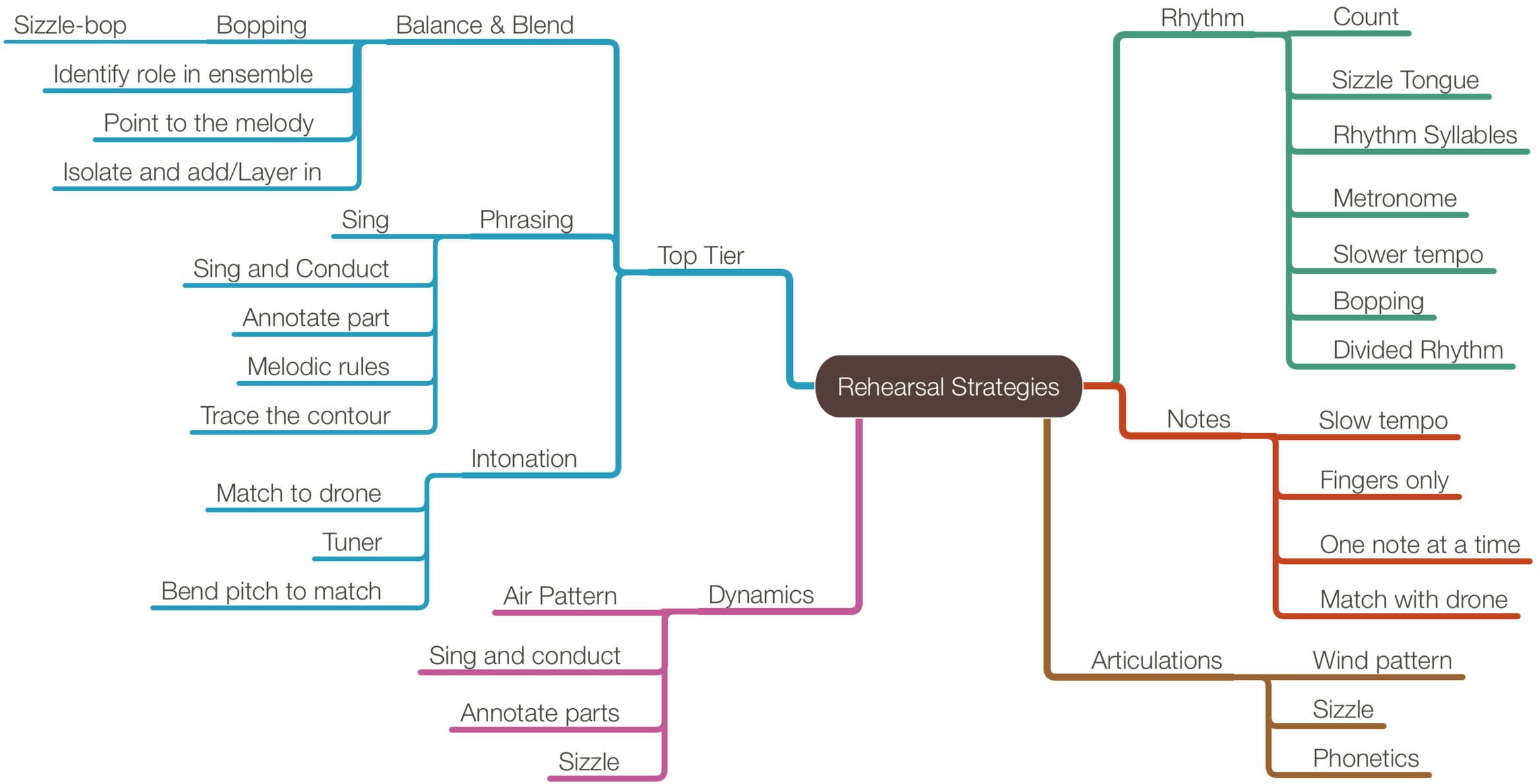
Improve

- This is the section where a lot of the teaching happens.
- I offer two overall frameworks to guide your work here.
- H.O.P.E.
- Flow



