

Looking at Conducting from the Players' Perspective

*Presented by Dr. Rick Fleming
Director of Bands, SUNY Buffalo State*

*The Midwest Clinic, An International Band and Orchestra Clinic
December 18, 2013*

GOAL

To urge teachers/conductors to think about professional deportment in rehearsals, and how we interact with our students and players.

SYNOPSIS

- *The impetus for this study is from my perspective*
 - As a professional trombone player
 - Listening to other professional players discuss conductors
 - Finding value in their comments for conductors and teachers
- **I set out to gain the opinions of others**
 - Organized panel of professional musicians at BSC Conductor Symposium (2011)
 - Initiated survey of players in various age groups
 - Interpreted data in frequency charts.

METHODOLOGY

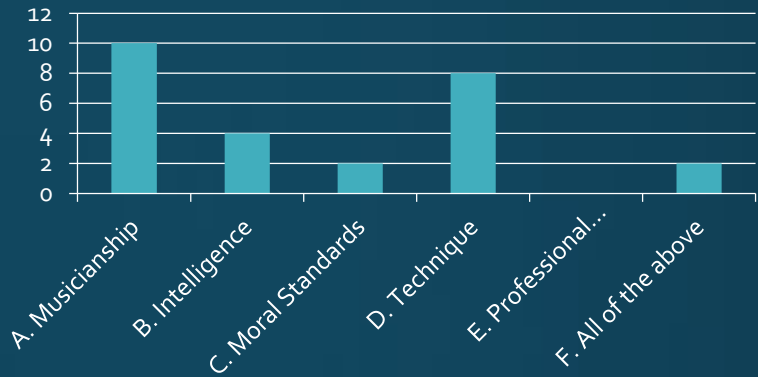
- Developed Survey
- Collected Data: 2 professional orchestras, college wind ensembles and high school wind ensembles
- Considered mean and median answer for each question in each group
- Sought trends
- Identified Implications

SURVEY QUESTIONS

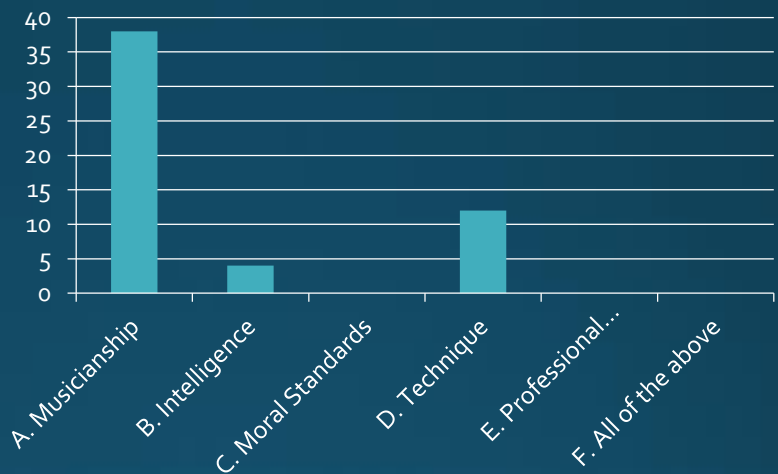
1. What is the most essential quality of a successful conductor?
2. What quirks are endearing? Offputting?
3. What inspires you to play better/work harder?
4. What gestures are most helpful?
5. What gestures are least helpful?
6. Does score memorization impress you?
7. What could most conductors do to improve quality of rehearsal?
8. Does physical appearance matter?
9. How can conductors best convey the meaning of the music?
10. I hate when a conductor_____. I enjoy playing for someone because _____.

