**BAND PERFORMANCE GUIDELINES According to AG and Officers 2023**

**GENERAL:**
The IMSG band does not audition it's members. This has over the years, and today, resulted in wonderful sounding bands with hugely varied instrumentation. However it does imply some responsibilities for incoming musicians as playing for dance is a particular skill - kindly learn the tunes quickly [you don't have to play for all of the dances at first, you are welcome to come to a dance-out and only play some of the time], and LOOK & LISTEN as no one in the band is just 'playing along'.

Beginner / less confident players: it is best to be in the centre / towards the back of the band. You will learn more in the middle and don't worry about putting people off.

The band should be as close together as possible rather than in a long single line. We all like to be seen but please allow yourselves to be 2 deep [on a big band day perhaps more] so that there is some chance
of who-ever is leading to have control over the tempo. When we are in a long line it is next to impossible to change speed and the ends are essentially playing to themselves. Differing performance areas will mean exceptions to this so flexibility is appreciated.

The tune leader will be where CENTRE of the band should be - please form up around them and NOT ALL ON ONE SIDE. This is for both visual [there are always photographs] and listening reasons.

Fiddles: when there is a microphone please stand together - violins resonate together and it sounds great having a string 'section'.

Although your tempo comes from the centre of the band 95% of the time you SHOULD be watching the dancers and fitting the RHYTHM of your playing to their movements.
Feet, arms, whatever, it doesn't matter just look at them as their rhythm should rub off on you!

It is the band/tune leaders role to set the tempo of the tune.  Please do not make a decision that it is wrong and try to change it.  However if this is the case someone in the dance will signal to the band leader and the changes made from there.

Intros can and will be at the wrong speed - LISTEN to the first phrases when the dance starts AND WATCH THE DANCERS when they start dancing as they will tend to start at the speed they have rehearsed - we should be all together within a couple of bars.

If things go wrong [and they will] please leave any discussion about what happened to a later date. Over the last 45 years I have probably made every possible musical error and while we seek to play error free, when we make them they are only fleetingly important. Please just focus on the next set and not discuss the last one.

**PRINTED MUSIC:**
Do what you have to do - the aim is to play by ear as you can then watch the dancers, but if you aren't there yet reading music is okay, and if it is discrete even better.

**BASS DRUM:**
The bass drum is the loudest instrument and has a particular role. We are always open to new drummers so please say if you wish to play it.
The drum should ALWAYS be next to the instrument that is leading and and the drum is there to pass on the tempo to everyone else. So drummers please be concentrating on the tune leader.
The are some cues played as solos by the drum - if any rehearsals are needed to help with getting these right just say and various members of the band will be keen to help. Please don't try 'new things' on a booking, your role is to be predictable!.

**OTHER DRUMS / PERCUSSION:**
We have always been a team with a bass drum / snare drum military style, rather than djembe, bodhran, or other ethnic drums. This suits the team and especially the North West style of the ladies.
Percussion is welcome, especially with younger members joining in. However the triangle is an instrument that is heard over everything else and is difficult to play well. We have a set of tamborine style things - if anyone wishes to develop a routine then great.

**STOPS:**
There are stops in a number of tunes and if in doubt stop playing when the leader makes a signal - this means being aware all of the time.
They will always be 'conducted' on the day and please pay attention as it is depressing for everyone if they are half hearted and uplifting when they are crisp.

**START & END:**

Beyond tuning up can musicians please not noodle the tune before a dance. Dance officers tell me that this is distracting and spoils the beginning of the dance.

At times the teams dance off the performance area and the timing can be unpredictable, especially if there is a conflict between the whistle and the band leader. Please follow the band leader as we don't want false endings. It doesn't matter if the music goes on for another 4 bars as it just reminds people that there is live music and the audience will just turn their attention to us - which is no bad thing!

Ideally after the big finish of the tune there will be a couple of seconds with the band STILL & SILENT so there is a contrast with the movement and noise of the dance. This is especially important when the ladies end the dance in front framing the band. They will stop and please all the band freeze for a couple of seconds of silence, then a whistle will blow and we prepare for what is next. All of these things add to the professional look of the team.
 **JOINING IN AFTER THE TUNE HAS STARTED:**
Many of the valued members of the band also dance and it is sometimes difficult to get back to play - quick as you can and, if at all possible WITHOUT walking between the audience and the dance that may now be starting, just appear in the band without drawing attention to the fact, and you are very welcome.
HOWEVER, if you have nipped off for a pint/comfort break/cream tea/charity shop, or frankly are just not paying attention and the new dance has started, then unless you are VERY QUICK [by the end of the intro], please accept that that you are not needed and perhaps take some photos and post them on social media.

**JOINING IN WITH OTHER TEAMS:**
It is very bad practice to join in with another sides playing UNLESS SPECIFICALLY INVITED. This means on anything - instrument, morris stick, tambourine, etc
This includes noodling along on an instrument or hitting a stick off piste.

There are times at the end of some morris weekends when it is an obvious free for all and anything goes!

**KIT**
Appropriate kit is required and this means anything predominantly plain red and/or black, with hints of yellow [not multicoloured]. Lots of leaway in this for younger players. This includes casual members who have arranged to play, for example, for a ticket at a festival.
However the IMSG band has always been an inclusive set-up and over the years we have welcomed many guest musicians including the most famous, so at times this rule will be broken.