

How to Achieve High Marks at Ensemble Adjudication

- *An Adjudicator's Perspective*

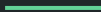
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Overview

This clinic will present an adjudicator's perspective on a variety of issues that arise during music assessments

Topics to discuss:

- Logistical and rehearsal preparation
- Adjudication criteria
- Proper sight reading techniques



What is the most important element to a successful performance?

PROPER PLANNING

On the day of festival the goal is to be calm and in control

What are the Major Ensemble Performance Errors?

- ❖ A Clear Discernible Musical and Expressive Line
- ❖ Clipped phrasing not holding fermatas for full value
- ❖ Improper Appearance, Discipline, Professionalism and Confidence
- ❖ Inconsistent Pulse
- ❖ Lacking or Non-uniform Articulations
- ❖ Poor Tone - which relates to: Poor Intonation
- ❖ Improper Balance - The inability to hear the melodic motive vs. accompaniment
- ❖ Lacking Rhythmic Clarity - Correct rhythms
- ❖ Softer Softs and a Full Dynamic Spectrum

Basic Rehearsal Fixes

- ❖ Use a metronome
- ❖ Self Evaluate
- ❖ Use tuners, computer assisted software (Smartmusic), etc.
- ❖ Sing as much as possible
- ❖ Create benchmarks and goals
- ❖ Always perform the music - do not just “Play It”
- ❖ Get a Coach

Develop a Success Plan **BEFORE** Rehearsals Begin

- ❖ Success starts at the beginning of the year
- ❖ Create a calendar of events at the beginning of the year
- ❖ Create a music fundamentals program that you use every rehearsal
- ❖ Choose music that compliments your ensemble
- ❖ Begin reading festival music at the beginning of the year. Choose the literature and order all music and scores at least 3-4 months prior to the performance
- ❖ Prepare your scores prior to the first rehearsal
- ❖ Train your students and crew for the procedures of the festival day
- ❖ Create your seating chart prior to festival
- ❖ Have a pre-festival concert
- ❖ Create percussion assignments & equipment lists prior to rehearsals
- ❖ Recreate the festival day in your rehearsals, including run through of the performance, walking on and off stage and into a sight-reading room

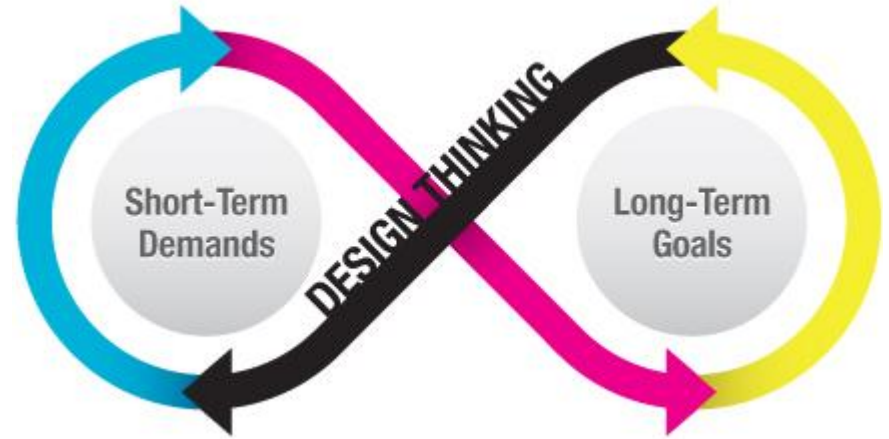
Success Plan Continued...

- ❖ Recreate the day many times before so it becomes second nature
- ❖ Create warm ups that are related to your festival repertoire
- ❖ Make a 1 page synopsis of all key terms, elements, period of music
- ❖ Determine all bowings and any other important items prior to the first rehearsal
- ❖ Choose appropriate high quality music from the MMEA music list that is within 1 grade level of each piece.
- ❖ Put a mirror in the back of your classroom and practice conducting while rehearsing
- ❖ Create an audio or video listing of your repertoire and make it available to your ensemble members

PREPARATION & PLANNING

Create Longitudinal Rehearsal Plans

- ❖ 6 Week Plan
- ❖ Weekly Plan
- ❖ Daily Plan
- ❖ Review Rehearsal Plan Template



Create a 6 Week Plan-Include a Pre-festival Adjudicated Concert

6 Week Sample Festival Plan

| SKILL | WEEK 6 | WEEK 5 | WEEK 4 | WEEK 3 | WEEK 2 | WEEK 1 |
|--------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Notes | | | | | | |
| Rhythms | | | | | | |
| Shifting/Fingering | | | | | | |
| Style | | | | | | |
| Tone Quality | | | | | | |
| Bowing | | | | | | |
| Tempo | | | | | | |
| Blend | | | | | | |
| Balance | | | | | | |
| Phrasing | | | | | | |
| Dynamics | | | | | | |
| Vibrato | | | | | | |
| Musical Flow | | | | | | |
| Musicality | | | | | | |

