

METHOD FOR A PRODUCTIVE REHEARSAL

How to Start a Rehearsal

1. How to enter the rehearsal room

- a. The conductor should post the day's program on the board.
- b. It is a good idea to remind students that they must enter the room in SILENCE and that they must not take the instruments out of their cases.
- c. The conductor must be in the classroom when the musicians arrive. The conductor may be at the door, behind the desk, on the podium or at the front or back of the room. The goal is to supervise the students as they arrive.
- d. The conductor may ask some of the students about their progress.
- e. The conductor must give clear and specific instructions, e.g., get your instruments and sit down.

2. Preparation

- a. The students must have specific instructions on how to get their instruments. Students playing large instruments should be the first to take out their instruments. They are to set up as soon as they arrive in the room. All students must get their instruments from the lockers or storage. They are not to take the instruments out of their cases yet.
- b. The students must wait for the conductor's instructions. This is for larger groups. Of course, the procedure may be changed for smaller groups, as long as the students are quiet.
- c. Following the conductor's announcements, the students are told to set up, prepare their instruments and put their music in order. They should not start playing right away. No blowing into their instruments yet.

3. What to do when the conductor takes the podium

- a. Students must immediately stop what they are doing and stop talking as soon as the conductor takes the podium.
 1. Instruments must be out of their cases. Students prepare to play.
 2. Make sure stands are at the right height so that students can see their music clearly and see the conductor as well. Correctly positioning the music stand ensures that the young musicians' posture will be correct as well.
- b. All eyes must be on the conductor.
 1. The conductor should be able to talk to the musicians in a normal voice, without straining. There should be no sounds from the band so that the conductor does not have to raise his or her voice.
 2. The conductor tells the musicians the plans for the rehearsal.

4. Rest position, ready to play and playing position

- a. Rest position: Students sit with their instruments on their laps (the members of each section will use the same position). Students sit with their backs against their chairs.
- b. Ready to play: Students move up about three inches from the backs of their chairs, keeping a good posture: backs straight, feet flat on the floor, instruments ready or in their laps. Again, the members of each section will have to make sure they are using the same ready-to-play position. Students take up this position every time the conductor takes the podium. Students must be taught to take up this position every time.
- c. Playing position: The musicians take the playing position, which is the same as the ready-to-play position. Students should know that when the conductor lifts his or her arms and takes the conducting position, they should be ready to play their first note.

5. How to use the different positions

- a. The rest, ready-to-play and playing positions should be used throughout the rehearsal. For example, once the band has finished playing, the conductor lowers his or her arms. Students will take up their ready-to-play positions. There should be no playing and no talking. The conductor must make sure the students are very familiar with these positions and must remind them as often as possible. Clear and specific instructions will facilitate discipline in the rehearsal room.
- b. Let these three positions work for you! If the routine—rest, ready, play—is ingrained, the results will be fantastic. You will be able to have smooth rehearsals, and it will be less tiring for both you and your students.

6. Good rehearsal method

- a. Make sure you have control of your class.
- b. Students must not talk during rehearsal when they are taking up any of the three positions.
- c. They must blow into their instruments only when the conductor tells them to.
- d. Eyes on the conductor at all times.
- e. Praise the musicians regularly. Students are motivated by positive reinforcement.

7. Rehearsal

- a. Rehearsal technique is very important for the conductor. It is the conductor's responsibility to be well prepared before facing his or her musicians. What are the goals for today? Where will the rhythm problems occur? The musicians must feel involved.
- b. When rehearsing one section, make sure you are not neglecting, and even ignoring, another section (percussion). This leads to bad habits, talking and all kinds of noise.

8. Tizzling—buzzing—solfege

- a. Buzzing can be good for conductors. It is solfege. Playing without blowing. This encourages students to use the correct fingerings and rhythms without blowing into their instruments. The conductor can then fix the problems and hear those who are having trouble. Make them sing their part, section by section.
- b. Solfege is very beneficial when students arrive in the rehearsal room. They can start looking over their music, analyzing it and practising their fingering. Remember that using solfege can also give you a short break. It rests the ears.

9. An example for the students

- a. The students must listen to musicians who have a good sound. Try to play your instrument as often as possible in front of your students. They have no idea what a good sound is.
- b. Have them listen to CDs of the great jazz and classical music masters.

10. Volunteers

- a. When you have your young musicians do their warm-ups, make them play scales in groups. Pick volunteers and ask them to play the scale on their own. They like showing that they are good.
- b. The volunteers will be even more motivated.
- c. It will also give you a chance to hear them play individually.
- d. This motivates them.

11. End of rehearsal

- a. Always comment on the rehearsal at the end. Give positive comments and a few things to improve.
- b. Give them something to practise for the next rehearsal.
- c. Tell them what you will be doing at the next rehearsal.

12 Good habits

- a. It pays off to instil good habits right from the start.
- b. When you are starting out with new students, make sure you teach them good habits right from the start. This will make things easier for everyone. When the musicians go on to other schools or more advanced classes in a few years, it will also be nice for their new teachers.

13 Key to success

Clear instructions

Remind them of good habits often

Good balance between routine and variety

Conductor has high expectations

Commitment between the conductor and the musician to maintain good habits during rehearsals