

NOTES ON BEING A PIPE MAJOR

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THE PIPE BAND

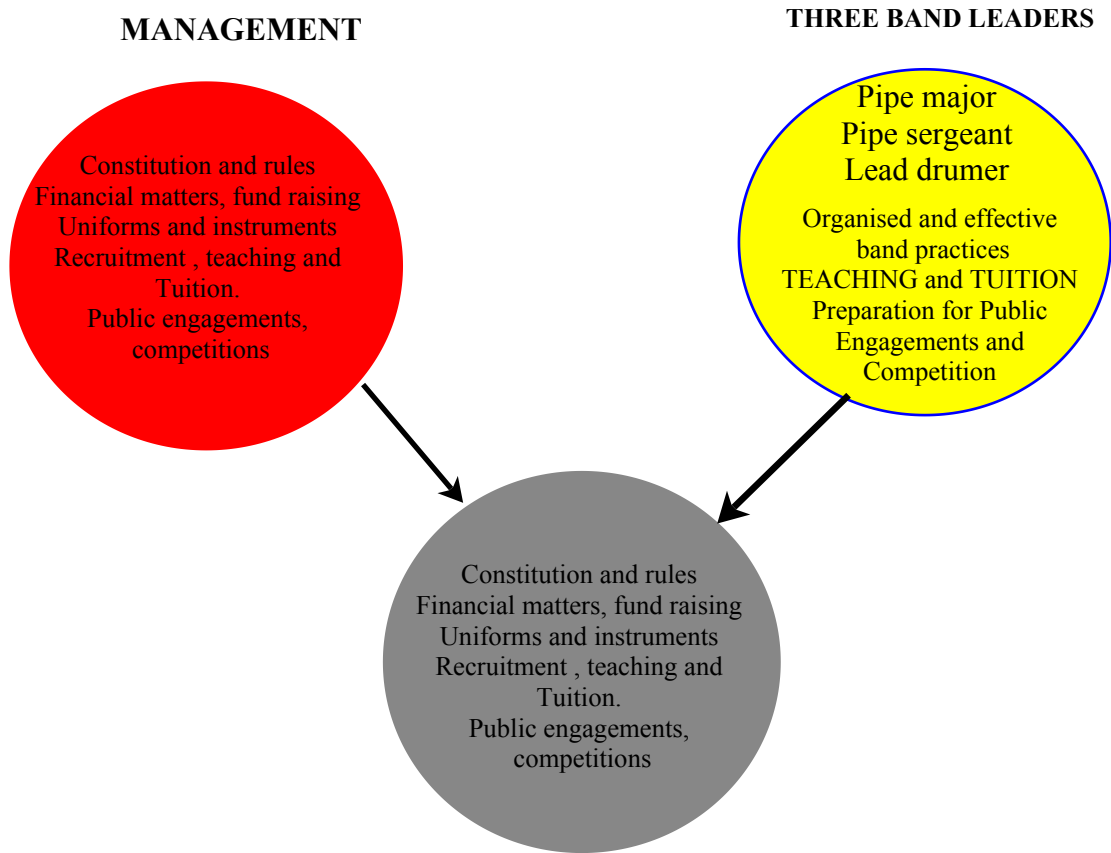
The Pipe Band as we know it dates back to 1885, when the first two civilian bands were formed, namely the BURGH OF GOVAN later to become the GLASGOW POLICE and the 9th BATTALION H.L.I., which became the GLASGOW HIGHLANDERS.

Pipe Band's have now been formed world wide, involving thousands of dedicated bandsmen

FORMING A PIPE BAND

The first priority for any successful pipe band is an organized management policy with effective band practices. For full band practice effectiveness there should be at least three band leaders. A pipe major, Pipe sergeant and lead drummer. Although not always necessary a Drum Major can be added to enhance the marching and discipline aspect of the band for public engagements.

THE PIPE BAND AND IT'S OFFICIALS



Ideally all administrative tasks should be the remit of special elected members for specific duties e.g. Band manager, Band secretary, band treasurer etc., the selection of such officials would often depend if the band operated with a defined constitution and rules.

THE PLAYING AND PERFORMANCE OF THE BAND SHOULD ALWAYS BE THE REMIT OF THE PIPE MAJOR, AND LEAD DRUMMER.

