

# INSPIRATION: THE KEY TO BEING A MASTER TEACHER

by Tim Lautzenheiser

- “The good teacher tells.”
- “The excellent teacher explains and demonstrates.”
- “The master teacher inspires.”

- William Arthur Ward

Mr. Ward’s words ring true in every aspect of our educational community; and perhaps they are MOST vivid in the world of music education. The role of the teacher, director, conductor, mentor is to create a healthy atmosphere supporting the entire spectrum of music learning, music making, and music listening.

If we analyze the wisdom of his quote, we can apply it to our daily teaching habits in a fashion that will benefit every one involved in the teaching-learning process.

## THE GOOD TEACHER TELLS

The very essence of education is “passing information from one source (teacher) to another source (student).” This represents the WHAT in the curriculum. From WHAT the dates are when Columbus landed in America to WHAT is wrong with the intonation of the ensemble, we are all trained to bring to our classrooms and rehearsals rooms a library of evolving valuable data to expand and improve the lives of our students. Even as we continue our own education through workshops, graduate school, seminars, conventions clinics, etc., we embellish our knowledge with everything from the latest statistics to new information embellishing our own understanding. Simply put; WE KNOW MORE WHAT.

However, if all we do is TELL our students this important data without holding them accountable for integrating it into their lives, we may be nothing more than another source of facts-and-figures. The overriding question is, “Is the material communicated in a way our students will realize it has a positive impact in relation to their well-being.” Simply put, DOES THE TEACHING OF THE LESSON

HAVE A LASTING EFFECT? Most certainly the WHAT is a crucial foundation block, but we cannot stop there.

## THE EXCELLENT TEACHER EXPLAINS AND DEMONSTRATES

The area of music education is one of the most exciting academic subjects begging for EXPLANATION and DEMONSTRATION. Successful music teachers know it is the “hands-on” learning-processes required for high-level achievement. We simply don’t instruct WHAT to do, but we show our students HOW to do it. We are participants as we sing along with them, conduct the ensemble, and serve as the accompanist. Not only do we explain how each vital skill is accomplished, we demonstrate the tone we are seeking, the needed style, the shape of the phrase, the music picture we are trying to paint. The job requires so much more than simply “telling the students WHAT to do,” it is a matter of discovering countless way to EXPLAIN the various avenues of efficiently and effectively reaching the given goal. The EXCELLENT teacher will then go the next step by DEMONSTRATING what the final product should be.

## THE MASTER TEACHER INSPIRES

To inspire; to establish a creative atmosphere where the students are “in the spirit” of the moment and can express themselves in a way they don’t just DO something, but they FEEL something. It is the WHY of learning. It is taking the WHAT combining it with the HOW and venturing into a new realm of WHY. When young musicians connect with WHY they are making music, then the motivation to strive for a higher level of proficiency takes on a whole new meaning.

Music touches a part of our psyche that helps us regulate our lives. Music helps us understand and express our moods and attitudes. Music helps us reorganize our thoughts and feelings while keeping us on track. Music allows us to respond appropriately in social structure that is

often confusing and complex. MUSIC MAKES US HUMAN. The master teacher INSPIRES us with this awareness.

We, as music educators, have a direct line to the inner emotions of our students. So much of the school day is “impressionistic.” (Learn the information and replicate it on a test.) Music is “expressionistic.” Each member of the class/ensemble has the opportunity to bring his/her emotions to musical portrait; each person has value and plays a key role in the creative process; each person contribute his/her SPIRIT to the musical community.

As we begin the next school year we certainly will be telling our students WHAT to do, and we will be EXPLAINING and DEMONSTRATING how we expect it to be done...and the MASTER TEACHERS will be constantly challenging their budding young artists to explore WHY it is important to continue along the pathway of quality music-making.

MAESTRO is taken from the Italian word, MASTER. As a “maestro” we can all be MASTER TEACHERS, we simply cannot forget to ask our students, and ourselves WHY?

...let the music begin...



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