

THE FIVE T'S OF REHEARSAL - TRAVIS J. WELLER (Nu/PA)

As directors, we all know the work is done in the rehearsal. What comes later - the performance - is a logical extension that provides evidence about what our students can do. Day to day, week to week, and month to month through our school year, we strive to set our students on a path towards excellence that improves the individual and the ensemble. **Daily emphasizing the Five "T's"** of the Rehearsal can focus student attention toward that goal and get them more invested in the process.

I have heard this story recounted at several honor band festivals that I have attended during my career, so I cannot claim it as my own. "An observer at a construction site asks two different stone cutters what they are doing. One says that he is cutting stones into certain shapes and fitting them to other stones. The other stone cutter says that he is building a cathedral." To our students at times, focusing on the five fundamentals of Tone, Tune, Time, Technique and Touch might seem like hard work. We need to remind them that work on these things can vastly improve their experience in the ensemble.

Tone focuses on the sound our students produce. Where do they hear good tone? Asking live musicians to join our rehearsals and present a master class is a great opportunity for students to be up close and personal. Sometimes as directors we neglect that we can be a great example on an instrument — sharpen up that ax! A colleague of mine organized a playlist on YouTube for each musical instrument for her jazz band to use as a reference. Organizing simple trips to hear college or professional groups can also provide students with additional aural imagery. While all these provide examples, we must encourage use of long tones, scales and chorale like exercises in the rehearsal for

students to begin to match their production with their aural imagery.

Tuning should also be a daily part of the rehearsal in which students are engaged. The instrument is the tool, but the musician is inside them and must learn to hear what is and is not in tune. Tuning drones are useful to engage everyone. I observed a colleague who after warming up the ensemble sent groups to the instrument storage room with a tuner while working small sections and passages with the remaining students. It took him 10 minutes to cycle through the entire ensemble and have everyone be tuned.

I often ask my own ensembles "Who is responsible for keeping time in this ensemble?" After a number of years asking, now all the hands go up! **Time** and tempo are everyone's responsibility! When appropriate, I always try to link and incorporate difficult rhythms or rhythms with inherent tempo issues in the ensemble repertoire into our warm-up exercises. It allows to provide the students with fundamental insight into the tempo and time concepts within the work that then can be transferred to other pieces in the future.

A friend of mine once stated that "if pedagogical music is not real music, get rid of the Well-Tempered Klavier!" Depending upon your teaching context, sometimes the emphasis on technique you provide in rehearsal may be the only technique work students will receive.

Technique is acquired through systematic procedures before it can be exhibited in a public performance — which means there will be work to be done! Asking our best musicians to model technique in certain spots can also be a way to groom leadership by example and set standards of excellence within the group.

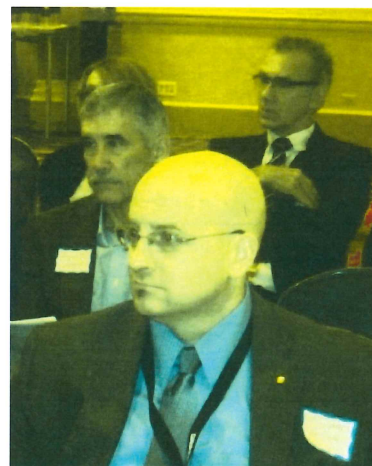
What is the point of music education?

While many of our students may be masters of high-tech with their phone in hand, our ensembles are places where we can groom **Touch**, high-touch. Many of the pieces we program have moments of emotion in them. No matter how small or fleeting the moment of emotion might be, engage the group in surrendering themselves so the moment might be felt and lived by the ensemble. By doing so, we can help students identify part of their own emotional template. They may forget the exact title and (more often) the composer (mostly because they believe they're all dead!), but they will remember how the music we studied and performed made them feel long after the last note has been released.

These are only five concepts to consider among many in music education, but focusing our ensembles on the "T's of the Rehearsal" can pay lasting dividends for these aspiring musicians.

Editor's note:

Travis J. Weller is a member of the PhiBetaMu Newsletter Staff, and is active with contributions to the PhiBetaMu Facebook page. I am sure we will value his contributions in future.



Travis Weller at Midwest 2015