Learn the MMEA Grading Criteria and Apply It

- ❖ Recognize the Value of Adjudication/Assessment
 - Use this time to introduce critical evaluation of individual and ensemble performances
- ❖ Explain the MMEA scoring system to students and use it for evaluation from the beginning of the year. Create weekly individual and ensemble assessments using the rating criteria.
 - I – 96-100: Superior
 - II – 90-95: Excellent
 - III – 80-89: Good
 - IV – 70-79: Fair
 - V – Below 70: Poor
- ❖ Create daily lesson plans/objectives that incorporate critical assessment of the adjudication sheets
 - Tone
 - Intonation
 - Technique/Articulation
 - Rhythm

Know the Copyright Issues

You MUST provide **THREE** original conductor scores for the adjudicators

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Choosing the music

- *This could be the most important planning element*
- ❖ Find music that comfortably fits the technical abilities of the ensemble and fits the median ability level
 - Consider tempo, time/key signatures, and the level of difficulty when choosing a piece for the ensemble
- ❖ Play literature that highlights the ensemble's strengths
 - Consider instrumentation
 - Avoid pieces with lead parts for instruments that may not be particularly strong in your ensemble
- ❖ Know your time limits and do not choose works that will take longer than the allotted time to perform

Seating Arrangements

- *Reference John Whitwell's Seating Plan Theory*
- ❖ Wind instruments in ensemble sound better if there is more space between players than you would find in an orchestra.
- ❖ Consider an arrangement that enhances the Pyramid of Balance.
- ❖ Wind bands sound better if the seating plan is deeper, and not wider.
- ❖ Center tubas and euphonium with the trombones centered in front of them. A combination effect takes place which makes the bass notes of chords centered, more beautiful and more clear. This never happens if the tubas are on the same row as trombones. Then one only hears the individual instruments, never a unity of the sound.
- ❖ MS Word created seating charts

Teaching Method

- ❖ Be Consistent in your teaching style
 - Students will achieve higher if they are familiar with the process.
- ❖ Set weekly and monthly achievement goals for both the ensemble and individuals
 - Set goals that are challenging, yet achievable.
- ❖ Assess the student's abilities throughout the preparation period
 - Your students' individual abilities should grow as your ensemble does.

Ask yourself

- What are my objectives for students?
- Am I actually teaching what I am assessing?
- Am I using student assessments to learn about my teaching and assessment?

Teaching Technique

Create daily warm-up sheets that reflect how to:

Practice precision (attack, sustain, release)

Practice articulation patterns

- Tonguing vs. Slurring
- Staccato, Legato, Marcato, etc.

Playing the correct notes

- Practice scales (major, minor, and chromatic)
- Practice alternate fingerings that can make sections of music easier

How to Teach Musicality???

Introduce shaping and phrasing

Play musical examples - try to vary as many examples as possible

Have the ensemble sing basic phrases and then phrases in the festival literature to exaggerate the musical phrase



Balance

- ❖ The proper blend of melody, harmony, and rhythmic accompaniment.
- ❖ The melody must always be heard, but never overpowering the bass voices.
- ❖ Practice interpretation – Written dynamics do not always guarantee good balance!



BAND CAMP

Concert BAND CAMP????

Consider having a 3 hour concert band camp

Bring in guest clinicians for each section to work with the students

Put on a concert at the end of the rehearsal



REWRITES???

When to Rewrite Student Parts?

- ❖ No double reeds? No french horns? Too many flutes or saxes?
- ❖ Essential or music lines must be preserved
- ❖ When is it appropriate to re-score music?
 - Missing and/or weak sections
 - Missing and/or weak soloists
- ❖ How much rewriting is too much?
 - When the musical content of the piece is compromised
 - Rewriting is much more acceptable in Grades I, II, and even III music than Grades IV and V
 - Whenever possible, select music that you can play “straight out of the box”

Will the judges disapprove of me rewriting?



- ❖ Will vary from judge to judge, but most judges will recognize the issue and give an “A” for effort to create a solution
- ❖ Most judges prefer that the re-scoring be kept to a minimum
- ❖ If you are rescoring is tasteful and skillful enough, the judges might not even notice!

