

Behind the Rating: Setting Your Students Up For 7 Minutes of Success!

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Presented by: Jennifer Shenberger-Brass Specialist/Band Director
School District of Clayton

Part 1: Thoughts on Solo/Small Ensemble Literature Selection

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Navigating the PML

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A Good Pianist Does Not Necessarily = A Good Accompanist!
Supporting Role
Balance
Yes, Turning Pages is a Mad Skill!

Part 6: Do's and Don'ts

General Solo & Ensemble Do's & Don'ts

1. Double and Triple Check that ALL Measures are Numbered in the adjudicator's score.
2. Students should arrive at the performance room at least 10 minutes early to check status of schedule.
3. If the schedule is not running on time and/or there is a conflict with another person involved (accompanist, director, parent), make sure the student knows the protocol you expect for the given situation (should they wait, offer an explanation to the judge, etc. . . .)
4. Please make sure the student(s) are able to give a well-rehearsed introduction, which includes the correct pronunciation of the composer/title.
5. Emphasize the importance of dressing professionally.
6. Encourage the use of a script for the introduction of the entry name, the title and composer/arranger, as well as any indications of movements being performed, instructions regarding repeats, etc. . . .
7. Typically, the student should stand when introducing the group.
8. Try to do the majority of tuning before you get into the room; then fine-tune once in the room.
9. Make sure ensembles practice starting together without using a count off.
10. Beware of foot tapping as an unwanted percussion element (tap your toes inside your shoes so it is inaudible).
11. Most ensembles work mostly on notes and rhythms but neglect matching note lengths and releases. Have students record themselves to listen and match styles. Recording an ensemble is also a great way to evaluate dynamic contrast.
12. Feel free to play more than just written dynamics; shape the phrases.
13. If you get separated in the music from the rest of your ensemble or accompanist, it is sometimes better to stop and regroup instead of being apart for the rest of the piece.
14. Keep your composure no matter what happens. Recovery is golden.
15. When the performance is over, say "Thank You!"
16. Do not hover (students or adults) over or near the adjudicator. Try to utilize the assistance of the door monitor in handling music scores.
17. Don't cuss...

Woodwind Solo & Ensemble Do's & Don'ts

Compiled by Michael Kanaan, Woodwind Specialist-School District of Clayton

1. When tuning flutes, make sure to adjust the head joint and not rely on just rolling in or out. A is a solid tuning note for flute, oboe, and bassoon.
2. When tuning clarinets, make sure to tune the barrel to open G and the middle joint to third space C.
3. Saxophones should tune to **their** F# or G, not to their D. D's are really out of tune and will cause many intonation problems if used as the sole reference pitch.
4. Woodwind ensembles **usually** stand unless a large instrument is involved; in this case the ensemble may sit. Standing can take care of potential posture/support problems.
5. While students are waiting on the judge to finish the comments from the previous performance, make sure to keep their reeds wet. It is okay to play a little while waiting.
6. Reed players' reeds should be wet before they walk into the performance room. If you are waiting a prolonged amount of time, put your reed in your mouth as you are waiting to enter the room. Don't just leave your reed on your mouthpiece for an extended waiting period as this can cause squeaks.
7. Carry a small screwdriver for emergency situations.
8. Don't cuss...

Brass Solo & Ensemble Do's & Don'ts

1. Have students check that all slides and valves are moving properly on a daily basis so there are no surprises on festival day.
2. Check mouthpieces for dents and if necessary, use a truing tool.
3. Always have horn players empty ALL slides before entering the room.
4. Always have valve oil/rotary oil/slide oil with you.
5. Carry a screwdriver and extra Horn string.
6. Directional instruments should not be pointed directly at the adjudicator.
7. Be aware of bell placement for all brass instruments.
8. Experiment with Ensemble Configuration during rehearsals to achieve the best balance for each individual group during performance.
9. Allow horn players to tune their Concert F on both the Bb and F side of the horn even if using Concert Bb for the other brass instruments. If playing in a woodwind quintet, a horn player should check their concert A.
10. If mutes are called for, make sure students are aware of necessary pitch adjustments for each type of mute. Also, encourage them when muted, to adjust the airstream as if they are playing one dynamic level higher than indicated in the music to achieve the desired effect/timbre.
11. Don't cuss...