DUTIES OF THE BAND LEADERS

PIPE MAJOR:

is the primary authority of the band and his or her appointment ought to be sustained by the membership. This is usually accomplished by a vote of some sort.

His / her qualifications should include if possible,

A basic knowledge of the Theory of Music
Knowledge and experience on the care and maintenance of the instrument
The ability to organize and give leadership to the band
The ability to give guidance to the Drum Corps to achieve a musical performance

The basic duties of the Pipe Major would include,
Overall responsibility for band performances
Preparation of practice and training schedules for the band including teaching beginners
Communicating the music interpretation to the Drum Section

The Pipe Major should also keep up with the new developments in the Pipe Band world, such as publications, music, recordings. This sometimes can be achieved by listening to other bands live or recorded. The pipe major should also try to keep up to date with their manufacturers and their products. In other words be aware of modern trends, before making personal assessment.

“If you want to know what the best is.....listen to what the best are playing” !

PIPE SERGEANT

Possibly best chosen by the the Pipe Major as consequently would have to work together and will have many over lapping tasks, e.g. Should be able to conduct the chanter practice, thus allowing the Pipe Major to spend time with the Drum Section, the novice or learner pipers or whatever has priority. When the full band is playing the Pipe Sergeant should be able to take command, allowing the Pipe Major to conduct and/or listen to the ensemble effect etc.

LEAD DRUMMER

Must work with the Pipe Major to understand the “Style and Interpretation” of the chosen music and be responsible for arranging all drum scores and conducting the drum section practice. If the band is large enough or has a lot of learners, further deputies can be added

