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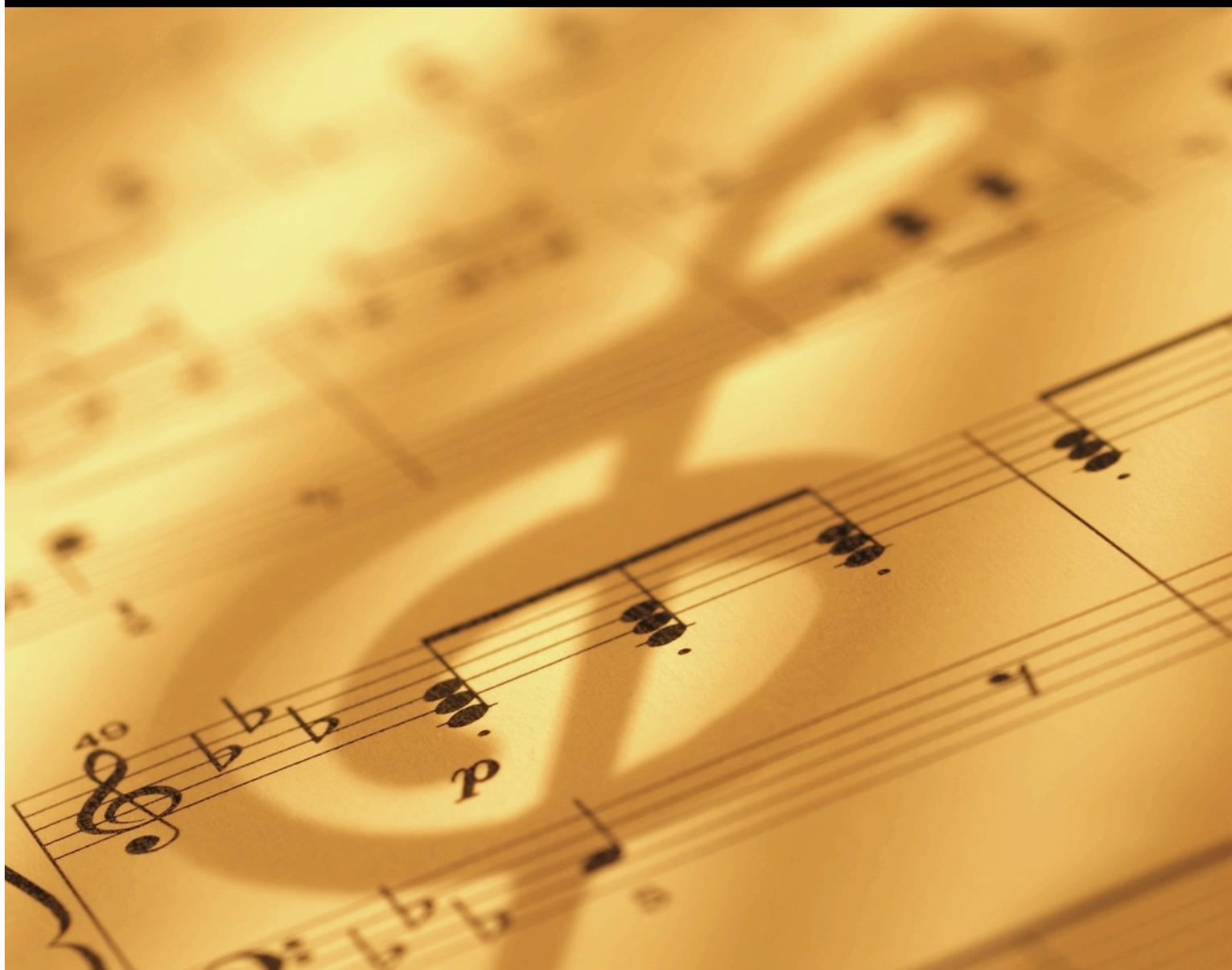


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My Rehearsal is a Riot

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Developing Superior Rehearsal Discipline

Discipline is the refining fire by which talent becomes ability.

Good discipline is the result of student respect for you, your personality, your skills, your musicianship.

Good discipline is a result of proper rehearsal atmosphere.

Good discipline is a result of setting high expectations for your students.

Good discipline is a result of setting and striving for individual and group goals.

Good discipline is a result of your respect for your students.

YOU are the number one cause of the success of your band, orchestra or chorus.

YOU, THE TEACHER, may also be the number one cause of discipline problems!

You talk too much!

You are not prepared for class.

You try to learn the score at rehearsals.

You start the rehearsal with talk and announcements instead of MUSIC; 90% of the discipline problems are caused by you, the teacher!

Slow-paced rehearsals cause boredom (i.e. discipline problems).

You permit students to talk during rehearsals.

