

How to Get the Most Out of Your High School Orchestra

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Some thoughts on Conducting:

Less is more. . . .GUTS: Gestures Unite The Score . . . The more you know about the music, the more it will come out in your conducting . . . Music makes technique . . . If you want your ensemble to watch you, show them something worth watching.

The four P's to excellent conducting: Programming, Planning, Preparation, Practice.

Programming: Consider what each piece on your program is to accomplish. There's more to life than just excitement of fast and loud. Even a Strauss Waltz can teach a lot to an orchestra. Great programming will build an orchestra, poor programming will destroy an orchestra's morale.

Planning: Know how much rehearsal time you have and budget it accordingly. Do you have time for sectionals both for individual sections (violins and cellos for example) and the larger choir all strings, all winds and brass, etc.) Will you need extra rehearsals? Are you missing instruments and will have to compensate some way? (Writing the part into someone else's. Asking another player to fill in., etc.)

Preparation: The study of the score and the preparation of parts. Any string ensemble needs bowings. Younger ensembles need fingerings as well. Put them into the parts before they are distributed. Do the parts and score have adequate rehearsal markings? Might be best to number the bars in each part.

Practice: After the marking of a score, sit down and starting THINKING about the music. How should it sound, what gestures should you use to get that sound. Practice in front of a mirror to see if it is clear to you.

Rehearsing:

1. Create a rehearsal schedule so your players know what to practice ahead of time.
2. Have a plan, what do you want to accomplish on *this* rehearsal.
3. Before you stop, know a)what instrument or section you'll address, b)where you will restart, c)the problem to be fixed.

4. BUT, ask yourself first, if you conducted a section differently, would you solve the problem? Your hands can be more efficient than your voice.

The (more than) Seven Trips Through the Score

The first seven were created by the Belgium National Conservatory as a score study system. More have been added as needed.

1. Instrumentation (including clefs and transpositions.)
2. Tempos (Metrenome markings!)
 - a. Do you have "relative tempo"?
 - i. 72 = Bolero
 - ii. 80 = My country tis of thee
 - iii. 92 = Beethoven 5/ii.
 - iv. 96 = Beethoven 5/iii.
 - v. 100 = Papa Haydn's tune from the "Surprise Symphony."
 - vi. 116 = March of the Toreadors
 - vii. 120 = Stars and stripes.
1. Form (Indicate Sections) and possible climaxes.
2. Harmonic Structure (indicate major key areas.)
 - a. This may need to be done before (3) is complete.
 - b. A chord by chord analysis is useful when music gets complicated.
1. Phrasal analyses (indicate phrase lengths in your score.)
2. Melodic Analyses and cues. (Indicate main melody, countermelody, accompaniment.)
3. Dynamics and use of colors. Mark so you can read these when standing over your score.

THERE'S MORE TO BE CONSIDERED!

1. Articulations. (Consider all articulations in context of composer. Especially important in the strings for the purposes of the right bow stroke. Winds for the purposes of the kind of attack.)
2. Special Effects (mutes, pizzicato, harmonics, etc.)
3. Mood and character.

For choral work add:

1. Tessitura
2. Diction.
3. Cut-offs.