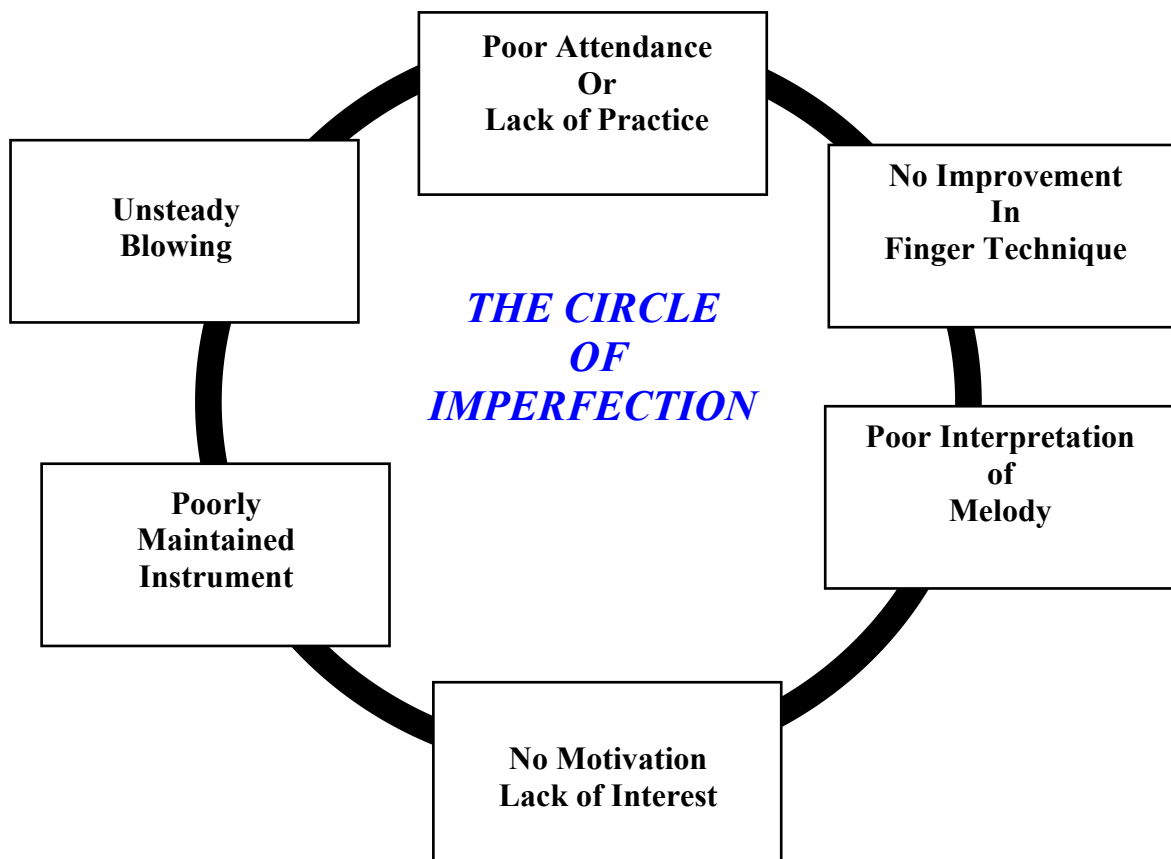
THE PIPE MAJOR AT WORK

In this text it will be assumed that the Pipe Major is taking up his/ her duties for the first time with Little or no experience and the pipers in the band are of varying abilities. It will also be assumed that there are problems associated with the band such as.

1. Poor attendance at practices
2. Various degrees in the standard of finger technique.
3. Badly maintained instruments.
4. Unsteady blowers etc.,

Although the above faults are clearly defined and in different categories, they are in fact *related* as illustrated in Fig. 1. I name this **“THE CIRCLE OF IMPERFECTION”**

