

PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES TO MAXIMIZE PRECIOUS REHEARSAL TIME!

Compiled by Anthony Susi

Efficiency & Effectiveness are the Keys to a Productive Rehearsal. I will share many Tried & True Approaches.

#1 - RELINQUISH CONTROL & DELEGATE TASKS

Student Ownership & Empowerment!

(Disclaimer: Modify Responsibilities/Titles based on Age Group you work with) Rotate vs. Permanent?

Class Librarian - Distribute and Collect Music, Loan Parts

Class Accountant - Collect Permission Slips, Excused Absence Requests, Fund Raiser Orders, etc.

Class Manager - Distribute Reeds, Oil, Rosin, Pencils, etc. Arrange Chairs/Stands Before/After Class

Section Leaders - Attendance, Run Sectionals. Collect and Return Cell phones at start of each rehearsal.

Saves Time and Allows you to Greet Students as they enter rehearsal space.

#2 - PREPARATION

- a. SCORE PREP - Color Code, Assume No One Practiced Approach. Anticipate Trouble Spots.
Eyes Up and Out of the Score.
- b. ROOM PREP - Make sure all Equipment/Supplies you need are on hand (Perc., Reeds, Oil, Rosen, etc.)
Enough Music Stands & Chairs. *Benefit of *Class Manager*
- c. MUSIC PREP - Parts Pre-Assigned and Pre-Distributed in Folder Slots (Mailbox). Extra Parts on Hand!
*Benefit of *Class Librarian*
- d. REHEARSAL OUTLINE & REMINDERS - On the Board. Be Creative and Replace Title with Relevant Knowledge, i.e.; Work by: Romantic Era composer; in Ternary Form, in Concert Ab etc.

#3 - SEATING ARRANGEMENT

Rehearsals do not have to always be in Performance Setting!

- a. ROTATE WHICH SECTION(S) ARE IN THE FRONT ROW based the day's rehearsal objective.
- b. AVOID ORDER OF ABILITY (Weakest player Sitting Furthest from your Strongest)
Rotate strong players to cover 1st, 2nd & 3rd parts for each song and serve as assistants.
- c. LEAVE ISLE DOWN THE MIDDLE so you have easy access to all sections of the ensemble.
- d. SIT IN A CIRCLE Facing Inward or Outward (more advanced). Practical for Jazz Band or Chamber Group.

#4 WARM-UP

- a. SCALE IN THE KEY of the first piece you are focusing on to "acclimate" them. Try add a note (do, do re do, do re mi re do, etc.) Allows several opportunities to hear wrong notes & correct without stopping
*Include PERC. on Mallets and/or Repeating a Non-Pitched Perc. Passage from Day's Piece.
- b. SELECT TRICKY RHYTHM Pattern(s) from piece to perform each note of the scale on.
Variation: assign different patterns to sections and play in a round (develop independence).
- c. SELECT ARTICULATION Pattern from the piece and apply it to the scale in the key and pattern of the piece.
Recommend FOUNDATIONS of SUPERIOR PERFORMANCE and HARMONIZED RHYTHMS for a.,b. & c. above
- d. AVOID TUNING Every Player Individually before rehearsing first piece. They will become dependent on this and Intonation will change as they play more, particularly larger instrs. Instead, Stop and Tune sections/individuals as needed throughout the rehearsal. The kids want to Play! Sound vs. Sight

#5 REHEARSAL

- a. FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE -Provide Pencils and Sharpener for those who need one. I tell students it's like playing baseball without a glove. Marking reminders will prevent future stops for same issue.
- b. ALWAYS STARTING from MEASURE 1 not recommended for a number of reasons: some sections may rest for a long time before being involved, results in imbalance of time devoted to measures in the latter half. Go directly to passages that need the most work while their attention is greatest.

c. REHEARSE SIMILAR PASSAGES Simultaneously that occur at different measures to address the same challenges once instead of multiple times at various points in the piece. (Color Coding Score)

REHEARSAL CONTINUED...

- d. MOVE AROUND THE ROOM. Staying on the podium is restricting your ears and eyes and can also lead to classroom management problems. Behavior is often relevant to your proximity.
- e. FREQUENTLY RECORD Rehearsals for the same reason. You can miss something musically when your attention is distracted by inappropriate behavior in the moment. *Play these for your Ensemble!
- f. PLAY MORE, TALK LESS! Students can't socialize or get bored when they're playing. Say it with your Baton
- g. MODEL PASSAGES -Demonstrate with an Instrument rather than use Words (you or capable section leader). "A Picture speaks a 1,000 Words!" *Play Professional Recordings -Compare/Contrast.
- h. ROTATE SECTIONALS (student led) in another room while you work with ensemble (Monitor:Blink Camera)
*Benefit of Student Teacher
- i. DIVIDE & CONQUER -Ensemble count off by 2's. The 1's play a passage while the 2's sitting next to them assess for accuracy (fingering, rhythm, intonation, etc.) and help correct. Reverse roles.
- j. 30 SECOND QUICK FIX -Step off the podium and give the ensemble 30 seconds to work out a tricky passage with partner. Helps students reluctant to ask for help in front of the group.
- k. NO IDLE TIME -Keep everyone active as much as possible as you focus on particular sections, i.e.; Brass buzz part on mouthpiece, Perc. play part on the rim, Woodwinds silently finger through, etc.
- l. ACCOMP. "BOP" THEIR PART (Play just the beginning of each note without the sustained rhythmic value) so you can hear moving lines better while keeping everyone playing or play 8th note subdivision on sustained pitches in slow piece..
- m. ISOLATE THE ISSUE to avoid countless repetitions trying to correct a passage. If it's rhythmic, play it all on one pitch; if it's melodic, disregard rhythm and play it slowly note by note. Work out articulations on single pitch.
- n. CUT TO THE CHASE -Ask students who do not have the syncopation to lap pat the downbeat and clap the upbeat slowly while those who have it play it. The audible upbeat helps with placement.
- o. RULE OF 3! -Don't Spend Too Long with Anyone Section in Full Group Rehearsal. Can't fix everything in one day so Try to Limit to 3 Attempts to Correct/Improve Passage and Move On.
*Follow up with Random Spot Checks
- p. CAREFUL NOT TO OVER-PROGRAM -Too Difficult +/- Too Many Pieces to Prepare will Eat Up Time Correcting Technical Issues and Leave Little Time for Ensemble Issues like Tone, Intonation, Balance, etc.

#6 DEVELOP INDEPENDENCE

Create Environment that's Student Centered:

- a. Ask students to identify issues and suggest solutions rather than you providing all the information.
- b. Avoid over cueing so student's count & listen rather than be cue dependent on you..
- c. Create a Chamber Ensemble within a Large Ensemble. Count off by 4's in each section & ask just 3's to play. Can't rely on section leaders and provides you an informal assessment of individuals in group.
- d. Scrambled Eggs: Students mix up seating. Cannot have the same instrument/voice on either side of them. They become more aware of other people's parts and cannot rely on their section leaders.
- e. Audiation Game: While playing, randomly hold up fist to stop playing/singing out loud but continue to "hear" in their head. Drop fist & challenge students to re-enter together at the same place in the music.
- f. Play the Rests: In 4/4, start the scale singing the first pitch as an 1/8 note and rest the remaining measure. Then sing first 2 pitches in 8ths and rest the remaining 3 beats. Continue adding 1/8 note each time.

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