

Effective Rehearsal Techniques



Physical Environment Conductive to Learning

- Neat, clean, uncluttered
- Organized and functional
- Free of outside noise and distraction (aural or visual)



Organize Space

- Make certain that you don't waste time with setup/teardown, if it can be done in advance. Put out stands, chairs,
- Assign responsibilities to students for percussion equipment and other large items.



Organize Music

- Make certain music, folders, parts, etc. are available. Consider having a librarian so you don't have to stop rehearsal to get parts.

Prepare Your Plan for Rehearsal

- Set conceptual goals. (What musical learning will take place?)
- Study scores or method book(s) to be used in instruction
- Plan for specific instruction related to concept
- Prepare supplemental materials as needed

Prepare your Plan for Rehearsal Continued

- Apply what students have learned
- Practice the evaluation
- Evaluate and assess your teaching and their learning
- Provide assessment feedback to students
- Reflect after each rehearsal
 - What did we accomplish?
 - What is undone?



Score Preparation

- Rehearsal runs better when the conductor knows the score. Mark cues. Memorization is recommended.

Anticipate Problems

- You can anticipate that students will have trouble with key signatures, complex rhythms and draw their attention to them.



Design Solutions

- Incorporate technical problems from the score into the scale warm-ups.



Warm-up

- Create warm-ups based on technical problems in the score.

Procedural System for Rehearsals

- How to enter the room
- Where to find the list of music to be rehearsed that day
- Where to check for other important announcements and information (on the board)
- How to get instruments from storage area
- How and where to store empty cases
- Process for making or adjusting set (chairs and stands)
- Procedure in the case of tardiness or absence (immediate and follow-up)

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Develop a Routine for Warm-Up

- Scales
- Chorales
- Rhythms
- Develop a routine for tuning. Do the same procedure every time. Tune after warm-up.

Diagnose Problems and Prescribe Solutions.

- Those you don't need to fix.
- Those you can fix quickly
- Those you can't fix today

Rehearsal Tips

- Eliminate dead time for students. If you're working with another section, give them something to do (hum their parts, while you work out the others, look ahead in the score to mentally rehearse upcoming sections)



Rehearsal Tips

- Repeat instructions on where to start, immediately before you play.

Rehearsal Tips

- Watch the clock. Know how much time you have left and whether it's realistic to get through what you planned (or are currently working)
- Determine if you need continue in the same vein or need to rethink your goals for the period.

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Rehearsal Techniques

- Sing a short rhythmic fragment with the correct rhythm and articulations (have students play it three times, immediately afterward).
- Have students speak and/or count rhythms.
- Have students sing parts – then play them!
- Choir – look for unison rhythms and melodies and don't rehearse things twice, when you could rehearse them just once.
- Don't rehearse what you don't need to.
- Put as much as you can into the students hands to practice beforehand. A big part of your job is to inspire practice!



What to Listen for in Rehearsal

- Band
 - Tone
 - Balance
 - Blend
 - Intonation
 - Rhythmic precision
 - Correct notes
 - Phrasing
 - Dynamic expression
 - Articulations
 - Stylistic expressions
 - Musical impact

What to Listen for in Rehearsal Continued

- Choir

- All the above
- Consonants release together
- Pronunciation

Rehearsal Policies and Procedures (Rules)

- Required items for rehearsal
 - Instrument
 - Music
 - Pencil
 - Accessories
- How to start
- How to end
- Routine combined with some variation to provide a blend of consistent reinforcement and interest

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What are the Principles of Quality Band Performance?

- Characteristic tone production
- Balance
- Blend
- Intonation
- Time (steady, free, or somewhere in between?)
- Accuracy (notes and rhythms)
- Vertical alignment
- Articulation
- Interpretation
- Style projection
- Expression

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Tone Quality

- Set the bar high. Simply insist that they get better- that each individual consistency strives to make a more beautiful sound.
 - Give them models. Play great recordings for them. Identify exemplary professional players and ensembles for them to seek out and listen to on their own.
 - Identify and expose them to great band programs in your area. Encourage live concert attendance.
- Attend to the mechanics of breathing
 - Correct posture--- Explain why it's important.



Balance

- We must achieve balance (low voices to mid voices to high voices) in order to achieve a beautiful sonority.
- We must identify each component of the composition and ensure that the proper “line” is predominant at the appropriate time
 - Melody
 - Counter-melody
 - Obligato
 - Harmonic Rhythm
 - Harmony
 - Accompaniment
 - Bass Line

Blend

- Like instruments matching tone quality
- Similar instruments matching tone qualities
- Dissimilar instruments matching tone qualities

Intonation

- Work on pitch and tuning, while constantly reinforcing the concept that it will only sound in tune when their individual sounds are of high quality.
- Assign responsibility for individual physical tuning (use of an electronic tuner to adjust the length of the instrument) to each individual student.
- Develop their sensitivity and discrimination with regard to pitch. Teach them to use their ears and adjust. Say to the students, “It’s ok to be wrong---if you choose “sharp” and you are wrong, then you know for sure that it was actually flat.” Use yourself as an example. Most of us are not infallible in our pitch discrepancy judgments.



Rehearsal Tips

- Sing, sing, sing. And then sing some more.
- Use buzzing on mouthpieces with some brass players.
- Find creative ways to keep the percussionists engaged in these lessons.



Rhythm

- Define tempos and unify pulse
- Use a metronome
- Accuracy of notes and rhythms----
provide your students with the
fundamental concepts necessary for
musical literacy. Then the responsibility
for correct notes and rhythms can be
theirs.



Articulations

- Vertical alignment is the result of good time and rhythmic accuracy
 - Work for matching articulations
 - Attend to the beginnings and the ends of the notes.
 - Attend to the duration and the shape of notes.
- Improve articulation for proper style execution.
 - Convey the concept that articulation is the vehicle for expression of different styles. Play recorded examples of basic styles---models.
 - Many young players have trouble playing short, light, or separated. Work on physical articulation first to eliminate fundamental problems. Use analogies to encourage continuous support of the air stream and lightness of the tongue. Demonstrate on your own instrument and/or use outstanding students as models.
 - Inability to play connected or smooth.
 - “Play 4 quarter notes with a whole note of air.”
 - Music happens between the notes.”

How can you improve the musicality of your band?

- Interpretation--- It is the conductor's responsibility to lead the ensemble in the appropriate direction, culminating in a collaborative music-making experience.



Style

- Research the composer (arranger) and his/her intent.
- Study the historical context.
- Define the essential elements of the style.
- Find model recordings.
- Share your findings with your students. Make the music relevant for them.



Expression

- Vertical playing must be transformed to horizontal playing
 - Shape the phrase
 - Connect the notes.
 - The line has to GO somewhere.
 - You have to SAY something with your performance of that melodic line.
 - The music happens between the notes.
 - Repeated notes or patterns in a melodic line must DO something.
 - Play it as if you were singing.
 - Stretch the upbeats and/or the weak beats (concept of elongated notes of syncopation).
- **IMPORTANT---** ALWAYS set and maintain high musical expectations of your students. The suggested techniques can and should be applied in musical context.



Maintain an Atmosphere Which is Positive and Conducive to Learning.

- (a) Honest praise
- (b) Positive accountability
- (c) Develop a good work ethic. Students inherently understand, if you work hard, there are dividends.
- (d) Nothing succeeds like success
- (e) Recognize and celebrate successes