1. What is the Most Essential Quality that one needs to be a Successful Conductor?

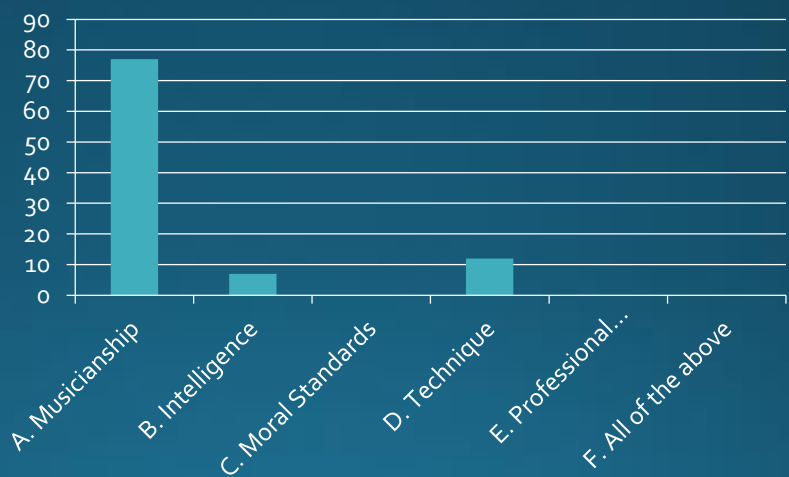
Professional Musicians



College Musicians



High School Musicians



2. Personality Quirks: Endearing

Respect

Pleasant voice

Polite

Positive Outlook vision

Approachable Sincerity

Positive outlook caring

Confidence **StickTechnique**

Educator knowledge

Dedication Passion

Eye contact humor efficiency

2. Personality Quirks: Offputting

Condescending

Short-Tempered Arrogant

Criticism Impatient

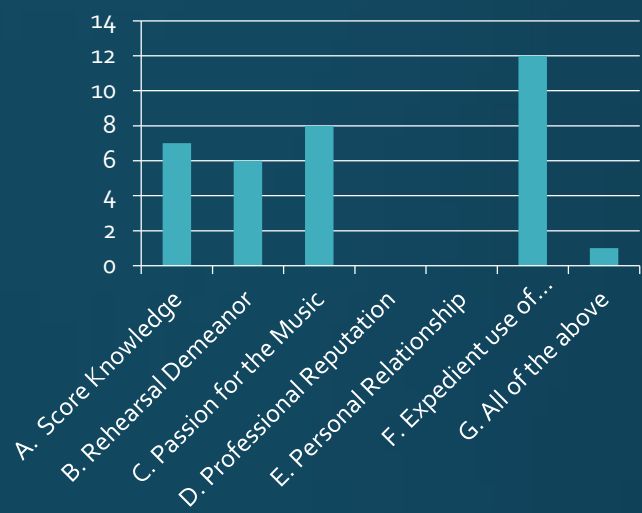
Sarcasm