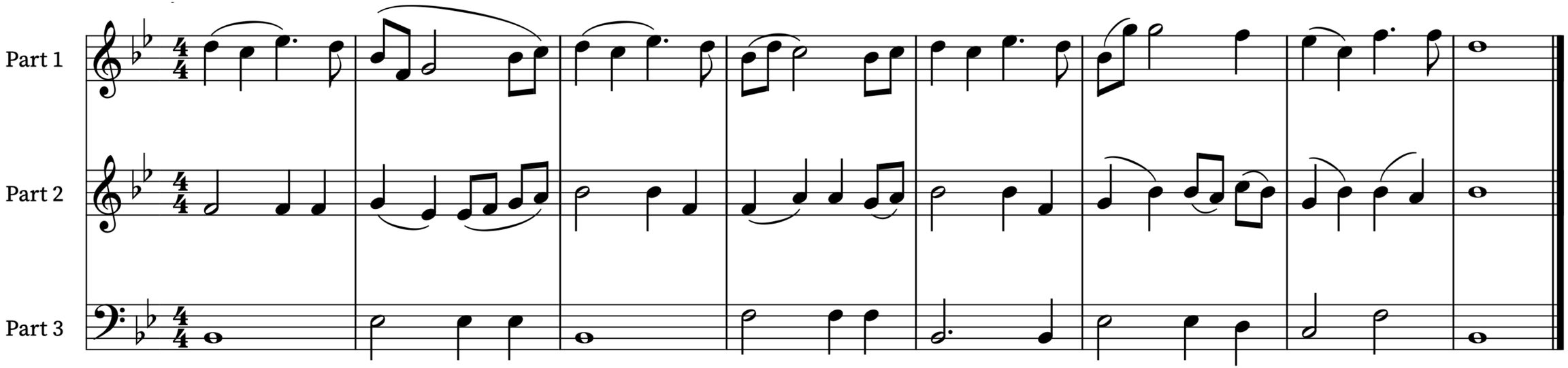


- After you diagnose, decide where on the hierarchy you need to work.
- If the foundational elements are not present, it's difficult to work on more advanced aspects.
- If foundational elements are present, you should be pushing the ensemble to the more advanced elements.
- Use strategies to isolate performing concepts.

