

The Three Pillars of Ensemble Conducting
Handouts

SCORE STUDY CHECK LIST

“To truly know a score you must first take it completely apart with your brain,
then, put it back together with your heart.”

- D. Betancourt

Components of score study:

___ general overview _____

___ number measures _____

___ phrasal analysis _____

___ composer’s notes _____

___ historical and analytical sources _____

___ length by measure and time: _____

___ descriptive words _____

___ bowings/articulations _____

___ percussion parts _____

___ instrumentation _____

___ playing/singing parts _____

___ orchestration _____

___ score marking _____

elements: _____

___ form ___melody ___harmony ___rhythm ___dynamics ___tempo ___ phrasing

scope chart _____

errata _____

___ conducting gestures _____

Nowak, J. and H. Nowak. *Conducting the Music, Not the Musicians*. New York, NY:
Carl Fischer, 2002.

Battisti F. and Robert Garofalo. *Guide to Score Study, for the Wind Band Conductor*.
Florida: Meredith Music Publications, 1990.

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REHEARSAL TECHNIQUES Band, Orchestra, Jazz, Marching

Pre-rehearsal

- Score study: anticipate musical problems
- Lesson plan: Standards-based concepts and objectives with considerations for the elements of music, historical and biographical information, interpretation, etc.
- Establish an order of importance for rehearsing problems
- Program rehearsal: have variety and consider difficulty level of each piece
- Be the first one to arrive at the rehearsal
- Set-up room/field: have a plan to do it yourself or as part of student routine
- Assign positions/chairs and music folders
- Post rehearsal order and announcements on the board
- Number measures
- Require a pencil
- Use librarian (student) to take care of music issues at rehearsals
- Talk about repairs any time other than rehearsals

Rehearsal

- Pacing: work towards peak
- Tuning: tendency sheets, chorales, directed listening, whom to tune by, vertically (chords) and horizontally (melody), beatless tuning, several sessions within a rehearsal, singing, use of tuner
- Warm-up: In same key as first rehearsal piece, relate to rehearsal piece, chorale setting, breathing exercises, stretching
- Use eyes to communicate
- Use sincere praise before constructive criticism
- Use humor
- Use names
- Talk as little as possible and stop seldom
- Don't stop for "silly" mistakes
- Wander through ensemble
- Breath with group
- Use metronomes and tuners during rehearsal (techniques vary)
- Use multimedia: record (audio/video) groups for evaluation/self-evaluation, listen to multiple recordings from other ensembles for comparison
- Individual versus ensemble work
- Use singing for melodies and chords
- Balance: choose order of importance
- Blend: develop a hierarchy of listening (composition versus player)
- Clap rhythms
- Count together, verbalize, one section play while others count
- Mark missed rhythms with downbeats
- Eliminate ties in rhythmic passages
- Slow tempo down

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REHEARSAL TECHNIQUES Band, Orchestra, Jazz, Marching (Continued)

- Guides self-critique
- Directed listening: chord quality, unisons, counter melodies, accompaniments, etc.
- Students model for others: start with competent players first
- Pick volunteers: find them before rehearsals
- Teacher demonstrations: play for them
- Move from the known to the unknown
- Repetition must have purpose
- Sight read often: start with easy to difficult over time
- Place sight reading between two familiar pieces
- Use separate folders for sight reading
- Point out mechanical problems, but focus rehearsal on musicality not technique
- Solve mechanical problems first ☹
- Talk over ensemble ☹
- Find problem areas by starting with a large group, then to smaller section, than to individual players ☹
- Teach by rote ☹
- “Old School” the students: yell, threaten, cajole, stare down, belittle, throw objects, only find faults, etc. ☹
- Announce upcoming expectations
- End rehearsal on a positive note

Post-rehearsal

- “Tear down” procedure is firmly established
- Bring in clinicians
- Develop a hierarchy: director, principal(s), section leaders, librarian, managers, officers
- Train student leaders: leading by example, learn logistical routines, expectations
- Sectionals: lead by director or students
- Open door policy: Anyone can stop in to listen to a rehearsal
- Match equipment/instruments ☹
- **The process should be more important than the product!**