Physical Appearance

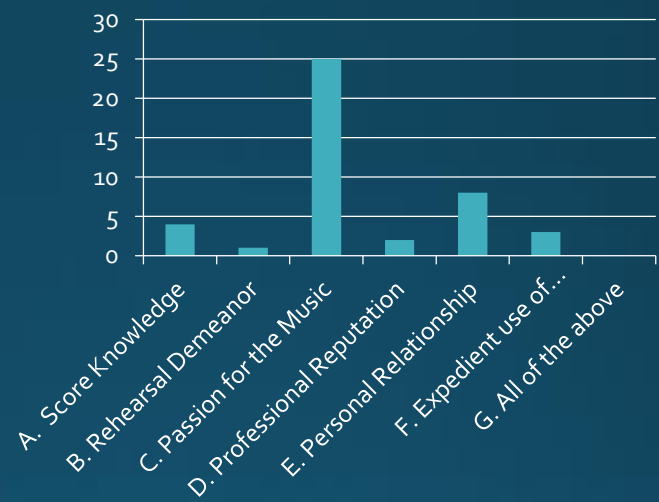
Harmful Comments

3. What Inspires you to Play Better/Work Harder?

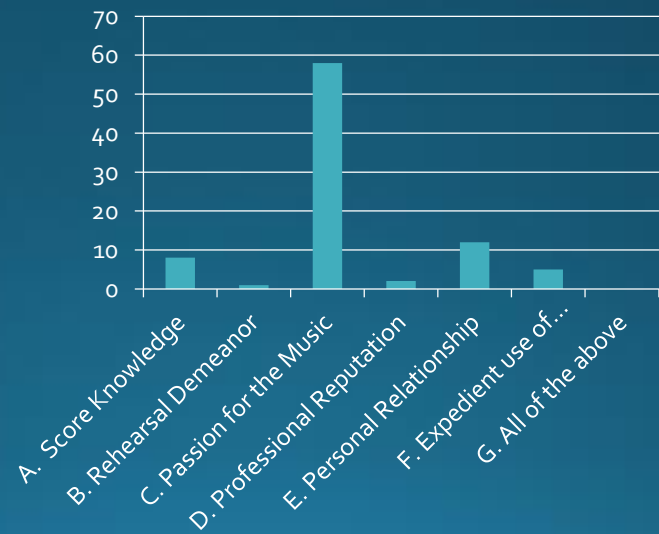
Professional Musicians



College Musicians

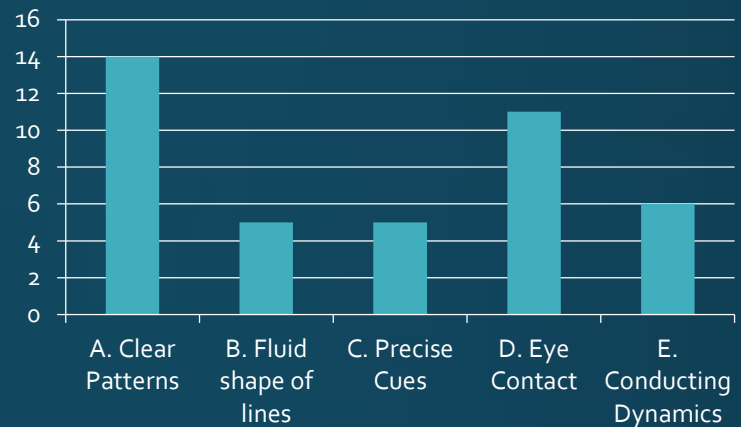


High School Musicians

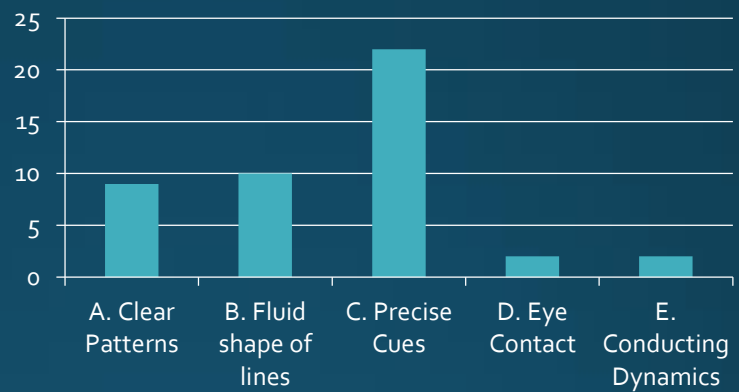


4. In general, what gestures are most helpful?

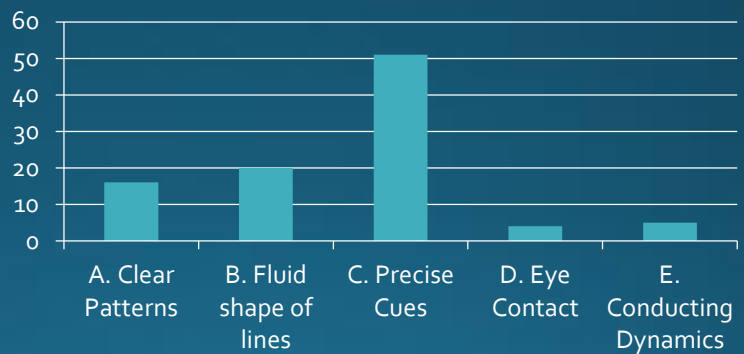
Professional Musicians



College Musicians

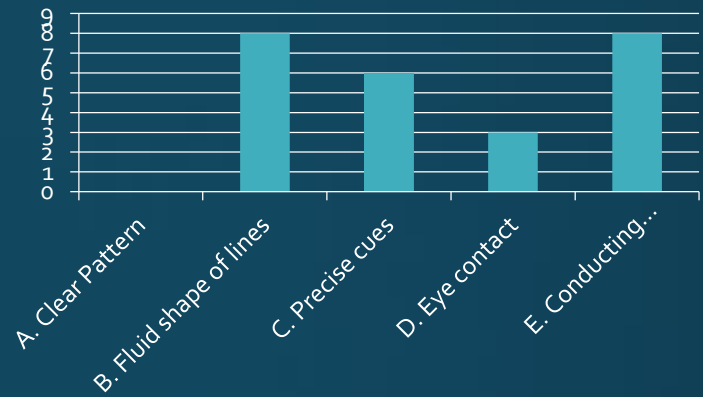


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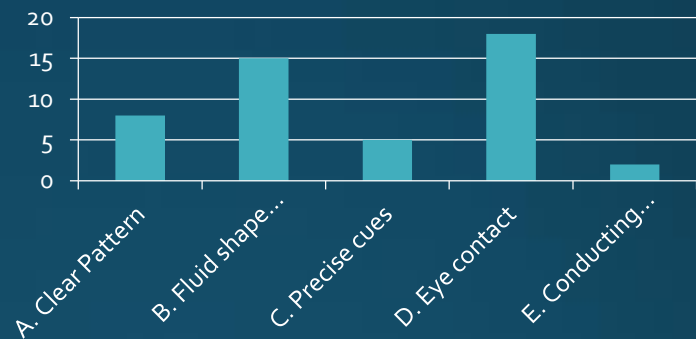


