**The Efficient Band Rehearsal**

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General Strategies

- Approach your work positively
- Have an agenda – plan your work and work your plan
- Bring your personality to the podium
- Leave your problems at the door
- Today is a new day
- Have your priorities in place
    - Basics – never an excuse
        - Posture
        - Hand position
    - Know where you are in the process

Rehearsal Planning

- The farther away the concert, we tend to spend more time on basics
- The closer we get to the concert, the less time we tend to spend on basics
- State your plan at the start of rehearsal
    - Write order on the board or announce the order
        - Establishes expectations
        - Allows percussion to get organized

Long Range Rehearsal Planning

- Each concert has a finite amount of preparation time
- Each work has a performance time
- Each work has a grade level
- Multiply the performance time X grade level = number
- Add the number for each piece and determine a % for each work
- Take amount of rehearsal time and multiply by %
- You now have number of minutes to spend on each piece in preparation

SCENARIO
Concert in 8 weeks
Daily rehearsals for 55 minutes
Actual rehearsal time is 45 minutes (10 minutes for role, announcements, warm-up)
Want to spend the last week running and taking care of "emergencies"
Have 7 weeks X 5 days = 35 rehearsals X 45 minutes = 1575 minutes

Playing 5 numbers

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. 5 minutes grade 3 | 5 X 3 = 15 X 1.19 = 17.85 % X 1575 = 281 mintues |
| 2. 4 minutes grade 4 | 4 X 4 = 16 X 1.19 = 19.04 % X 1575 = 300 minutes |
| 3. 7 minutes grade 3 | 7 X 3 = 21 X 1.19 = 24.99 % X 1575 = 393 minutes |
| 4. 3 minutes grade 4 | 3 X 4 = 12 X 1.19 – 14.28 % X 1575 = 225 minutes |
| 5. 5 minutes grade 4 | 5 X 4 = 20 X 1.19 = 23.80 % X 1575 = 375 minutes |
| | = 84 total = 1574 minutes |

100/84 = 1.19

Then take the number of minutes and assign to each work over the course of the seven-week preparation period. Determine if you want to work in 15 or 20-minute blocks, when you want to have a run-through, etc and begin your work.

The Warm-Up

- Make this a priority
  - Focus 100% of your attention
  - Avoid doing “clerical” duties
- Eyes
  - Precise Attack
    - Style
    - Placement (tempo)
  - Vary tempo
  - Vary styles
  - Vary meter
  - Vary dynamics
- Ears
  - Match timbres
  - Woodwinds only
  - Brasses only
  - Diatonic – identify half steps and whole steps
  - Hear the note before playing it
  - Learn new keys to develop a broader repertoire of muscle memory
- Fingers
  - Move them rhythmically
  - Slow passages require *fast* finger movement
  - Learn new keys to develop a broader repertoire of muscle memory
- Tongues
  - START – SUSTAIN – RELEASE
    - Two parts to the language
      - Consonants – tongue movements (placements)
      - Vowels – air
  - Accents
  - Staccato
  - Fast
  - Tongue must make a rhythmic movement
    - Think tongue-stroke
    - Think rebound
- Coordination
  - Tongue and fingers must move together
  - Tonguing and slurring
  - Divide the group to develop ensemble coordination
- Minds
  - Counting System Practice
- New concepts

Tuning

- The “ceremonial first pitch”
  - Has nothing to do with the outcome of the game
- Have students match sounds
- Listen to one instrument at a time
  - Sound goes up or down
- Hearing the beats
  - Difference between two sounds in vibrations per second
  - We hear the “average” of the two sounds
- Know when to use a tuner
- Avoid multiple tuners in the rehearsal
- Just vs. equal temperament tuning

Literature

- Perform quality music
- Perform music you “believe” in
- Have a concept before you begin
  - Develop your “internal” ear
- Think of the music “in context”

Music

- Two kinds of music, song and dance
- Song music
    - Lyrical in nature
    - Think line
    - Energy is in the “center” of the note
    - Often provides for more nuance in tempo
        - Rubato
        - Agitato
- Dance music
    - Rhythmic in nature
    - Think rhythm
    - Energy is at the “start” of the note
    - Strict tempo

Balance

- Develop the concept of sound you want to hear
    - Influenced by your listening history
    - Instrumentation
        - Large group
            - Symphonic Band
        - Small group
            - Wind Ensemble
        - Number of “color” instruments
- Often long notes cover moving lines
    - Let the students know when they have a long note, there are usually short notes underneath
        - Have them listen to the moving lines
        - Ask the moving lines to bring out their smaller notes
        - Ask the moving line to bring out any note that has an accidental
        - Ask students to bring out the moving (changing) notes
- Ask students to listen to other sections
- Ask students to place their line “ahead of” or “behind” another section
- Define the layers of the music
    - Foreground
    - Mid-Ground
    - Background
- Asking brass to raise or lower their bells can increase or decrease brightness of sound

Interpretation

- What role does meter play?
    - Strong beats – weak beats
        - Note weight
- Note length
    - Use your counting system to assist you
- The triplet figure
    - Music is motion
    - In duple music, a triplet is used to add motion
        - Faster
        - Slower
    - Use the triplet figure to bring this motion to the music
- The crescendo or decrescendo
    - What the composer wants is an increase or decrease in sound
    - The goal becomes the **contrast** between the beginning and end
    - We should phrase into the crescendo by shaping the line softer into the start of the crescendo
    - We should phrase into the decrescendo by shaping the line louder into the start of the decrescendo
    - Don’t allow the performer to anticipate by starting the action early