Additional Tips from the Beaumont Brass Quintet-MSU

Rich Illman, Trumpet

- Practice coming in on one note from the first trumpet player's downbeat. Practice playing one measure at the same tempo from the first trumpet player's downbeat.
- Have the first trumpet player practice breathing in rhythm when they start a piece. Practice rhythmic sections with a loud metronome. Practice complex rhythmic passages with a drum machine playing downbeats and subdivisions.
- Practice tuning chords by starting with the roots first, then adding the fifths, then thirds, then any other notes that are left. Note that the third of a major chord should be flatter than normal (fourteen cents) and the third of a minor chord should be sharper than normal (16 cents)
- Practice cutting off chords together by deciding on the exact time with a metronome. Then practice the cutoff with the metronome until it is together. Once that is achieved, turn off the metronome and see if it can still be done together.

Mitch Gabel, Trumpet

- Know when you have the melody line or an accompaniment line. If you have the melody, more times than not you will want to lead the ensemble with that lead line. When you have an accompaniment line you will want to adjust your dynamics accordingly [softer] so that the melody can be heard. The sooner you can grasp this concept the better your chamber ensemble will be but more importantly, the better a musician YOU will be.
- Try your best to have your parts completely learned [key/time signatures, rhythms, notes, mute changes] as soon as possible so that you can concentrate on ensemble issues. Not having your part down will impede upon the ensembles progress. This is true of any musical situation.

Janine Gaboury-Sly, Horn

- Particularly in louder passages have the horn player play with the bell off the leg and raised a bit higher for better projection.
- Be sure that the hand is open in the bell to blend well with the other instruments.

Ava Ordman, Trombone

- Often the low brass get covered, especially when the set-up has the trumpets on the outside. Be aware of this and adjust dynamics accordingly.
- Eye contact and body language can be very important in performing chamber music. Getting to know your colleagues' tendencies in these areas will enhance the ensemble's ability to play more as a whole. Consistent ensemble time, rhythm, and dynamics as well as breathing and phrasing can become second nature to the sensitive chamber music player.

Philip Sinder, Tuba

- For the brass quintet in general, develop your rehearsal success by working on selected difficult passages with fewer than five players. Practicing a section of a piece with only two or three voices can quickly straighten out metric precision, balance, and intonation. Plus, others in the quintet not playing at that moment can offer advice to the others for improvement.
- For the tubist, be sure to consider the following: a. Always listen for good balance and style within the quintet setting. Since most high school tubists will employ a tuba in the brass quintet, be sure to play with a clean, accurate style, and avoid overpowering the others. The tubist sets the stage metrically in a brass quintet. Be certain to stay on top of the beat and to consider yourself a leader rhythmically. c. You must play in tune with yourself, and set a strong foundation for the other brass to rely on for placing their voice in the chord.

Percussion Solo & Ensemble Do's & Don'ts

Compiled by Kim Shelley, Percussion Specialist-School District of Clayton

1. Do NOT clog the hallways with all of your equipment! (line up on one side of the hallway in the order you should enter with the percussion equipment).
2. Let the previous event completely leave the performance room before you start bringing your solo/ensemble into the room.
3. Make sure you have everything with you for the performance, including trap towels, music stands, etc.
4. Have a person (including friends, relatives) help QUIETLY move equipment in & out of the performance room. (just like a "front ensemble" does for halftime shows).
5. Make sure your instruments are at a performing height that is appropriate for you; especially when using provided equipment. It may be prudent to create a set of blocks to raise a mallet instrument for taller students.
6. Once you are in the room, get organized and then quietly wait until the judge is ready.
7. Please don't introduce every single person in the ensemble, just welcome everyone to your performance: *EXAMPLE: "Good afternoon, this is the Clayton Symphonic Percussion Ensemble, and we will be performing "Title of Music" by "Composer".*
8. Do NOT count off out loud; visually cue each other to start the performance.
9. At the end of the performance, BOW & SMILE (no matter what happens) to acknowledge the audience clapping for you.
10. When you are finished performing, quickly take your equipment out of the building and carefully pack it back up to alleviate space issues.

