

## There Never Is Enough Time to Rehearse! The Most Efficient Music Rehearsal Strategies

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*What Most Determines How Well Our Students Perform:  
Orchestras Perform ONLY as Well as They Have Rehearsed!*

### Efficient Music Rehearsal Strategies:

#### For Sound Production

- A. Focus on the three sound production variables: Speed—Weight—Contact (Sounding) Point
  1. Give me an SWS!
  2. miles-per-hour = speed of the bow
  3. weight = pounds
  4. contact point = lane
  5. Best bow placement: Where are you in the bow? = What part of the bow is best to play the passage
    - We ALL need to be in *that* part of the bow
    - How do we get to that part of the bow to begin to play the passage?
    - If we get too far out in the bow: slower down bows and faster up bows
- B. Test for false strings. Replace strings if necessary.
- C. Label the sound with colors: visual colors, analogy, story to describe the sound, degree of light (hazy, dark, bright sunlight, light, white light), breathy, clear, diamond, warm, harsh, angry, airy, scratchy, edge
- D. Determine how much bow hair should be on the string to produce the desired sound

#### For Precisely Playing Together

1. Pizzicato the passage until the ensemble is precise
2. Be sure the students know how to count beats and rhythms—including rests!
3. Practice spiccato passages on the string first, gradually increase the tempo, then add bounce
4. Teach students how to subdivide
5. Give a clear ictus within the conducting pattern.
6. Do not conduct or conduct only on selected beats.
7. Occasionally conduct the rhythm rather than the pulse to help students play together.
8. Frequently use the gesture-of-syncoption while conducting to help students play together precisely
9. Occasionally do not conduct rests or only conduct *dead* beats during rests.
10. Ask students to play only on selected beats without being conducted
11. Be sure all students are playing the passage at the same place in the bow and at with the same bow speed.

12. Ask students to count the rhythm out loud, with and without shadow bowing.
13. Audio or video record the orchestra and then ask the students to evaluate their ensemble precision.
14. Showing students the score so that they can see how their part lines up with others, e.g., try using the *forScore* app for iPad
15. Have one section play pulses only, e.g., basses plucking open D only on the pulses

#### For Passages with Cello Extensions

1. Remind students of the correct fingering
2. Remind students all extensions are ONLY between the 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> fingers
3. Walk behind the cello section to be sure thumbs remain behind 2<sup>nd</sup> finger (the thumb moves as the 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> finger web opens for high pitches, and the thumb rolls for lower pitches)
4. Explain to students the difference between shifting and extending

#### For Controlling the Tempo

1. External pulse—loud metronome and gradually soften the sound
  - principal beats
  - subdivisions
2. One section of the orchestra claps the pulse
3. One section of the orchestra verbalizes the beats, e.g., “1, 2, 3, 4”
4. Do not conduct so that students learn to **own** the pulse—not just the teacher
5. Conduct only selected beats to help students listen across the orchestra to help control the pulse
5. Require students to pizzicato the passage with correct/consistent tempo first—the reward by allowing them to bow the passage
6. Toe or heel tapping the pulse
7. Teach students how to count and subdivide

#### For Dynamics and Balance

1. Only one or two students play the line that must be heard and everyone else must be able to hear them when playing
2. Softer—action terms, e.g., slower bow, lighter bow, lower numbered lane, play Closer to the bow tip
3. Louder—action terms, e.g., faster bow, heavier bow, add pounds, lower numbered lane play closer to the frog
4. Play the passage intentionally at an incorrect dynamic and then at the correct dynamic
5. Have students draw in hairpin marking for decrescendos and crescendos

#### For Intonation

1. Sustain pitch and compare to model pitch AND THEN determine relationship of previous pitches and those that follow
2. Add one in-tune player at a time
3. Sustain and tune chord progression in the order of root, 5<sup>th</sup>, and then 3<sup>rd</sup> of the chord

4. Finding out who has the *cool* note—the third of the chord and making sure that note is easily heard
5. Tune between instrument sections
6. Sustain pitch on the down beat of each measure or only those on the principal beats
7. Remove vibrato when tuning pitches
8. Bow pizzicato pitches occasionally to make sure they are in tune
9. Ask students to show you the finger pattern (including cellos) that should be used to play the passage correctly
10. Play out of tune passages slowly to help determine which pitches are of tune
11. Cello and double bass players bow slowly when tuning upper strings to them
12. Model the passage in tune and then out of tune so players can hear the difference
13. Have students memorize the measure or measures that are out of tune for ease to be able to quickly rehearse
14. Avoid as much as possible telling students if the pitch is sharp or flat. Expose the pitch(s) and let them move their finger(s) until they match the reference pitch. This is the best ear training for them. The goal is for them to become their own tuner.
  - Ask the student to raise or lower the pitch and see which direction brings the pitch closer to the sound of the reference pitch
15. Sustain and tune the passage or individual pitches to a drone.
16. Record the students playing the passage and then listen to the recording. You may be unaware of some of the sounds the students are producing. Protect your ears.
17. Sometimes tune problem pitches very softly to help listen to the pitch carefully and to focus the attention of the player.
18. Be careful to especially check the intonation of notes at the end of phrases
19. Tune first fingers with the adjacent open string for the interval of a 4<sup>th</sup>.
20. Do not lower your standard of intonation—string students can play in tune—do not give in! Students only play in tune to the standard they are required to achieve. Playing in tune is hard work and daily challenge—for everyone! And, continue to develop your own pitch discrimination skills. Some ways: apps such as *Tonal Energy* and *In Tune*

### Expressiveness

1. We are not done until we can play the passage expressively
2. Show through playing and/or singing the passage expressively
3. Mark phrase shapes using curved or dotted lines
4. Use analogies and word pictures to describe the desired sound and feeling
5. Use feeling words for students to sound, e.g., lazy, tired, anger, excited, smiling, sad . . .
6. Teach students mechanically how to shape phrases through changing bow speed, weight, contact point, variable vibrato speeds, glissando shifts

### **In the End—The Big Picture**

The overarching music rehearsal sequence: Predetermine how the passage should sound, efficiently rehearse to achieve that sound, and then Reinforce, Reinforce, and Reinforce, one the sound is achieved.

## Resources:

### Intonation Music Rehearsal Resources:

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