By selecting any of the boxes and following their path in a clockwise motion, you will soon identify possible problems facing the Pipe Major of the typical lower grade band and provide you with the basis to construct *a programme for a controlled development*

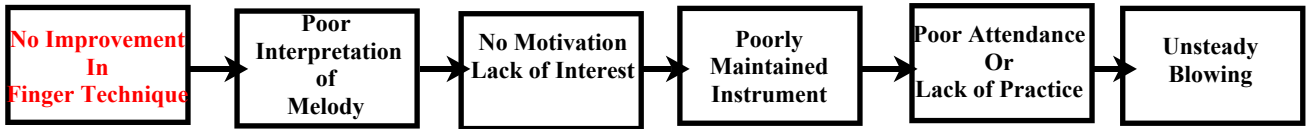


CONSTRUCTING A "CONTROLLED DEVELOPMENT" PROGRAMME

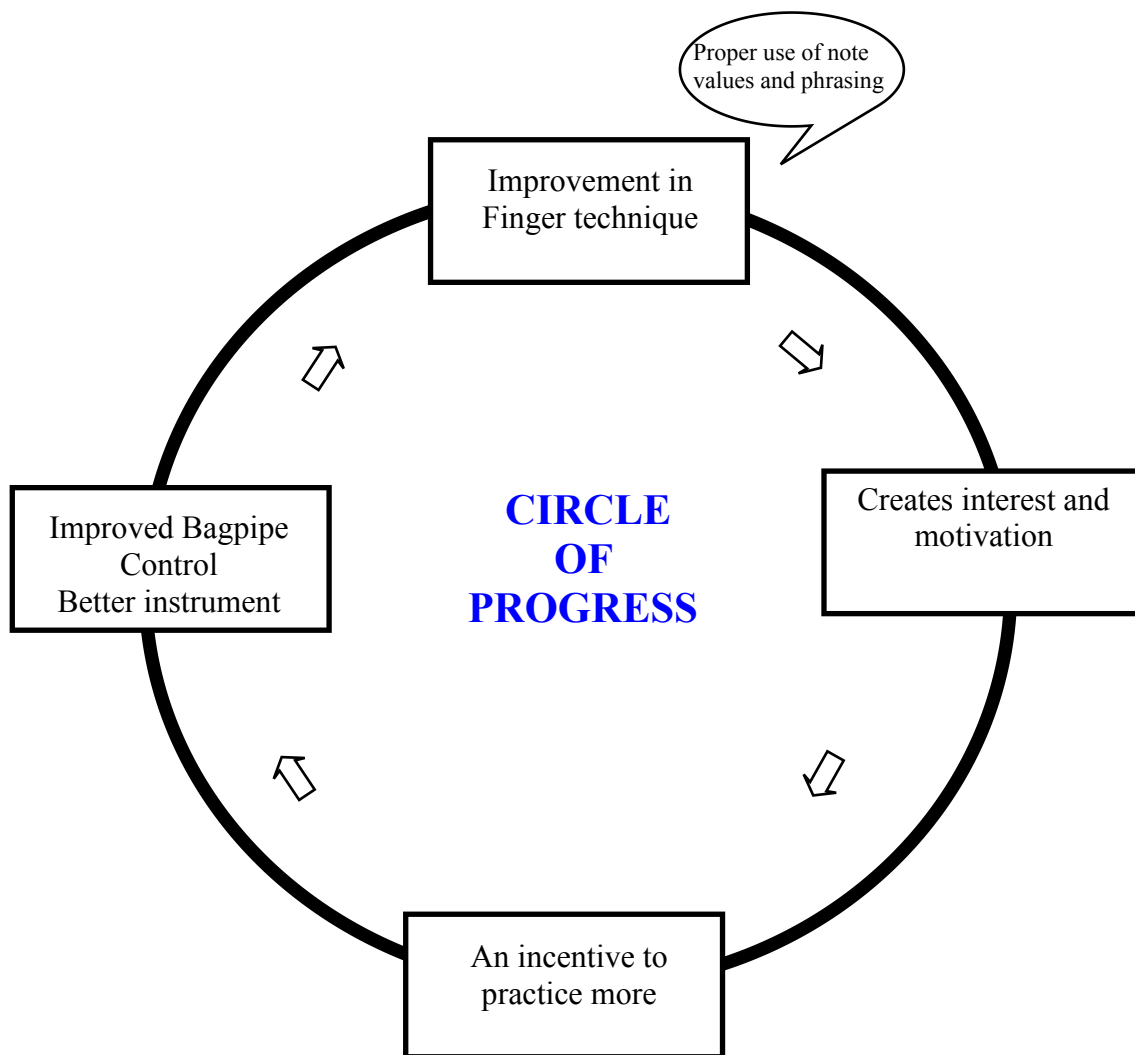
The following examples illustrate two separate "controlled development" programmes by selecting either