11. Do NOT start commenting about your performance while still in the room. Wait until you are out of the room to discuss it with your teacher, friends, and/or family.
12. Don't Cuss. . .

Reminders for Music Festival Site Managers:

1. About a week before the festival date, send a detailed list of all provided percussion equipment to participating band directors! This will help prevent schools from bringing in duplicate equipment. *EXAMPLE: Mallet equipment: Make, Model & octave range, Timpani: Make & Model, range of each drum, if you have gauges & if the gauges actually work) Do the timpani pedals hold the notes?*
2. Make sure to indicate the room in which the equipment will be located. Many times performance times get bogged down due to students waiting for a specific piece of equipment that is also being used in another room.
3. Make sure the equipment is in excellent condition (no swayback mallet instruments, etc.)
4. Make sure to have PLENTY of working music stands (real music stands) for the percussion rooms. The stands should be tightened enough to also be used as trap tables for percussion equipment.

Part 7: Planning for The Big Day

SOLO/SMALL ENSEMBLE FESTIVAL PLANNER

Adapted from Teresa Dixon's Large Ensemble Festival Planner

- _____ 1. Determine date of festival/deadline for submitting
- _____ 2. Place festival date on the school calendar (all school calendars)
- _____ 3. Review required festival music list
- _____ 4. Secure purchase orders for festival fees and music
- _____ 5. Order music or check music library for availability
- _____ 6. Make sure that each student has music
- _____ 7. Have the students number the measures of the music
- _____ 8. Provide a pitch tendency chart for their instrument
- _____ 9. Number Adjudicator's scores
- _____ 10. Submit festival entry forms and fees
- _____ 11. Order extra scores for adjudicators (2 sets each) and accompanists (at least 1) and number measures when scores arrive.
- _____ 12. Listen to each student play their music (have a scoring system)
- _____ 13. If desired, ask each student to submit practice records (begin 4-6 weeks prior to festival)
- _____ 14. Listen to and rehearse all parts on the score in each section of the music

- _____ 15. Dissect how each part relates to the complete piece
- _____ 16. Make transportation arrangements to festival
- _____ 17. Secure chaperones and necessary background checks
- _____ 18. Personally invite the principal to attend the festival
- _____ 19. Be clear with your dress code expectations
- _____ 20. Have a recital with guest adjudicators
- _____ 21. Spot individuals who have difficulty playing certain passages or those who play out of tune on certain notes
- _____ 22. Practice the ending of selections as much, if not more, than the introductions
- _____ 23. Have students play entire movements or selections in order to achieve continuity and stamina
- _____ 24. Make sure faculty, coaches, and staff have a list of students attending festival well in advance
- _____ 25. Make arrangements to borrow percussion equipment at the festival site if needed
- _____ 26. Mark all equipment and music with the school name
- _____ 27. Make sure all student instruments have a nametag as well as school name on them
- _____ 28. Have students listen to quality recordings for final ideas
- _____ 29. Double-check that all adjudicator music is on the bus with you and that all measures are numbered as well as the school name on the music. This includes documentation of any copy permissions.
- _____ 30. Remove any rehearsal markings from music
- _____ 31. Send home a complete information letter in advance to students' parents
- _____ 32. Advise students of spending monies needed for the festival
- _____ 33. Be knowledgeable of the festival grounds and locations of practice/warm-up rooms as well as performance rooms
- _____ 34. Learn about your adjudicators and their styles, education, etc.
- _____ 35. Try to relax!!!!
- _____ 36. For all solo/ensemble music—make sure the selections are on the prescribed list and that the number is placed at the top of the first page of music
- _____ 37. Make sure all accompanists have original copies of music
- _____ 38. After the festival, make sure all public announcements and celebrations have been submitted for release

Part 8: What should I as a director . . .

Stop? Start? Continue?

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