You talk over students who are talking.

You are hesitant in corrections, you say "let's go back to No. 5," without giving a reason.

You don't know your score, so you're really winging it during class. (How do you know if students are making mistakes if you don't know the score?!)

Fast-paced rehearsals eliminate many discipline problems. That means:

Keeping your head out of the score, memorizing the score, being ready to conduct a performance at the very first rehearsal. Students will usually sense when you are winging it, when you don't know what corrections to make.

Boredom in the rehearsal is a major cause of poor discipline.

Don't say it, conduct it. Teach them your conducting motions. Memorize the score; know what every instrument is supposed to be playing. You can't teach what you don't know.

Keep your head up and out of the score. Keep eye contact with the students.

Poor results can be a major source of dissatisfaction among students and, therefore, poor discipline.

Students can sense poor quality of teaching-lack of balance in the ensemble; overblowing; poor tonal quality; poor sectional balance; lack of technical preparation.

Students may not know the CAUSE of poor results, but they will blame it on you, the teacher-and that causes poor discipline.

DO YOU TALK TOO MUCH? It's a MAJOR cause of poor discipline.

More Ways to Poor Discipline

Your preparatory beats are confusing.

You don't diagnose the problem, you just say, "let's do it over."

You work too long on one problem and lose the group's interest. (There's always tomorrow.)

You rehearse the complete work when spot rehearsal (small segments) would improve interest (and, incidentally, improve technique).

You don't break down problems into musical factors, then drill each factor.

You talk too much!

You don't use a blackboard to clarify problems.

You make the whole group sit idle while you repair an individual's instrument.

You never work on fundamentals, so you don't have any carry-over value from one piece to another.

Your exact ictus (tip of baton at point of attack) is not clear.

Your baton beats are out of sight of the students.

Your eyes cannot be seen because your head is in the score.

You didn't check the height of the students' music stands (too high or too low), so they cannot see your eyes, baton and facial expressions.

Your rehearsals are slow-paced and lose student interest.

You talk too much, instead of letting your baton talk for you.

Guides for Well-Disciplined, Interesting Rehearsals

1. Train your ensemble to give you immediate attention when you step on the podium!
2. Train your ensemble to continue that silence as long as you are on the podium or even when you are off the podium, but talking to them.
3. Train your group to immediately look at you when you stop for a correction, and to mentally ask themselves, "why did he/she stop?" and then wait for your answer.
4. Keep interest at a high level with a fast-paced rehearsal, with results obvious to students themselves:
 - a. DON'T be a "stop-&-fixit" conductor, stopping for every tiny error; many times students fixit themselves.
 - b. DON'T be a time-beater; you can get a flashing metronome for that. Time beating is monotony, turns students OFF and doesn't teach MUSIC. Your baton should SAY something.
 - c. The first three minutes (3 minutes) are the key to the whole rehearsal and are critical to establishing the mood of the rehearsal. No announcements, no paper-passing, no distributing music, no talk, JUST MUSIC, RIGHT OFF THE BAT.
 - d. Make the last five minutes of the rehearsal the impetus for the next rehearsal.

- e. DO put your rehearsal agenda on the blackboard before each rehearsal.
- f. DON'T use long warm-ups; they're boring, repetitious and break the 3-minute rule. Any warm-up should be meaningful and should relate to the rehearsal (stress balance, dynamics, intonation, tone, following the baton, technical fundamentals) but definitely not the same every day, ad nauseum.
- g. DON'T talk if your baton can say it for you. Teach your students the expressiveness of your conducting motions. The less talking you do, the more concentrated the rehearsal will be. If you must talk, make it short, concise and clear.
- h. Know exactly what you want to accomplish during each rehearsal. That means knowing your score, knowing what spots need work.
- i. Always give as much praise as possible to individuals, to sections, and to the whole group.

Anecdote: Arturo Toscanini stopped an NBC Symphony rehearsal in mid-stride and asked William Bell, the famed tuba player, to play a certain passage. When Mr. Bell finished, Toscanini asked him to play it again. Mr. Bell was flustered and asked, "Maestro, what am I doing wrong?" Toscanini beamed and said, "you play it so beautifully I just wanted everyone to hear it again." The power of praise!

Music directors recognize that music classroom situations are more complex and dynamic than the average school class. Music ensemble classes are not like other classes. This unique educational setting requires discipline approaches different from other academic classes. For your first meeting of the school year (for those of you who are new to a particular situation), the first meeting or rehearsal is the time to put your best foot forward. That first meeting should be an experience in exacting demands, in what you want your students to learn, in your hopes and expectations; what you expect of them in rehearsals. You set the tone for the entire year. They can leave that first meeting all enthused and expecting great things-or they can walk to the guidance office and change their schedule!

