

“The Daily Rehearsal: The Director’s Most Potent and Powerful Retention Tool”

by
David Newell

I. THE DAILY REHEARSAL EXPERIENCE IS WHAT KEEPS STUDENTS IN THE MUSIC PROGRAM

A. Retaining students

1. Essential to building quality programs
2. Upperclassmen serve as models for younger students.
3. The end goal: More students playing in their commencement ensembles

B. The rehearsal

1. Beautifully crafted, aesthetically driven
2. Carefully planned with the end in mind
3. Students leave every class wanting more; anxious to get back.
4. Keeping students IN music by getting them hooked ON music.
5. Less teacher talk, more music every rehearsal
6. Students deserve to make beautiful music every day.

II. THE TWO FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES: THE BEDROCK OF THE REHEARSAL

Concentration

**Students must be given
the luxury of
concentrating on only
*one thing at a time.***

Mastery

**Students must be given
the time necessary
to master that one thing
before being moved on to
the next logically sequenced
step in the process.**

These Foundational Principles lie at the heart of success in teaching *anything*—be it calculus, swimming, tennis, compound meter, legato articulation, phrasing, linked bowing, and on and on. Stating the converse: When we are *not* successful at teaching something, we have violated one or both of these foundational principles. We either did not give our students the opportunity of focusing all of their attention on one discreet thing, or we did not give them the time they needed to master that one thing before moving them on to the next step in a well-planned, logical and sequential process.

A Unique Two-Part Rehearsal Format: Its Relationship to The Foundational Principles

The Lesson Part

Basic Skills,
logically **sequenced**
and
mastered,
are taught
to
100% of the students
before
they are
encountered in the
literature.

The Literature Part

Musical Rehearsal of
appropriately graded
literature, which
embodies **already-**
mastered musical
skills,
for
the purpose
of
aesthetic
pleasure.

The Foundational Principles of concentrating on one thing at a time and mastery before moving on are ***infused throughout every phase*** of the above two-part rehearsal format that we plan each day for our most important audiences—the students in our performing ensembles.

The essence of the rehearsal, no matter how many pieces there are to it, is one that starts with a comfortable beginning with everyone participating, has an intense working middle, and an aesthetic and artful ending.

III. THE LESSON PART

- A. The Lesson Part of the rehearsal is solidly based on The Two Foundational Principles.
- B. The Lesson Part begins every rehearsal.
 - 1. Much more than just a “warm-up”
 - 2. After the warm-up, individual musical skills introduced as concentrated **Units of Study**.
 - 3. 100% of students participate in every Unit of Study.
 - a. Breathing, bowing, posture, rhythm, articulations, styles, expressive phrasing, etc.
 - b. Several separate Units of Study every rehearsal – **a few minutes for each**.
 - (1) Some units introduced while others in mid-development, others near mastery
 - (2) Adds variety and a healthy amount of interest to the rehearsal
- C. When to hand out literature for rehearsing in second parts of rehearsals?
 - 1. No piece is handed out if it contains a Basic Musical Skill that has not been mastered!
 - 2. Teacher question: “Does anyone see anything in this piece you don’t understand?”
 - a. Students will successfully sight-read the piece.
 - b. Slow, legato piece will sound musical from Day One if students have mastered legato.
 - c. Syncopated piece will offer no problems if students have mastered syncopation.
 - 3. The Key to Success: 100% mastery of the specific Musical Skills that each piece requires.