5. In general, what gestures are least helpful?

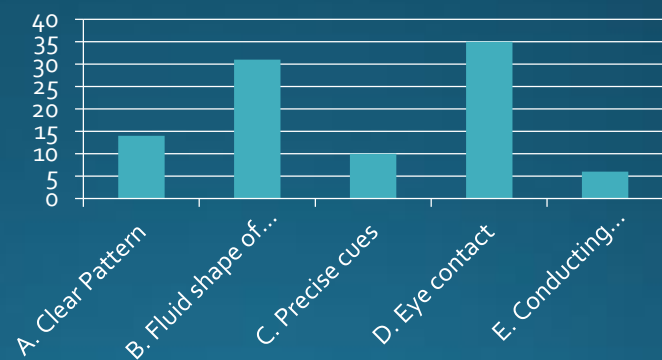
Professional Musicians



College Musicians

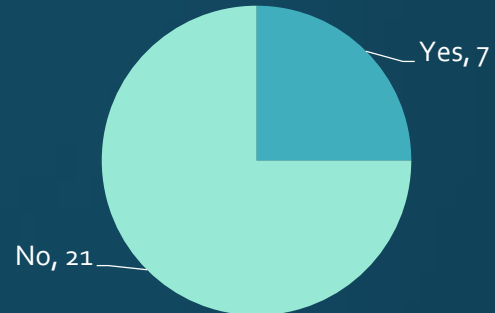


High School Musicians

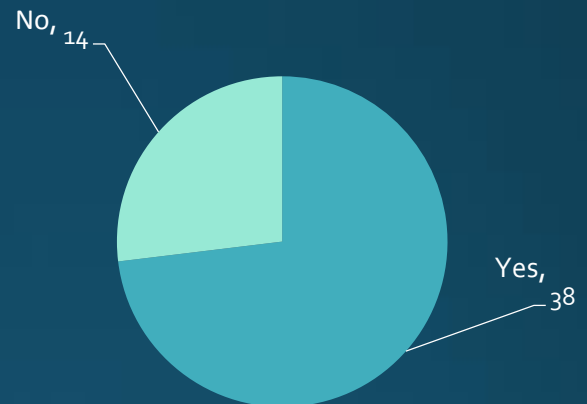


6. Does score memorization impress you?

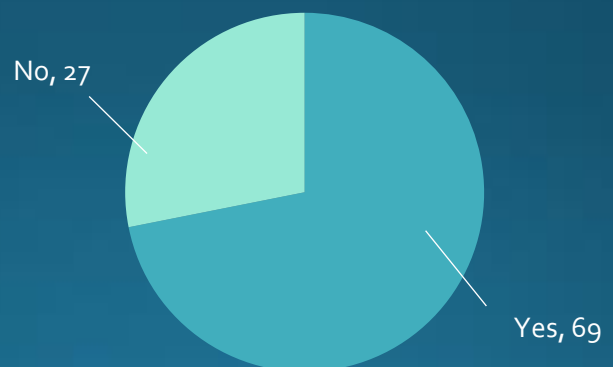
Professional Musicians



College Musicians



High School Musicians



7. What could most conductors do to improve quality of rehearsal?

Professional Musicians

1. Positive framing of suggestion, for example, instead of saying "don't do this," try saying "let's do it with more" something.
2. Using time efficiently
3. Get through the program in order in the dress rehearsal
4. Less talking –be able to show everything with baton
5. Budget time better
6. Actually fix what's wrong- don't just run through stuff
7. Know the score
8. Have a plan for what needs to be accomplished in each rehearsal and stick to it
9. They must know the score and be able to communicate their vision of the work to the orchestra through their baton in an effective way
10. Respect the abilities and knowledge of the musicians
11. Efficient use of time
12. Give clear indication of tempo and beat patterns