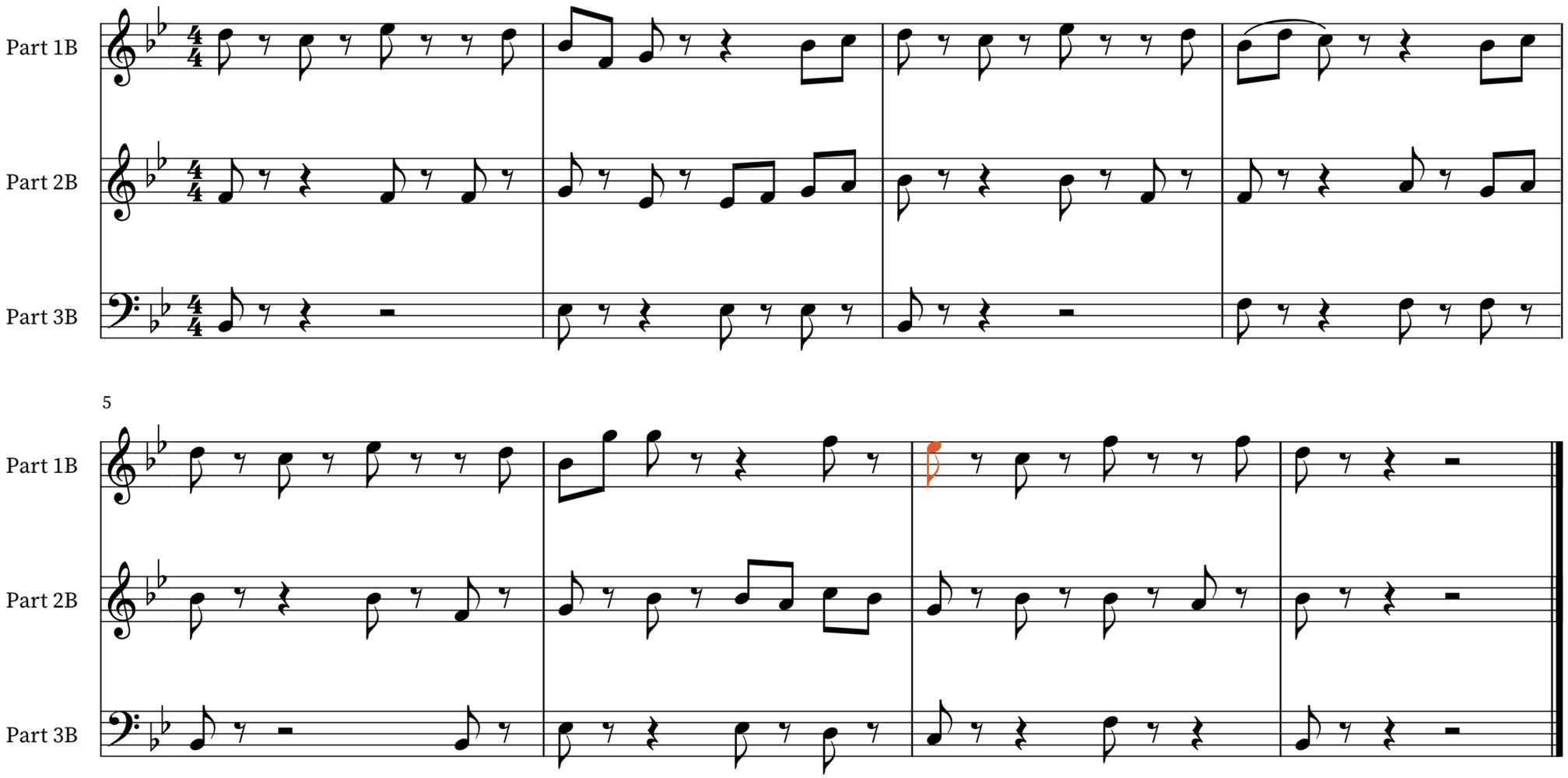

Rehearsal Strategies
Top Tier
Balance & Blend
Bopping
Sizzle-bop
Identify role in ensemble
Point to the melody
Isolate and add/Layer in
Phrasing
Sing
Sing and Conduct
Annotate part
Melodic rules
Trace the contour
Intonation
Match to drone
Tuner
Bend pitch to match
Dynamics
Air Pattern
Sing and conduct
Annotate parts
Sizzle
Rhythm
Count
Sizzle Tongue
Rhythm Syllables
Metronome
Slower tempo
Bopping
Divided Rhythm
Notes
Slow tempo
Fingers only
One note at a time
Match with drone
Articulations
Wind pattern
Sizzle
Phonetics