1. **No Improvement
In
Finger Technique**

Identifying finger technique as the priority. Make use of monotonous study the structure of the tune by identifying the motives (rhythm patterns and Phraseology. (reference The Language of Music). Make use of the group practice method as illustrated on page



"THE CIRCLE OF IMPERFECTION" NOW BECOMES A CIRCLE OF PROGRESS

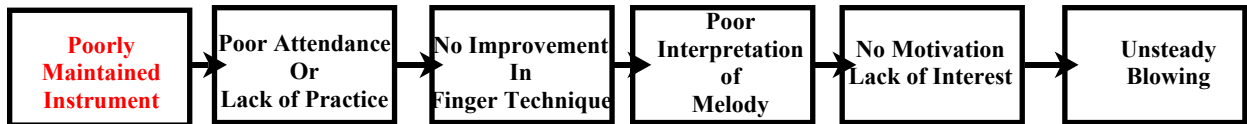


CONSTRUCTING A "CONTROLLED DEVELOPMENT" PROGRAMME

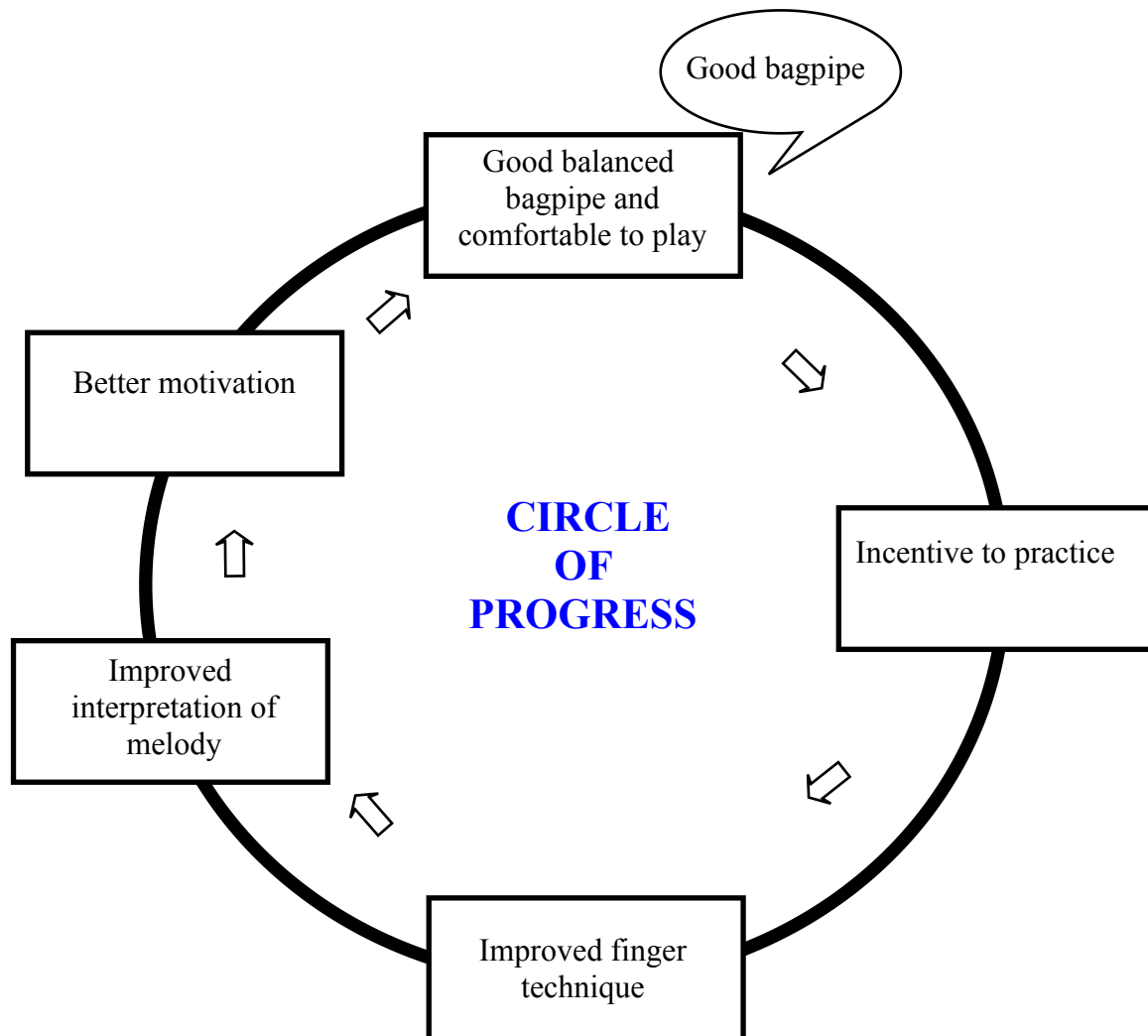
2.

Poorly Maintained Instrument

Identifying and improving the maintenance of the instrument. With particular emphasis on the players posture and comfort requirements. Develop exercise to improve arm pressure and co-ordination as well as stamina



"THE CIRCLE OF IMPERFECTION" NOW BECOMES A CIRCLE OF PROGRESS



FACTORS TO CONSIDER IN A CONTROLLED DEVELOPMENT.

1. Fix rigidly the duration of practice time, I would recommend 2 hours
2. Have enough material to last 2 hours I.e. For chanter practice or pipe practice or a combination of both
3. Consider known weaknesses in players before selection of material for each practice session.
4. Be prepared to vary or develop a schedule for the bad attender, find out the reasons for non-attendance e.g., pressure of work, school studies, family commitments, travel arrangements and so on....
5. Insist on a telephone call from any member who cannot make a particular practice. This will you to adjust your schedule if necessary and also help and provide better communication.
6. Ensure the time allocated for the practice is strictly adhered to Establishing a disciplined start time and the finishing time, helps the band members to complement their on perhaps busy schedules.
7. Do not spend too much time on maintenance of any individual's instrument, especially defaulters. arrange a separate session for constant defaulters...

.make the practice a worth while investment of time for every player

PRACTICE SCHEDULES

When considering practice schedules it is necessary to consider and allow for each of the following

PIPERS

1. PRACTICE CHANTERS
2. PIPES ONLY
3. PIPES and DRUMS

DRUMMERS

1. DRUM PADS
2. DRUMS ONLY
3. PIPES and DRUMS

The time allocated to the above divisions would largely depend:

Duration of practice
Frequency of practice
New music
Reviewing music
Rehearsal for an actual performance
Individual tuition-dependent on number of learners and the level of
standard pf the Pipe Band