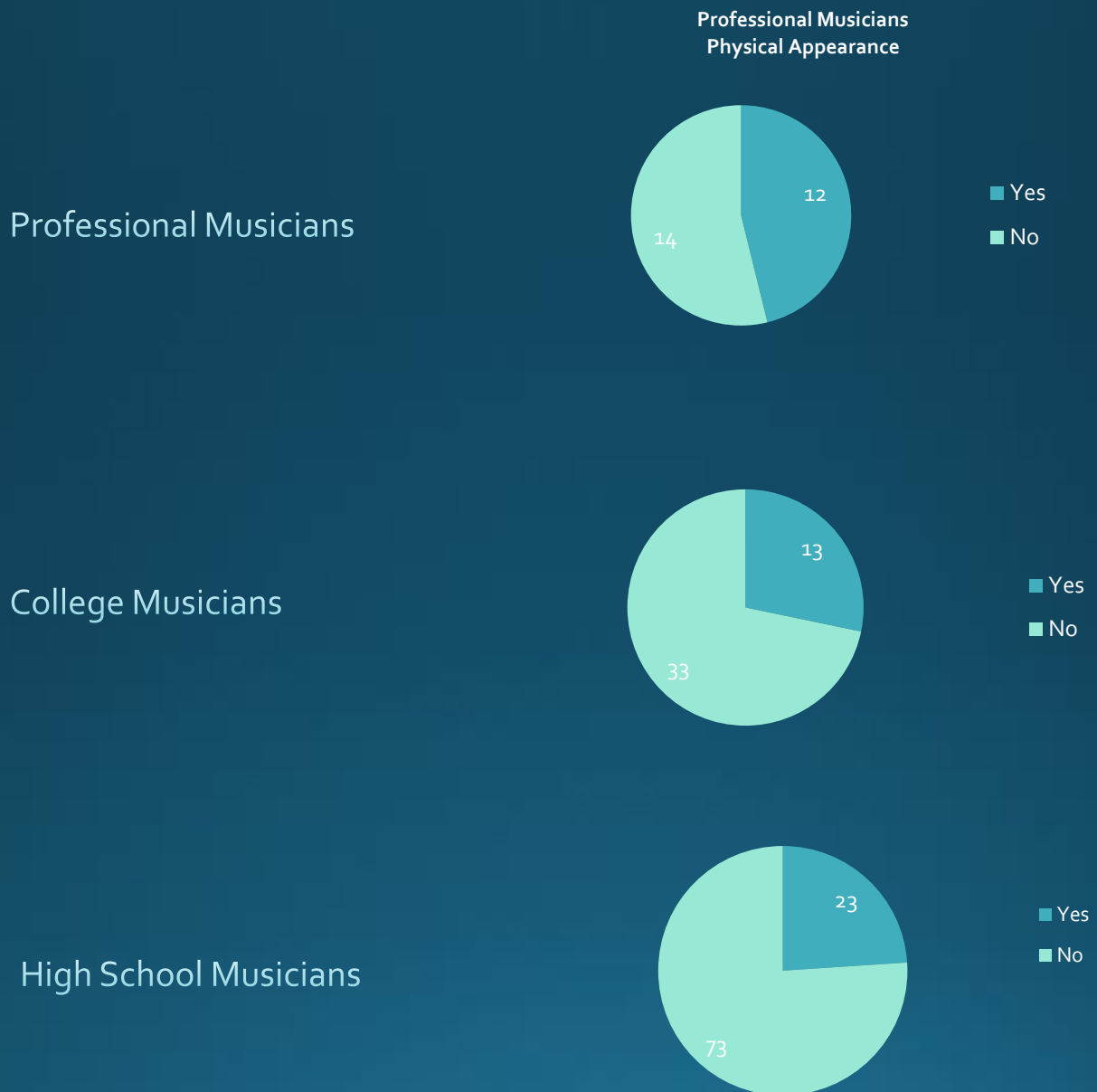
College Musicians

1. Snack breaks
2. Provide an engaging experience balance with education regardless of level of group involved.
3. Conductors would spend time to help student
4. Let's us play through before stopping and correcting
5. We can tell if we play wrong notes
6. Don't talk down to us
7. To become more personal with the band
8. Less yelling
9. Be patient
10. And be happy, with themselves and musicians
11. Conduct clearer
12. Make better use of time
13. Go slower
14. Letting us talk a little then we will concentration