    - Defining the arrival point helps prevent the performer from achieving the contrast too soon
    - In “song” music we focus on increasing or decreasing the supported air volume (amount and/or velocity – depending upon desired timbre)
    - In “dance” music, we must also increase or decrease the intensity of the articulation
- Accents
    - Play the note before an accent softer
    - Type of music
        - Dance – Articulation
        - Song – Air – Weight
- Dissonance
    - Embrace dissonance
        - Suspensions
        - Anticipations
    - Play dissonances stronger, provides for increased satisfaction at resolution
- Ornaments
    - We hang the “ornament” on the outside of the tree
    - They must be heard
        - Grace notes
        - Trills
        - Turns
        - Pick up notes
- Transitions
    - Use one tempo to help set up the next
    - When rehearsing, work into and out of transitions
- Ritards
    - “Wheel of Fortune”

Clarity

- The ability to “hear” into and through a band sound
- Requires good tone and good pitch
- Requires good rhythm and good time
    - Students must watch the conductor (see conducting section below)
- When multiple instruments are playing a lyrical melodic line, have only one person perform with vibrato, the rest using straight tone

Counting System

- Wind players must engage the air
- Clapping systems work well for percussionists
- Don’t you hate the number “one?”

Articulation

- Students often focus on notes and rhythms
- Again, START-SUSTAIN-RELEASE, consonants and vowels
- What kind of articulation will you use?
    - T or D consonant?
    - Is the music song or dance?
- Have students say the articulation before playing the line
- Tongue and finger coordination
- Blow a stream of air…then have students tongue “over” the air stream and use hand motion to demonstrate this to the students
- Don’t stop the sound with the tongue unless the music requires it

Conducting

- A good set position
- Get comfortable with the baton, make it an extension of YOU
- “Quiet” yourself
- Condition your students to respond
    - Set position
    - Don’t talk with your arms in set “ready” position
    - Breathe <u>with</u> the students
    - Maintain eye contact through the downbeat
    - Keep your head out of the score
        - Videotape yourself

- Understand and use the “planes” of conducting
    - Horizontal = air
    - Vertical = attack
    - Size = volume
- Students should
    - WATCH to define tempo
        - Listening is of secondary importance here
    - LISTEN to define balance, blend and pitch
        - Watching is of secondary importance here
- Cues need a prep beat
- Fermatas mean note value **PLUS** the fermata
- Give non-verbal reinforcement
- Check the position of the music stand to allow student to see the podium while playing

Hearing

- Internal ear
    - What you want to hear
- External ear
    - What you are actually hearing
- Avoid defensive strategies
    - Singing the parts as you conduct
    - Conducting to the internal ear
- Constantly compare the external model to the internal model
    - What you hear vs. what you want
    - Diagnosis and cure
    - Listen to the starts, sustains and releases of notes
- Know “what” you want to hear
    - Following a line or color
    - Following a series of events in the music
    - Anticipate

Efficiency in Language

- Reinforce the verbal with visual support
- Less is more
    - Louder – Softer
    - Sharp – Flat
    - Faster – Slower
    - Brighter – Darker
    - Warmer – Cooler

Rehearsing

- The rehearsal is a place to do those things the player cannot do on their own outside of rehearsal
- Knowing what you can and can’t fix
    - Some things can be fixed immediately
        - When you hear it, fix it
        - Have students be “specific” with what they write on their music
            - Don’t circle something
                - Place a “#” in front of the note that needs a sharp
                - Place a “b” in front of a note that needs a flat
                - Same goes for naturals
            - What section to “listen to”
            - Use “arrows” for intonation reminders
    - Some things take time
        - We can’t rush the maturation process
        - Identify what needs to be done
        - Explain to the students how they should practice in order to develop the necessary performance skills
        - Reinforce these skills in daily warm-ups
        - Have students
            - Think like an “athlete” – so many “reps” a day
            - A minute on a measure

- Set up the framework
    - Think of rehearsing the music as putting together a puzzle
        - Rhythmic
            - Internalize rhythms with ensemble
            - Use band as a metronome while rehearsing a section
            - Look for like rhythmic figures
                - Play a line
                - Play the layer
                - Add together
                - Continue the process
                - Don't forget the percussion
            - Know that bad "off" beats are usually the case of bad "on" beats
                - Work for steady pulse and focus on the pulse
        - Harmonic
            - Bass line
            - Accompaniment
            - Melody
            - Harmony
            - Obbligato
            - Don't forget the percussion
- Get the students to acknowledge a mistake
    - Don't berate them
    - Saves tim, you know they know and don't have to stop

Modeling

- If you are singing something to the ensemble, sing (play) it correctly
- Sing the correct articulations
- Sing the correct pitches
- Sing the correct style
- Make the ensemble responsible
    - You are hearing this (sing example as they played it)
    - You are seeing this (sing the example as you want it played)

The Whole Process

- Concept >>>>> Detail >>>>> Concept
- Pacing
- Experience

Good luck!

***CHARELS T. MENGHINI*** *is President, Professor of Music an dDirector of Bands at VanderCook College of Music. Charlie frequently serves as a clinician and adjudicator throughout the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, and has actively worked with over 500 school and community ensembles from 25 states as well as Canada, Japan and Australia. He has conducted all-state ensembles in Wisconsin, North Dakota, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Nebraska and New York and has presented numerous clinics at the Midwest Clinic in Chicago and state music educators in-services from coast to coast. Charlie is also co-author of* ***The Essential Elements 2000 Band Method****, published by the Hal Leonard Corporation and serves as a member of the Board of Advisors to the "Instrumentalist" magazine.*


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