

Pipe Band Chanter Set-up and Tuning

By

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Maintenance

Drones properly hemped, not too tight and not too loose (able to turn with two fingers)
Pipe bag airtight and all stocks secure
Pipe chanter and drone reeds are secure in their seat
All holes on the chanter have tape either on the hole or placed above (note: the length of tape he uses goes one complete turn around the chanter and overlaps rather than short pieces)

Weather/Climate

For cold weather expect the chanter pitch to be flat and the top hand notes to go sharp and sometimes the C.
For hot weather expect the top hand notes to flatten after playing. Hot weather will also sharpen the overall pitch and may make the top hand go thin.
Practice outside the weeks leading up to the first outdoor competition allowing the pipes to acclimate.

Tuning Routine

Recommended pitch is 480hz (we're tuning in at 476). When asked a good range for tuning, he said 478-480. He stated that the new chanters and reeds sound better at the higher pitch. Grade 1 bands are tuning in the 480-482 range.

He sorts through reeds and selects those that all sound the same *before* putting them in a chanter. Out of a group of 20, he said he might find 6 (more from Terry Lee on reeds)

There is a new app that works well for tuning chanters (not drones). He went through several setups where he put in a reed, tested it to a meter for one that played "A" at 480, then demonstrated taping (including the low G) the holes. Selection of the reed was based on whether or not the scale sounded close with – again with low A at 480.

He demonstrated undercutting holes to sharpen the notes - nothing different than what we already do. Undercutting is a last solution. His statement was that some reeds will always be sharp or flat on certain notes in certain chanters. Their band plays one chanter and one brand of reed. Avoid undercutting the low A since this is the base – undercut the low A only if ALL other holes have a 1/3 or more tape covering them and you want to raise the overall pitch.

1-10 pipers = 1 master bagpipe, 11-19 pipers = 2 master bagpipes, 20+ = 3 master bagpipes. He tunes half of the FMM band and the PM tunes the other (they have 26 pipers)

The master bagpipe must be perfectly in tune and checked regularly. If the master bagpipe is a wet blower, consider using another bagpipe.

Tune by ear. He only used the tuner for the chanter, low A (but he's Alastair Dunn!)

Know your pipers, select reeds to suit your piper's ability. Every piper must be comfortable (more from Terry Lee on this subject)

Select a tune that covers all notes on the chanter and use this when tuning – don't play a scale; players blow differently when they blow a scale than they do playing a tune. Pick a slow tune.

Don't follow the crowd. Use products and routines that work best for your band in your climate.

NOTE: both he and Terry Lee said they don't spend time modifying reeds. They either work or they don't – plug and play or throw them away.