High School Musicians

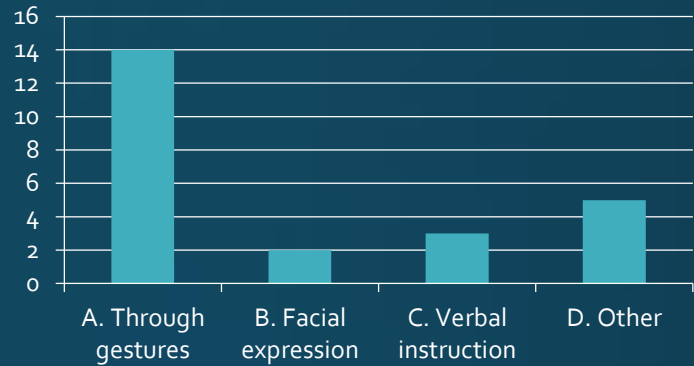
1. I believe that all conductors have their own unique style.
2. Keep all comments positive
3. Have sectionals, require sectional, and give challenging warm ups.
4. Conductor should use time wisely.
5. The conductor could have the band tune and have the band warm up before down beat.
6. Tell each group of instruments to practice more and the conductor keep calm if someone messes up.
7. Don't single people out.
8. Focus entirely on improving the quality of the performance, as oppose to repeating a section that someone has not practice.
9. Take a breath with the whole group before we play a down beat.
10. Conductors could explain stuff less.
11. An Individualize approach to help each section in order to sound better musically.
12. Conductors could be more specific about articulations and style that they feel is correct the piece of music
13. Pay attention to the bass section.
14. More efficient transition from tuning to songs.
15. Not stop and start every second
16. Be on time
17. Counting out loud to give beat when coming or changing time signature.
18. Spend time on parts people are having trouble with.

8. Does physical appearance matter?

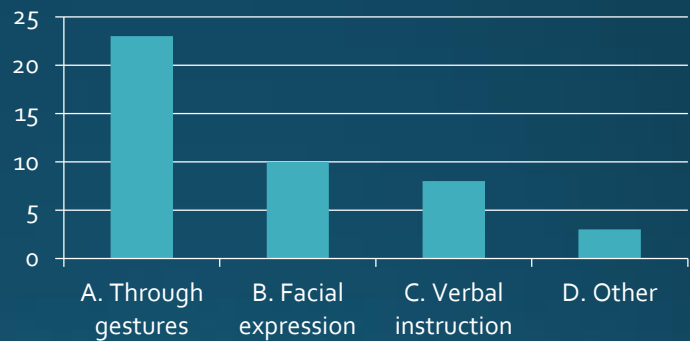


9. How can conductors best convey the meaning of the music?

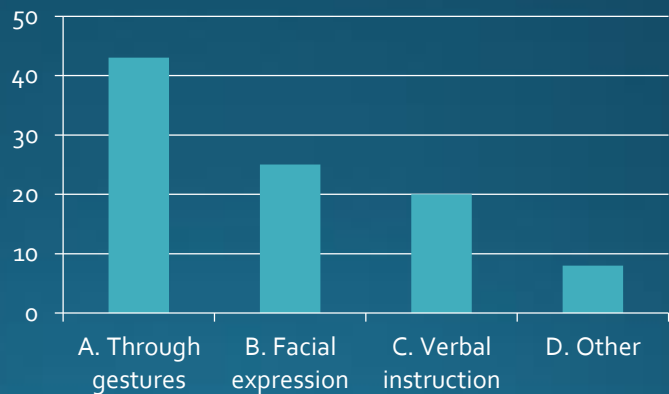
Professional Musicians



College Musicians



High School Musicians



10. Please finish these statements:

Professional Players

I hate when a conductor

Doesn't really know what they want
Wastes time through ignorance
Is sarcastic

Is a fake
Fixes his/her hair constantly
Wastes my time
Over-rehearses
Micro- manages
Tells what mallets to use

Cannot admit a mistake
Rehearses the same music the same way
whether mistakes are made or not
Chides

I really enjoy playing for him/her because:

They have clear musical ideas
They do not talk
He/she tries to convey the intent of the composer

He/she knows the score
They know what they're doing
He/she loves the music as much as I do
They Respect us
He/she gives good musical vision
They work on the music

They are good at what they do

They illuminate the piece in a way I hadn't previously considered
They present a fresh approach