General Re-Scoring Guidelines

1. Range

- a. Always choose the same range as the original

2. Timbre

- a. Choose instruments or combinations that resemble the same color

3. Percussion

- a. Always cover the basics – snare drum, bass drum, cymbals first, then timpani and as many mallet parts as possible; anything else that is rhythmical in nature
- b. Mallets parts can often be omitted when they double wind parts
- c. Make a percussion score for your players to play from, enabling them to easily move from part to part and allowing them to cover as many parts as possible
- d. Consider using wind players to play the easier accessory percussion parts

PERCUSSION

Create Percussion Assignments for Assessment and Sight Reading

| Instrument | Composition 1 | Composition 2 | Composition 3 |
|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Snare | Student Name | Student Name | Student Name |
| Bass Drum | Student Name | Student Name | Student Name |
| Crash cymbals | Student Name | Student Name | Student Name |
| Mallets | Student Name | Student Name | Student Name |
| Timpani | Student Name | Student Name | Student Name |

Major Improper Percussion Techniques

- ❖ Not playing musically and/or over balancing the winds
- ❖ Clarify the cymbal smash vs cymbal choke
- ❖ Timpani tuning is too loud
- ❖ Using improper/inappropriate sticks and mallets
- ❖ Not using the highest quality equipment available
- ❖ Not using a padded trap table/stand for percussion accessories, sticks, mallets, etc.

SIGHT READING

Sight Reading Preparation

- ❖ Choose relatively short pieces to sight read when taking a break from rehearsing your main set.
- ❖ Start with a piece 2-3 grades below your level to read then gradually as the band improves, increase the difficulty until your band is sight reading their own level well.
- ❖ Know the required timing procedures
 - Use a stopwatch to make practice more realistic
- ❖ Focus more on playing musically than just the notes.
- ❖ Use assessment criteria for evaluation

Helpful Hints for Sight Reading- Prep stage

- ❖ Use a stopwatch for each step of the process.
- ❖ Make sure you have the correct music and part
- ❖ No playing! Instead have the students
 - Tizzle or air and valve
 - Sing
 - Clap
- ❖ Assign percussion parts prior to the assessment and have them stand behind the instrument
- ❖ STARS acronym
 - Signatures
 - Tempo
 - Articulation
 - Rhythm
 - Signs

Helpful Hints for Sight Reading- Performance Stage

- ❖ Balance - Melody must be heard at all times
- ❖ Ask to play a scale in the key of the piece
- ❖ Always have mutes
- ❖ Play proper tempo
- ❖ Use fingers to touch key signature and repeats



PERFORMANCE ETIQUETTE

Performance Etiquette

- ❖ Arrive to the venue early, leaving enough time to properly warm up the students and their instruments
- ❖ When in the audience
 - Applaud when a new ensemble and conductor come on the stage
 - Remain quiet and attentive during performances
 - Applaud at the end of each piece
 - If necessary, only move around between ensembles, or between pieces if it is an emergency
- ❖ When performing
 - Dress appropriately
 - Students should remain professional and focused throughout the performance, even if mistakes are made
 - Do not wave to the audience or otherwise attract unnecessary attention

NON-MUSICAL ITEMS

Important Non-Musical Items

- ❖ Reserve transportation
- ❖ Acquire chaperones
- ❖ Complete all necessary paperwork (festival information, field trip forms, etc.)
- ❖ Submit seating charts, scores, any other pertinent information
- ❖ Create packing/equipment lists
- ❖ Obtain all medical forms, information, etc.

PEER REVIEW

More than 50 Maryland Directors were asked: “5 things to help obtain high ratings at festival?”

- ❖ 100% of the educators polled stressed the importance of music selection for the strengths of your ensemble.
- ❖ 91% stressed a focus on fundamentals including intonation, articulation, and breathing.
- ❖ 86% suggested that planning out your rehearsals will help you achieve maximum efficiency.
- ❖ 76% focused on balance, blending, and instrumentation in the ensemble.
- ❖ **Only** 14% put any focus on getting all of the notes. At this point, it is more important to make music not just the correct sound.

CHECKLISTS

Closing Remarks

Thanks to all of the educators who assisted in compiling this information.

Questions???

Festival Must Have's

- ❖ Train your students and crew for the procedures of the festival day
- ❖ Choose music wisely for student success
- ❖ Review concert attire and bring extra uniforms and parts as needed
- ❖ Create your seating chart prior to festival
- ❖ Have a pre-festival concert
- ❖ Create percussion assignments prior to rehearsals
- ❖ Create a percussion and overall equipment list for the day of assessment
- ❖ Have a strong percussion section leader to check, recheck and check again that you have all pertinent equipment
- ❖ Recreate the festival day in your rehearsals, including run through of the performance, walking on and off stage and into a sight-reading room
- ❖ Bring your music, extra student music, Judge's conductor scores and a tool box
- ❖ Bring in guest clinicians (conductors, performers, etc.)
- ❖ Recreate the day many times before so it becomes second nature