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**Ch. 8: Rehearsal Procedures**

*Kohut & Grant (pg. 102–105, 107–111, 113–115)*

1. How might the level or setting of an ensemble change your rehearsal planning and procedures?

As the authors suggest on page 103 a beginning ensemble has different objectives than an advanced or a professional ensemble. They state that a beginner level ensemble should focus on “improving tone quality, music reading, performance technique, and development of general musicianship.” The authors also state that beginning level ensembles should focus on listening and watching within warm-ups. However, listening and watching should also be included within the rehearsal so that beginning musicians can develop good habits. The authors suggest that advanced ensembles should focus on ways to achieve a “high quality performance,” through expression and precision.

1. Prerehearsal Planning: What are some of the basic steps Kohut and Grant describe when planning a rehearsal?

Kohut and Grant state that prerehearsal planning should be based on both short and long term learning and performance objectives. Some of the basic steps Kohut and Grant describe when planning a rehearsal include the following considerations: the reading and performance abilities of the group; the difficulty of the music and the amount of music; the time allotted for rehearsal and the number of rehearsals before a performance. Additionally, Kohut and Grant prescribe the following: the conductor should be as familiar with the score as possible; the conductor should have a specific rehearsal plan including music to be rehearsed and reasonable objectives; the conductor should record the rehearsal for purposes of ensemble and self-evaluation; the conductor should use the recording to plan the next rehearsal. Kohut and Grant suggest that rather than asking the ensemble what music they would like to go over, the conductor should have a written plan with specific objectives or learning targets.

1. A Basic Outline: How do Kohut & Grant structure rehearsals?

Kohut and Grant suggest structuring rehearsals by starting with an energetic piece that the ensemble is familiar with and has few problems. Starting off the rehearsal with a piece that is faster in tempo, familiar, and has few issues does two things. First, this energizes the ensemble. Second, this establishes a positive tone in which ensemble members will most likely want to keep participating and working during the rehearsal time. Kohut and Grant recommend putting the piece that needs more work in the middle of the rehearsal period. The authors state that by the middle of the rehearsal, ensemble members will be energized, warmed – up, and ready to concentrate at a higher level. Last, it is suggested after the final piece, ensemble members should feel a sense of accomplishment. Kohut and Grant state “The performers leave feeling good about themselves and the group, and anxious to come back for more.”

1. Describe the Synthesis-Analysis-Synthesis approach to learning a piece of music?

The Synthesis-Analysis-Synthesis approach to learning music involves hearing the piece in it’s entirety, breaking down and working out the details or problematic areas, and then reintegrating the problematic areas into the whole piece. This approach consistently gives singers an understanding of how one section fits into an entire piece and can help alleviate problems with transitions near performance time. This approach is similar to several of the EDUC 340 literacy strategies which involved brainstorming or engaging with an entire unit, isolating specific elements within a unit, and then summarizing the unit. The first part of the literacy strategies were important because it created a sense of curiosity amongst the students and an excitement to learn. When seeing a piece for the first time, ensemble members can either listen to a piano reduction played by the conductor, a recording, or sight read the piece all the way through- if the ensemble members are capable of doing so. After the ensemble hears the piece the conductor should drill the problem areas and then reintegrate them either into a phrase, a section, or the entire piece for purposes understanding how the elements fit together.

1. List the seven rehearsal priorities in order and briefly describe each one.

The seven rehearsal priorities include:

Correct Rhythm and Pitches- Kohut and Grant argue that rhythm and pitch exist together because “the goal for both choral and instrumental ensembles is the same- performing the right notes. This means producing the correct pitches at the proper time.” It is suggested to clap, tap, or say the rhythm, count sing, sing on one pitch/syllable or play on one pitch, and then play the specific spot.

Intonation and Tone Quality- Kohut and Grant state that adjustment/listening is a never-ending process. Warm-ups should incorporate intonation and tone quality, but there will be spots in the music that are unbalanced due to intonation and improper tone quality. The authors write that for both wind players and singers, breath and the size/shape of the mouth are two factors in tone production.

Articulation, bowing, and diction- Kohut and Grant believe that articulation, bowing and diction help to add dimension and definition to music.

Precision- Attacks, releases, entrances, and variations in tempo are all elements of precision. Precision is being able to sing/play the elements at the same time. Kohut and Grant describe precision as a “degree of refinement with which an operation is performed,” and as “specific events occurring in time.”

Phrasing and Expression- Kohut and Grant argue that phrasing and expression should take place after rhythmic and pitch accuracy are accomplished rather than “in the final stages of rehearsal.” Expression enables students to access some form of creativity within music, within the constraints of still blending with the ensemble.

Dynamic Contrast- Dynamic contrast is one element of phrasing and expression. Dynamic contrast is its own category because a large spectrum of dynamic changes within a piece and a piece with less dynamic contrast will affect the rehearsal time and help a conductor plan when to address dynamics.

Balance and Blend- According to Kohut and Grant, balance involves individuals or sections loudness or softness in relationship the rest of the ensembles and their part in the music, and blend involves creating a “homogeneous” sound. Although the conductor has an advantage of listening to balance and blend, it is suggested that ensemble members take part in listening to the rest of the ensemble and within their own section.

1. What are some of the key elements associated with pacing as described on pages 113 and 114?

Kohut and Grant mention that the energy, enthusiasm, musicality, and intensity displayed by the conductor will be reflected by ensemble members. They state that the rehearsal should balance talk with singing/playing and point out that it is important to provide students with more playing time and less verbal instruction. Kohut and Grant write that one to two brief comments are sufficient before the students start the next piece. The authors recommend mastering one problem at a time and using vocal modeling. If the conductor needs to stop it is important to have the ensemble respond to the feedback, and then reintegrate the specific spot back into a larger passage or phrase. Kohut and Grant later state that it is important to a lot specific times for sectional or individual issues and to devote the rehearsal time to the entire ensemble.

1. What do you do if you are drilling a passage of music but the choir is not “getting it?” (pg. 115)

Kohut and Grant have several recommendations for a scenario in which drilling a passage is not going as planned and the ensemble is not responding well, or there is a lack of improvement. The authors state that a traditional approach is to drill the passage at a slower tempo and then increase the tempo. If the traditional approach does not work, first, it is suggested to divide the musical elements and master them one at a time. The musical elements include rhythm, pitch, timbre, and expression i.e. dynamics or tempo. If the choir is having trouble with the rhythm the conductor is advised to have the choir members speak the rhythm and then sing count. If pitches are the issue, the conductor can isolate the intervals or chords, or address the vowel formation and blend/listening. Kohut and Grant point out that sometimes with foreign languages the choir can speak the words in rhythm. After the elements are addressed the conductor should “reintegrate all parts back.” One example of this is to have singers count sing after speaking a rhythm. Kohut and Grant suggest that after count-singing, that singers move to a neutral syllable and then sing on the text. They also indicate the importance of recording the rehearsal so that the conductor listen to the tape to identify the specific problem.