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Rehearsal Schedule Example

What Your Students See on the Board

Tune:

Warm Up:

Scales Studies: Bb, A, Ab, G

Chorale: #59

First Suite in Eb/Holst:

Intermezzo:

March:

What You See

Tune:

5 minutes

Warm Up:

10 minutes

Scales Studies: Bb, A, Ab, G

Chorale: #59

First Suite in Eb/Holst:

Intermezzo:

30 minutes

- m. 43-67 (all) Theme 1
melody with pick-up, light lows, entrances, count out loud, triangle & tambourine, dynamics, balance (m.59)
- m. 27-38 (clarinets & alto sax) Theme 2
clarity, articulation, dynamics (p), crescendo
- m. 25-43 (all)
dynamics, pulse, clarity, articulations
- m. 42 (all)
release
- m. 1 & run (all)
apply above; pulse, tempo, melody, dynamics, articulation
- m. 136-end (all)
Fit parts, no dynamics, count outloud, pulse, add dynamics

March:

20 minutes

- m. 163-168 (all winds; no percussion)
Tone, balance, blend, pitch, tuning: Chorale (play-sing-play), no dynamics at first
- m. 169-end (all) Coda
accents with air, triplets (how to practice)
- m. 109-end (all)
apply everything, (run?), bass drum solo, balance at m. 123, accents on half notes (126, 130, 146), accent first note of each triplet with air

Bands choice: run a movement of bands choice 5 minutes

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A Different Handout That I Gave Regarding Rehearsal Techniques

Concise, Clear, and Specific Comments should be practiced daily

Musical Concepts (list is not all-inclusive):

Tone, Pitch, Tuning, Blend, Balance

Rhythm, Pulse, Tempo, Time, Singing

Expressive Elements: Dynamics, Phrasing, Articulation

Form: Themes, Melody, Counter Melody, Accompaniment, Harmonic Progression,
Compositional Devices

Harmony, Triads, Tension & Release

Context, Relevance, Historical Info, Composer Info, Terminology

Your Responsibilities:

Score study (start by having all measures of all parts, including score, numbered)

Rehearsal plan (with timeline): the 'to do' list gets longer and more specific as a performance approaches, but there are more 'run-throughs'

Practice your conducting technique (gestures needed for each selection) (never ending)

Practice rehearsal techniques (never ending)

Hone your musicianship (never ending)

Practice being flexible

Model: Become the student that you would want in your ensemble

Indicators that you are talking too much:

- You dedicate the beginning and end of rehearsal to announcements (and maybe throw some in the middle of rehearsal, just for fun)
- You spend a fair amount of time planning announcements
- You spend a lot of time explaining where to begin to play
- You use extensive analogies to explain the same concept (i.e. crescendo) every day, to the same students
- Students don't make eye contact (without prompting) when you start talking
- Students put their head down when you start talking

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REHEARSAL TECHNIQUES

Young Ensembles

("young" doesn't refer only to age!)

Pre-rehearsal

- One objective per rehearsal
- One concept at a time
- Turn in practice sheets any time other than rehearsal
- Instrumental check-in and check-out procedure firmly established
- Set-up procedure in place (practice!)

Rehearsal

- No Playing until group plays together
- On the podium = No talking/ eyes front versus Off the podium = talking allowed
- Numbering system for dynamics
- Change articulation/bowing for ease or clarity (change back when appropriate)
- Hands/ baton up and down, instruments follow hands (practice!)
- No talking when group stops playing (practice!)
- Flash cards to quiz elements of music
- Phrasing: emphasize various notes in a phrase to show differences
- Purposely vary expressive elements to encourage students to watch (n/a marching)
- Purposely stop and start in different spots to encourage students to watch (n/a marching)

Post-rehearsal

- No playing at end of rehearsal
- Tear down procedure in place (practice!)
- No late passes given (within reason!)
- Make parent phone calls: praise and concerns