



“An open mind and a compassionate heart”: Ensemble Rehearsal Lessons from a Champion

The preceding quote is from Phil Jackson, now retired coach of the Chicago Bulls and Los Angeles Lakers and 11-time NBA Champion coach. This brief session focuses on the fostering of awareness in the ensemble rehearsal by both players and teacher to maximize the full potential of each.

Brief bio: Thomas P. Rohrer is Director of Bands and Director of Music Education at Utah State University where he conducts the Wind Orchestra and the Aggie Marching Band as part of his leadership of a diverse collegiate band program and teacher training curriculum.

Outline:

- Title from Phil Jackson: Sacred Hoops . . .
 - Inspiration for multiple-print article on rehearsal dynamics and awareness
 - Jackson philosophy: shared experience facilitated by coach
 - Training based on court awareness, importance of each individual contributing to the whole
 - Maximize the strengths of each individual, trying to include all
 - My philosophy:
 - Give students tools to be better than me
 - Music as the focus and the reward
 - Don't waste time
- “Being Aware is More Important Than Being Smart”
 - Classroom as Sanctuary
 - What you wear is part of the perception others have of you
 - Room Set “Control the Environment that Controls You”
 - Music in folios, logistical system invented and enforced
 - Music level-appropriate (Flow experience)
 - Close doors
 - Ceremonious beginning to class
 - Rehearsal schedule: goals shared . . . and perhaps achieved

- Teacher Delivery: If students are not paying attention they cannot maximize their potential or your teaching
 - o Student learning = What you teach – distractions
 - o Ask primarily multiple-choice questions of the ensemble
 - o Maintaining attention in large classroom:
 - We must speak like what we are saying is important
 - Change inflection
 - Articulate
 - Contrast between sound and silence, music and instruction
 - Repetition of phrases, words for emphasis
 - Responsibility on the students: The more you work, the less they work
 - Non-Conducting
 - o Begin with snare drum subdivisions or Dr. Beat
 - o Only conduct “music” time beating unimportant unless meter changes
 - o Make it their problem
 - Proximity
 - o Add isles to classroom
 - o Get close to problem players while talking to the rest of the class
 - Your eyes are your best evaluation and expressive tool
 - Be unpredictable: You must convince them that you have something that they want
- Assessment (not to be confused with Evaluation)
 - o Eyes, ears must be active
 - o If “podium deaf,” step to the side and imagine yourself as an observer
 - o Audio (or video) record your rehearsal and listen to selected parts on your time
 - o You must PLAN rehearsals, based on assessment of previous; off-the-cuff is only good for clean-slate, one-shot guests
- Parting Shots:
 - What did we NOT cover today?
 - o Rehearsal strategies (Jagow book)
 - o Conducting gestures (only achieved through practice)
 - o Specific music selection and repertoire
 - o Analysis as a pedagogical tool
 - o Teacher/student assessment/evaluation

- We must know our standards for each rehearsal s we journey toward the concert and be insistent students reach today's standard
- Plan subsequent rehearsals based on a careful sequence from the known to the unknown and students' ability to reach today's goal (or not)
- Disapproval IS an option (Sincerity is honesty)
 - o Rehearsal tedium and isolation
 - o Facial, verbal
 - o Proximity
- Be a Benevolent Narcissist
- Pay attention!
- References:

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1991). Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience. New York: HarperPerennial.

Jackson, P. (1995). Sacred Hoops: Spiritual Lessons of a Hardwood Warrior. New York: Hyperion.

Jagow, Shelley. Developing the Complete Band Program. Galesville, Maryland: Meredith Music Publications, 2007.

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