The story of Toscanini's first rehearsal with the fabulous NBC Symphony is a classic: He walked on stage, stepped on the podium, raised his baton and gave the downbeat for the first bar of the Brahms First Symphony, all without saying one word. Only after the Orchestra had finished a breath-taking performance of the first movement did he say his first words to the Orchestra: "Not bad, not bad." Don't you think he got the attention of those world-class players on his very first meeting with them?

Discipline is often the result of the physical environment of the rehearsal hall. The setting influences attitudes. Make your rehearsal area pulsate with interest, with past history and pictures, with up-coming events, with musical themes. Always neat and clean and well-ordered, with chairs and stands always properly placed, never a messy area! Discipline is negatively impacted when students walk into a messy room.

Discipline is sometimes improved by your stepping off the podium. Leave aisles down the middle of the group so you can step down from the podium and circulate down the middle or along the sides-right in the middle of the rehearsal. It will improve the effort of

the students. It also helps if you wish to work for a few minutes (repeat: few) with a particular section in the rear or middle of the group.

Your facial expression can be a powerful discipline tool. It can express your pleasure or displeasure without the disruption of words. A frown can say "STOP!" or your face can express satisfaction with behavior, or your pleasure with the performance of a certain passage. Facial expressions are also used by excellent conductors to convey emotion in the music.

Your approach to rehearsal should always be enthusiastic. It will carry over to your students. Wear a smile!

Involve your parents. Inspire them to be in tune with your philosophies, your rules and your discipline. Get them to support you on your goals, your aspirations for the group.

Causes of Discipline Problems

You will readily recognize these causes for poor discipline:

YOU, the director

Boredom

The Student's sense of ensemble non-achievement

Student discouragement/sense of failure

Negative social conditions

Lack of motivation

Boredom

Interest (the opposite of boredom) will be enhanced when the students feel emotionally involved in what they're doing. Enliven your rehearsal by keeping it fast paced, by some comments on technical composition techniques such as form, themes, historical scenarios of the composer and work, visual descriptions of a musical passage. Again, keep it fast-paced, never any wasted time, no time for boredom.

Student Sense of Non-achievement

Students usually sense poor quality of teaching. They may not be able to define poor tone quality or lack of balance in the ensemble, or poor intonation, or poor technical preparation, etc., but they sense that the music does not sound good. They sense non-achievement. This creates dissatisfaction and that leads to poor discipline. If this is a problem for you, don't hesitate: Find the best musician you can and ask for help.

Student Discouragement,

Sense of Failure

A student may feel inadequate in comparison to others. Whether this is a valid reality or not, the perception of lack of personal progress leads to dissatisfaction and poor discipline. Discouragement with one's individual progress is a leading cause of dropout.

Praise and encouragement are prime methods of getting young people to give their best. Praise before criticizing. When mistakes are made, say something complimentary before you mention the mistake. Encouragement can help give the student a new start after a failure. Look for something to compliment. Praise the slightest improvement. Make them excel. Even the most untalented student can be praised and encouraged and made to feel important.

Negative Social Conditions

Your warmth, your personal interest in each student, your attempt to make each student feel there is something for them, your desire for their success, might just be the catalyst needed to lift a student out of a poor home condition, an unloved situation, or some other negative social condition.

Lack of motivation

A feeling of inadequacy, a feeling of non-achievement, a feeling of the unimportance of band or orchestra, a feeling of failure or lack of success, a feeling of not belonging or being a social outcast from the group, a feeling that YOU don't like him/her. All these can be factors in a potential dropout and certainly factors in poor behavior patterns. You, as a music director and teacher, are more than just a teacher. You are a motivation, an inspiration, a person to be admired and looked up to.

One of the greatest compliments you will ever receive is a student telling you that he/she wants to be just like you when they grow up!

Other Discipline Factors

Occasionally, a problem student will be the product of where there is no love. Your warmth, your obvious interest in each student, your desire for their success, may find a receptiveness which will change the problem student into an asset, both to the group and to him- or herself.

Even in band or orchestra, a few students will develop excuse-making techniques.

Destroy this by showing them the futility of such an exercise.

When poor conduct is willful, take immediate action. To falter is to commit discipline suicide. Move immediately, with tactfulness, but with forcefulness. To even APPEAR to accept poor conduct is disastrous for the group discipline. Don't make a mountain out of a molehill, but demonstrate the seriousness of the situation. The approach of a private meeting with problem students will let them know you really care.

We repeat again: Keep rehearsals fast-paced. Make corrections or praise performance, get your baton up, start immediately, never any waiting around, any loss of time. Keep them busy and concentrated. At the same time, your approach is warm, human, student-centered and never an ego trip for the teacher.

Next time: Setting goals, winning attitudes, inspiring others, winning.