IV. THE LITERATURE PART

- A. The Literature Part of the rehearsal is devoted 100% to MAKING MUSIC.
- B. No teaching or re-teaching of Basic Skills during the second part of the rehearsal.
 - 1. Students are turning NOTES into MUSIC by way of Mastered Musical Skills.
 - 2. Students understand the relevance of their Units of Study.
 - 3. Directors do not stop the music to teach a basic skill, interrupt the flow of the rehearsal.
 - 4. Any deficient basic skill that needs review to be dealt with in the next Lesson Part.
 - 5. Because pieces contain only already-mastered skills, directors' corrections can be short.
 - 6. Much more is accomplished in a fast-paced rehearsal/less teacher talk/more music.
 - 7. Rehearsal stops are essentially for withdrawing funds from the group's "Skills Bank."
- C. Directors' "**Four Magic Words**" can result in immediate improvement.
 - 1. "Look at the rhythm."
 - 2. "Think about the style."
 - 3. "Look at the dynamics," and so forth.
 - a. "Look at the dynamics," far superior to "You're too loud."
 - b. "You're too loud" requires no student thinking, just student reaction.
 - c. "Look at the dynamics" requires students to do their own thinking.
 - (1) Students who *tell themselves* "Oh, we're too loud" will remember it far better.
 - (2) We need to give students more opportunities to think for themselves.
 - (3) Thinking students are engaged in the dynamic process of the rehearsal.
- D. Students want to learn more than just how to play their parts for the next concert.
 - 1. They want to understand how music works – **the "academics" of music.**
 - 2. Students who come to understand the academic side of music are proud of that knowledge.
 - 3. Anecdotal evidence of this, via 54 anonymous student surveys.

Every day in band...

- ...we learn something that is interesting and not boring like some other subjects.*
- ...we learn something new and still have fun.* (3 students)
- ...we do serious work.*
- ...we understand more about music.*
- ...we learn something new.* (10 students)
- ...it's fun and especially this year, I learned a lot.*

In band we always...

- ...have fun and learn a lot of things.* (5 students)
- ...learn new things.* (2 students)

In band we never...

- ...go a day without learning something.* (2 students)
- ...leave the room without knowing something new.*

The best thing about band...

- ...is learning all that we do.*
- ...we learn many things that other people don't know.*
- ...is that we have fun learning new stuff.* (2 students)

Being in this class...

...is a lot of fun but it takes a lot of hard work.

...makes me want to learn.

...helps me to learn more about music.

...is never boring. !!GREAT!!

...helps me a lot with a lot of things. I learn a lot too.

Our teacher almost never...

...gives us something easy to learn, I like that!

Our teacher almost always...

...has a good time helping us learn.

Music...

...is a hard subject but you learn what it is about and what different things mean.

V. CONCLUSIONS: THE BENEFITS OF THE TWO-PART REHEARSAL FORMAT

A. The Lesson Part

1. 100% of the students are working 100% of the time.
2. The first part of every rehearsal is like a “group private lesson.”
 - a. Everyone has the LUXURY of concentrating on ONE THING AT A TIME.
 - b. Even students who can’t practice everyday get a vigorous workout, led by an expert.
 - c. No one is sitting around getting bored as small groups get lessons.
 - (1) Boredom on a daily basis is a frequent and serious cause of dropouts.
 - (2) Teachers are always in charge of the Boredom Factor in their classes!

B. The Literature Part

1. From sight-reading on, students concentrate on MUSIC, not on PARTS.
 - a. Students have the tools they need to turn the notes into music.
 - b. Short rehearsal stops mean much more time for making music.
 - (1) More literature is accomplished in less time.
 - (2) Performances are more musical, because that is what students do everyday.

C. With an eye always on the clock, director gradually steers the rehearsal toward its end.

1. Every rehearsal ends with MUSIC by the full ensemble, not with teacher-talk.
2. Final ending sounds are carefully planned and chosen.
3. Goal: To send students into the halls wanting more, anxious to get back.

The daily classroom experience is what keeps students in the music program!

David Newell’s “Quick Read” 48-page textbook, upon which this clinic has been based, is now available in the Kjos Booth in the exhibit hall.

The exhibit hall closes on Friday, 12/18/15 at 4:00 pm.

The book is also available from your favorite music store or online from

www.kjos.com.

The Rehearsal: A Quick Guide to One Music Teacher’s Most Potent Retention Tool. (W80).