College Students

I hate it when a conductor:

Gets mad
Isn't clear
Talks down
Gets angry
Is too serious
Is condescending
Is rude
Yells
Over criticizes
Stops a lot
Stares

Hold us past the class time
Conducts with an unsteady pattern
He/she is clear and knowledgeable
Stops conducting when something went wrong, but
he/she doesn't make corrections
Puts us down
Only is aware of himself and not what is going on with the
musicians and music
Loses tempo

I really enjoy playing for him/her because:

He/she is funny
They engage me
They enjoy the music
They are passionate
We are also friends
He/she picks out good music
He is extremely nice and happy
Nice and caring
He/she knows what he's talking about
they have passion for the music
They pick fun music

They are nice
They are encouraging

We can rely on him/her to be there for us.
I am able to concentrate on
my part/instrument needs.

10. Please finish these statements:

High School

I hate when a conductor

Stops too much
Complains
Goes to fast
Is unprepared
Says "ready go"
Yells
Conducts circles
Is not specific
Has to stop for discipline problems.
the group
Keeps talk instead of conducting
Doesn't praise us

Yells or gets overly emotional; conductors have to
keep their composure

Gets frustrated/yells
When doesn't treat musicians with respect
Acts crazy
Looks at and puts me under pressure
Tells us how the beat goes multiply times but still not making sense.
Is not informative or clear with what they are doing.
Taps the baton on the stand
Taps on the stand
Rushes

I really enjoy playing for him/her because

she is fun
she is funny

Shows the emotion of the piece
it's fun
I understand the music
teaches me a lot
he/she enjoys what they do and support us
Encourages and helps individuals as well as

he is a great teacher
he teaches well and makes sure I
understand what he wants

she/he makes beautiful sounds with the
group
he/she is passionate about music
they can make everyone feel involved
she teaches things about music
she teaches me new note
Helps with the music in different ways
They know how to create good music
they're nice and helpful
They're helping me to become better
The teach well

Rick's Bio

Rick Fleming is an associate professor of music and director of bands at Buffalo State College, where he conducts the Buffalo State College Wind and Jazz Ensembles. He also teaches undergraduate conducting and instrumental methods. Dr. Fleming is the founding conductor of the Erie County Chamber Winds, a professional chamber wind ensemble, and has conducted the Buffalo Silver Brass Band and the Genesee Symphony Orchestra. He also plays trombone with the Rockwell Brass, a brass quintet he founded, which is affiliated with Buffalo State College.

From 1992-1998 he served as director of bands at William R. Boone High School in Orlando, where the band program received superior ratings at both district and state levels. Prior to his appointment at Boone H.S., Dr. Fleming served for six years as the director of bands at Memorial Middle School, where he was named teacher of the Year in 1992.

Fleming received his Ph.D. in Music Education with emphasis in wind band conducting from The Florida State University where he studied with Clifford K. Madsen and James E. Croft. He earned his M.M. degree in trombone performance from The University of Mississippi and Bachelor of Music Education from Mississippi Valley State University.

Fleming's international conducting experience includes conducting the University of Szeged Wind Ensemble in Szeged, Hungary. He also conducted the Youth Band of the Private Music and Art School for the East European Symposium for Wind Conductors November 24-28, 2004 in Szeged, Hungary. In 2006, Dr. Fleming served as an adjudicator for the Tygerburg Fanfare International Band Festival in Cape Town, South Africa. He has published chapters in the GIA Publication's Teaching Music Through Performance Beginning Band Volume 2 and Teaching Music Through Performance in Jazz.

"Looking at Conducting from the Players' Perspective" is Rick's second presentation to the Midwest Clinic, having also presented a clinic in 2005.

He recently completed his first recording on Mark Records entitled "Trois selections pour Chamber Winds," conducting the Erie County Chamber Winds. He is a member of the College Band Directors National Association, Music Educators National Conference, International Trombone Association, Phi Beta Mu National Band Fraternity, and is an honorary member of Kappa Kappa Psi.

PARTING THOUGHTS

Famous Quotes:

"Every player wants to play well and wants to have and experience."

Ricardo Muti

"Don't let him stop playing for the sake of minor mistakes, but point them out to him when he has finished playing the piece... I have always follers this method. It produces musicians."

Ludwig van Beethoven.

"Half the battle in teaching is to convince students they can do it."

Derek Bourgeois

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