

Listen with Your Eyes: 2017 Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic

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- Teaching and rehearsal stereotypes exist in our profession because they are founded on a grain of truth. It is our goal as teachers to learn these tendencies in order to be as proactive as possible.
- Let's talk about... talking.
 - Many teachers new to the profession will often try and "talk their way" into better sounds, execution, and fixing mental mistakes:
"No... play with a darker sound." "You're out of tune." "Don't come in early!"
- You have to keep in mind that sounding bad is not a musical issue; it is most often a PHYSICAL issue. Don't just tell the students to sound better. Tell them what to change in order to sound better! **THIS IS WHERE WE MUST LISTEN WITH OUR EYES IN ORDER TO BOTH IDENTIFY AND FIX CERTAIN ISSUES.**
- Common Sound Initiation Problems:
 - How are the students striking the instrument? What is the shape of their embouchure? Are all of the holes being covered? Are they using the correct hand position?
 - Many times woodwinds are asked for a clearer sound, but it's just not possible because of the condition of their chipped reed, mouthpiece, or lack of a good ligature.
 - If you don't quite know what you're doing with a particular instrument, try SOMETHING! Want to figure out what did or didn't work? ASK THE STUDENT!
- Hidden Issues:
 - Many problems can be obscured by the sounds coming out of a student's instrument:
 - 3rd valve slides or 4th valves aren't being used (but all we hear is "it's sharp")
 - Poor hand position leads to sound production problems (i.e. horns or strings)
 - Percussion stickings (we hear the melody on marimba, but they're only using the right hand)
- But I Like My Way...
 - Be careful of students using an incorrect fingering (1-and-1 on saxophone), position (avoiding the trigger on trombone), or volume (suspended cymbal players are often shocked that they have to play quite loudly to be heard).
- A Need for Speed
 - What physical issues often hold back students' technical development?
 - Finger height/placement, tension, instrument condition
 - **"Practice more" isn't always the answer, especially if the basics are flawed.**
- Not that Kind of Doctor
 - Be careful when discussing articulation, embouchure, aperture, or breathing physiology with students. Know that you will often have to use "x-ray goggles" to discover problems (tongue placement/bad embouchures, etc.). Again, **ASK QUESTIONS** as the students can give you a lot of great information as to what's happening "on the inside."
 - Remember... what worked for you might not work for your students; sometimes the conventional approach is actually the *opposite* of what a certain student needs to hear.
 - Don't be afraid to tell students, "Because I said so."
- Your Own Personal Popemobile
 - What gets in the way of using your eyes with your ears? **THE SCORE!**
 - Listening with your eyes is impossible if your head is in the score.
 - Get off of the podium and observe; FORCE THEM TO LISTEN (and not just to a metronome!).
 - Do you have issues with phrasing? Watch the students while they play.

- Bury Yourself
 - There is a time when burying your head in the score is a good thing, and that time is SCORE STUDY outside of rehearsal.
 - Don't just analyze scores for chords or phrases; work to identify potential *rehearsal* (not performance!) pitfalls.
 - Mark your scores with pedagogical information; the more you do this, the more you'll remember and can reproduce on the fly.
 - Fingerings, style/balance issues due to tessitura, breath points, roll bases, stickings, dynamic changes needed for better balance
- "The Rehearsal Psychic"
 - Key Signatures: for sharp keys through B-flat (moving around the circle of fifths), the 3rd and 7th notes are most often the issue. For E-flat through the remaining flat keys, it's most often the last two flats that will be missed.
 - Rhythms: sustains (both rests and notes) will often be skipped; syncopations, particularly when surrounded by multiple rests, will be misplaced.
 - Phrasing: long note = breath. Bar line = breath. Easy place to destroy a phrase? Breath.
 - Pitch: KNOW YOUR TENDENCY TONES!
- No Doubt
 - Students don't have a copy of the score. You are the only one with a road map! Know where doubt will appear during your rehearsal process:
 - Thin texture
 - Strong entrances from other sections
 - Rhythms that don't line up
 - *Divisi* parts
 - Newer notes
 - Transitions
- Only YOU...
 - If you take the time to go through the score and think through the following issues, you can save an enormous amount of time in rehearsals.
 - Chords: any dissonances should be supported from the onset; harmonic analysis can really expedite teaching.
 - Accidentals: C-flat? Students are going to run away with it and play what they know (B-flat, C-sharp, C-natural and just assume it's a misprint).
 - Dynamics: so often a tutti passage is *forte*. It is YOUR JOB to help the students identify the melodic material and bring that out (or back away the accompaniment).
- Be Proactive
 - Split parts/divisi, new instruments and techniques in percussion, extended techniques, rare notation (glissandi, tremolos, etc.), old notation (trills for timpani or snare, slashes that indicate sixteenth notes), and new beaming practices (extending the beams over rests) are often issues that throw a wrench in rehearsals. Know that they're coming and address them before they happen!
- Your Powers Combined...
 - Many of the teachers with the best ears have a remarkable combination of preparation and the ability to predict what an ensemble will do. They know what will most likely happen and their eyes and ears are ready for it. If you're ready for something in advance, you are much more likely to be able to tackle it instantly.
- In Closing
 - Talk to others; find out tricks for every instrument with which you're not comfortable.
 - Open your eyes. If you know the problems that will occur, use what you hear AND see to drive your teaching.
 - Get off of the podium. Walk around the room. Use a combination of your eyes and ears to identify problems and solutions.
 - **Don't avoid the issues, address them head on!!!**