Example - Softly Speaks the Night

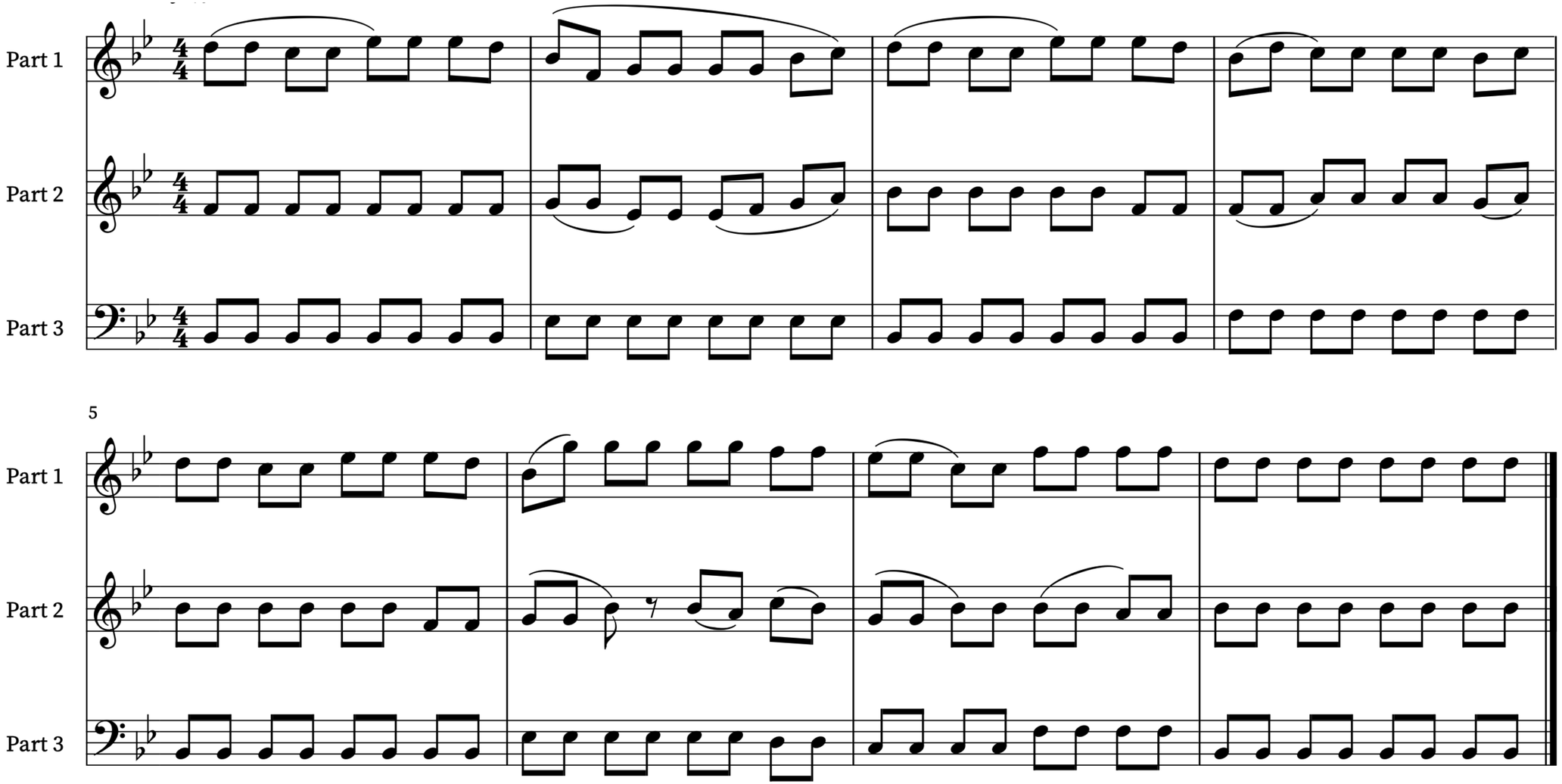
Carol Brittin Chambers



Bopping

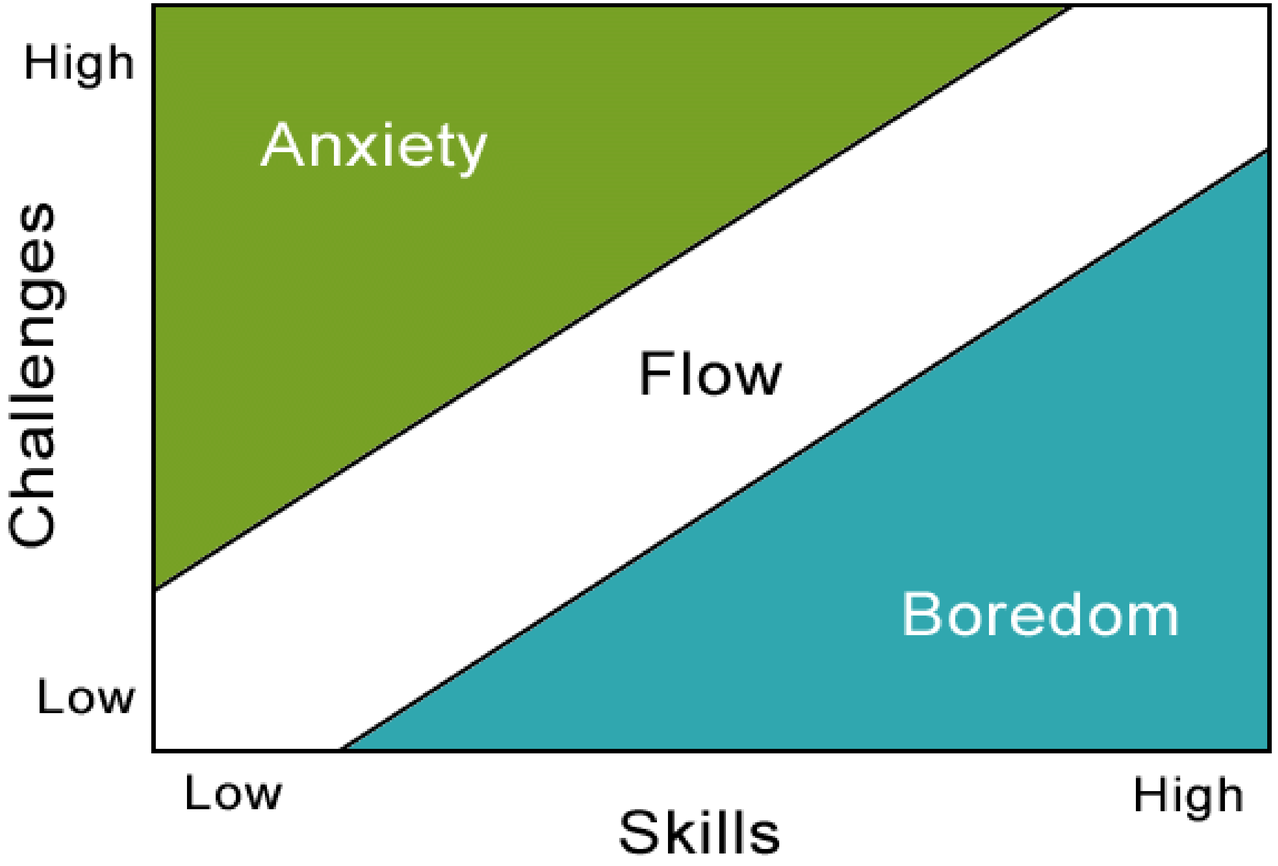


Divided Rhythm



Educational Theory Moment

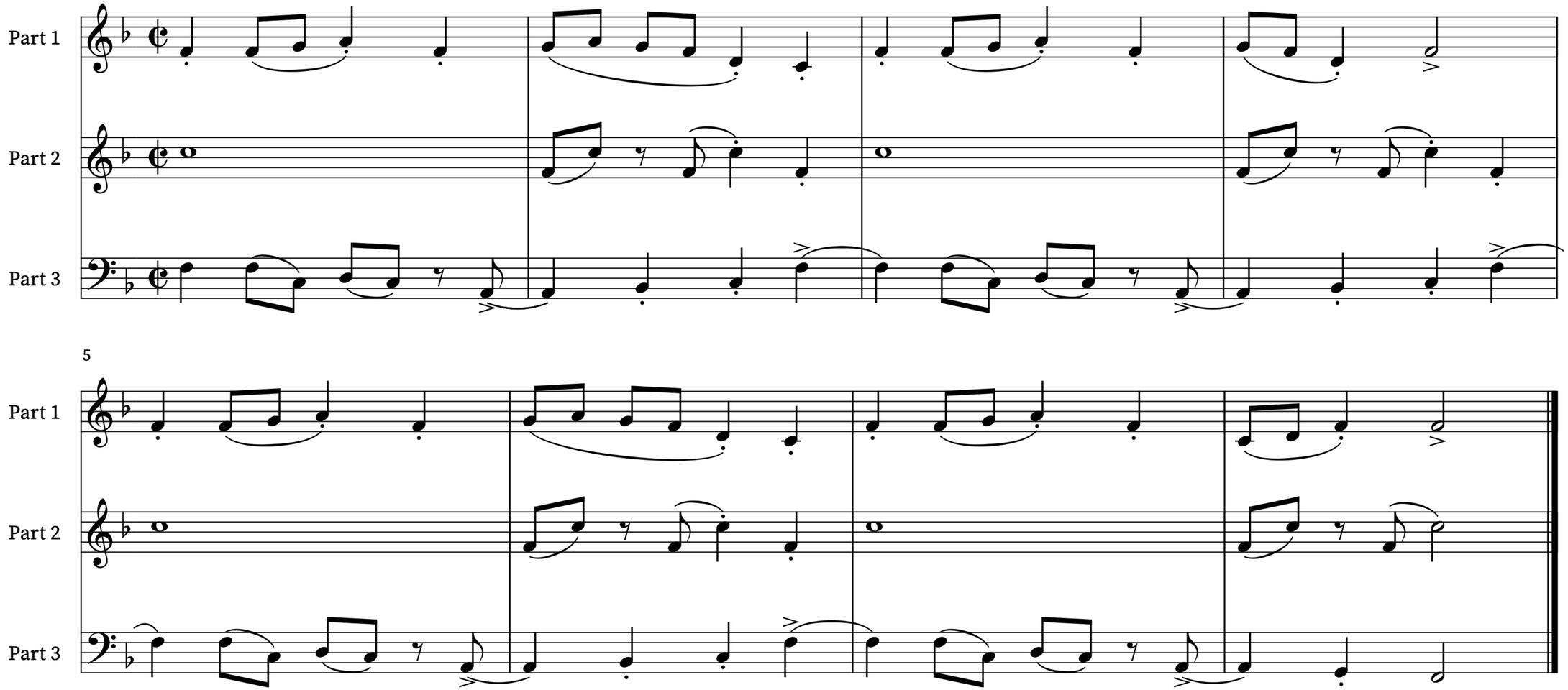
- Rehearsals ideally keep students in flow
- Similar concept to Vygotsky's "Zone of Proximal Development"
- How might this function in a rehearsal situation?



Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1997). Finding flow: The psychology of engagement with everyday life. New York: Basic Books.

