

## Ensemble Adjudication Best Practices Checklist

### **Musical Selections:** *If the shoe fits . . .*

- ❑ Sight-read and analyze several possible selections for performance with your ensemble months prior to the adjudication.
- ❑ Select music that showcases your ensemble's strengths.
- ❑ Rehearse the selections within an appropriate time frame and educational pace:
  - Performance expectations and excitement may peak too soon if selections are rehearsed too early.
  - Panic may occur if selections are rehearsed too late.
- ❑ Master the warm-up selection and be certain it includes participation by all musicians. For band, consider a march as a suitable warm-up.
- ❑ Choose two contrasting adjudicated selections.
- ❑ Re-orchestrate the music to ensure no part is left uncovered:
  - Assign more lower voices per section (three on 1<sup>st</sup>, four on 2<sup>nd</sup>, five on 3<sup>rd</sup>, etc.)
  - Perform written cues if an instrument/voice part is missing.
    - Examples specific to band:
      - Drop flutes an octave when intonation is a concern.
      - Use muted trumpet if lack of oboe.
      - Use alto saxophone if lack of horn.
      - Use tenor saxophone if lack of trombone.
      - Use bass clarinet/baritone sax if lack of tuba.
      - Do not double snare drum.
- ❑ Record your ensemble throughout the preparation phase for director and/or student assessment and feedback.
- ❑ Utilize clinicians through critique rehearsals and master-classes as an extension of student learning, not the ultimate tool for learning.

### **Taking the Stage:** *You never get a second chance to make a first impression.*

- ❑ Invite administration, staff, supporters, and the students' families to attend the performance.
- ❑ Realize adjudicators "see" your ensemble, before they "hear" music:
  - Professionalism begins with the conductor (appearance, attitude, behavior, uniform, etc.).
  - All members, including the conductor should:
    - appear united in uniform.
    - reflect pride.
    - express confidence.

- demonstrate enjoyment (not dread!).
- Process on stage by order of row/section.
- Set-up the stage to mimic your rehearsal space.
- Move all equipment, such as chairs, stands, piano, or percussion to your ensemble's preference to match your rehearsal space.
- Avoid tuners/phones on stage.
- Avoid visual distractions on stage (water bottles, hair bows, unique socks/shoes, folders under chairs).
- Perform a chord/scale before being announced.
- Prepare to perform the warm-up selection the moment the announcer *finishes* speaking.

**Performance:** *Yes, this IS a performance!*

- Maintain posture.
- Retune soloist, sections, or the ensemble between selections, if necessary.
- Adjust equipment placement between selections, if necessary.
- Emphasize that tone always wins over dynamic contrast.
- Enhance the melodic line.
- Demonstrate musicality:
  - Do not neglect long notes.
  - Taper the ends of phrases.
  - Add expression beyond what is written.
- Demonstrate pride.
- Expect the unexpected in regards to errors.
- Acknowledge soloists.
- Encourage musicians to accept an applause by not moving at the end of a piece. Instruct students not to touch/change their music until the conductor does.
- Acknowledge the ensemble before the warm-up and after the final selection by asking them to stand uniformly. Practice this prior to the performance.

**Sight-Reading:** *By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.*

- Establish a plan for sight-reading and practice it routinely.
- Enter this space as if you are entering the performance.
- Mimic your performance set-up, when space allows.
- Move all equipment such as chairs, stands, and percussion to your ensemble's preference.
- Ask for a piece of equipment, if needed, such as additional stands/chairs.
- Be certain all students are attentive when the adjudicator is speaking, both during the instructions and for the critique.

- Use nonverbal communication during the director’s study time. For instance, when a conductor “air conducts” during the silent study time, valuable information can be communicated to the students before they even see their music, such as time signatures, tempi, cues, and even dynamics.
- Ask to perform a warm-up note/chord/scale.
- Maintain student behavior while waiting after the session has concluded.

**Audience:** *It ain’t over ‘til it’s over.*

- Expect superior behavior throughout the entire adjudication process (on/in the bus, hallway, restroom, auditorium, audience, cafeteria, etc.).
- Encourage only positive remarks to be made about the performances of other ensembles.
- Acknowledge the adjudicators if your paths cross.
- Say “thank you” if your ensemble is complimented.

**Reflection:** *Experience is a hard teacher because she gives the test first, the lesson afterwards.*

- Share your ratings/comments with your administration and/or community.
- Listen to the recordings before your students for appropriateness and audibility.
- Share written commentary with your students.
- Reflect on suggestions and attempt to implement them as an ensemble.
- Contact the adjudicator if questions arise or to show gratitude.