Example 2: Blue Ridge Reel

Brian Balmages



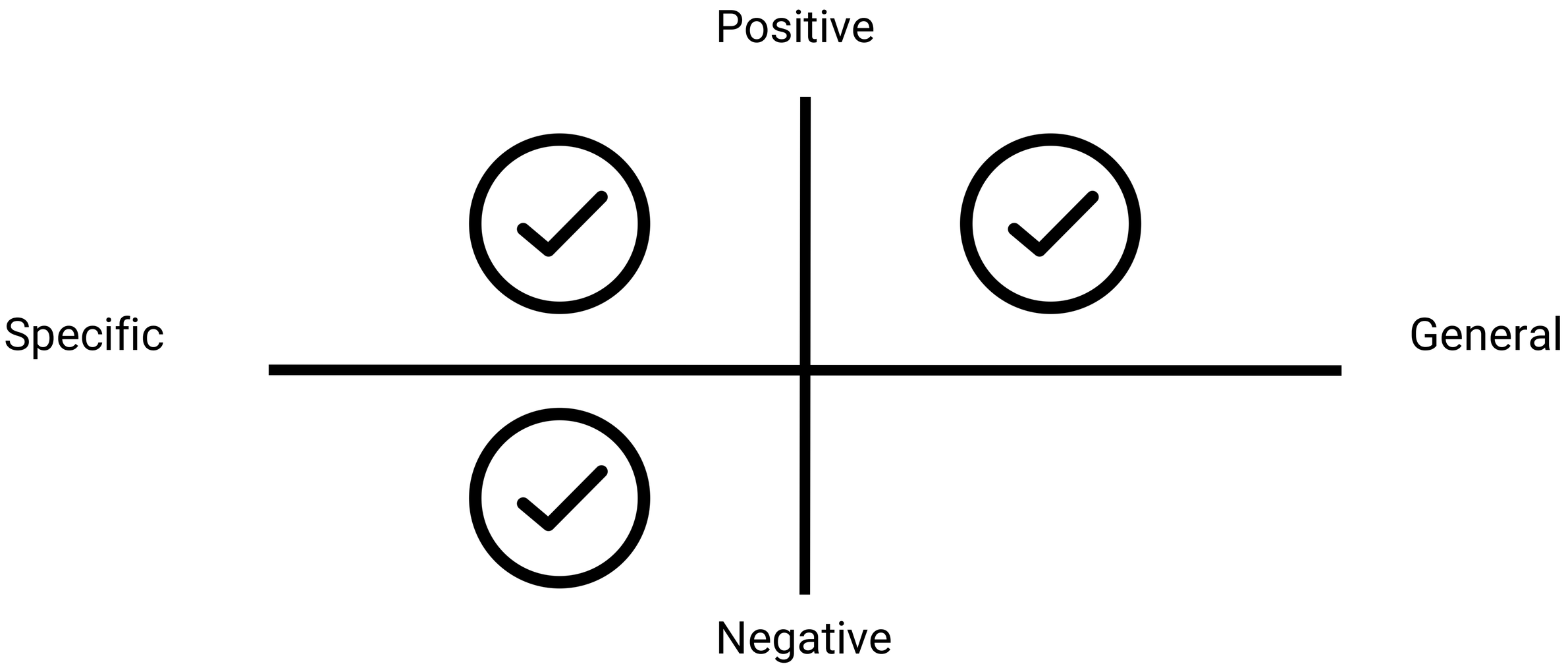
End the Cycle with Feedback

Feedback can be helpful and memorable

Feedback Type	Helpful	Memorable	Example
Positive General			Way to go!
Positive Specific	✅	✅	Your articulations were clear!
Negative General		✅	That was bad.
Negative Specific	✅	✅	More air would help your tone sound fuller.

Blackwell, J. & Matherne, N. (2024). Developing feedback skills in preservice music teachers. *International Journal of Music Education. 42*(2), 243–256. https://doi.org/10.1177/02557614231163237

Types of Feedback



Planning

- Analyze your scores and anticipate possible issues at each level of the hierarchy.
- Plan possible teaching cycles and use them in response to what you hear.

Example Teaching Cycle:
Stormchasing mm. 15-23

Performance Element	*Instruments/Part*	*Reheasal strategy*
Rhythm	*Trumpet(s)*	*Count rhythm words out loud, focusing on sustain for half note. Progress to sizzle tongue*
Articulation	*Flute/Oboe*	*Say phonetics for accent-> staccato (Dah-> Dih) then remind how that will work on instrument*
Intonation	*Trumpet(s)*	*D (bottom of staff) will be sharp. Show on Tonal Energy how 3rd valve slide will help*

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