

Where Are The Band Directors Of Tomorrow? ...They Are In Your Rehearsal Rooms Today...

Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser

Many years ago I had the privilege of hearing Phillip Farkus (principal horn in the Chicago Symphony Orchestra for many years before leaving in 1960 to teach at Indiana University) present a heartwarming clinic describing the most important highlights of his life.

He was asked, "What is your most important contribution to the world of music?" Without hesitation he responded, "MY STUDENTS! The recordings of my playing stand a distant second place to the feeling of personal accomplishment when I witness one of my students advance to a higher level of proficiency. Moreover, my greatest wish for them is to also experience the indescribable joy of teaching."

Mr. Farkus looked around the room and said, "I want to be remembered as a teacher."

The silence (for a seemingly endless amount of time) was deafening. Before us was one of the world's most revered musicians/performers/luminaries, a man who warranted complete adoration as the icon in the art of French horn playing, and he was emphatic in regard to his thoughts about his professional legacy.

From his renowned book *The Art of French Horn Playing*, Phillip Farkus wrote:

It is my desire to create such a book, containing not only the findings of my own years of experience, but that of my teachers, which prompts me to write so complex a subject as horn playing. But, if some day I might hear a solo beautifully played and would hear the soloist say afterward 'Your book helped me do that,' I would feel repaid for my effort a hundred times over.

As always, Mr. Farkus has set the bar MIGHTY HIGH for all of us!

How do you respond when one of your students says to you, "I want to be a band director. I think it would exciting to spend my life working with young musicians. Do you think it is a good idea for me to pursue music education as a career?" What is your reaction to this all-important inquiry?

First and foremost, we must be thrilled with the fact we, as music educators, have such a lasting

impact on our students, arguably more than any other educator in their lives. The student's message in the above paragraph is quite clear; "I want to be just like YOU

when I grow up." Isn't it the greatest compliment you could possibly receive? Secondly, it provides a forum of extended-confidence demonstrating an individual's

complete trust in you as more than a classroom teacher, but rather as a mentor, a confidant, and a valued guide along life's journey. Your response CAN and WILL make a significance difference in the direction of the individual's future.

Herein lies an opportunity to graciously thank the student for considering the field of music as a career option. Again, your influence has been a key to creating this professional preference. It also offers the opportunity to explain the various aspects of the occupation rarely seen by the participant; it is time to be boldly honest as you describe what lies ahead. Ask the student, "Are you willing to:"

How do you respond when one of your students says to you, "I want to be a band director."

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1. Prepare yourself NOW to meet the requirements for your upcoming college music program?
 2. Fulfill the rigorous curriculum requisites for an undergraduate degree?
 3. Embrace the added pressure of an expanded music-major schedule?
 4. Deal with the demands of extended rehearsals, demanding performances, extra duties, etc.?
 5. Thrive and grow in a competitive environment?
 6. Set and attain high levels of personal commitment and dedication?
 7. Master the people skills necessary for teaching success?
 8. Understand the trade-off of revenue intake for life-mission satisfaction?
 9. Find the balance of a personal and professional life?
 10. Stay fresh and enthusiastic avoiding professional burnout?
4. A need to control ones temper in emotionally charged situations.
 5. An ongoing effort to be genuinely fair to everyone connected with the program.
 6. An affable personality designed to work with all types of people.
 7. Highly developed communication skills.
 8. The ability to make tough decisions under challenging circumstances.
 9. A basic love of music.
 10. An insatiable desire and a genuine passion to teach children the art of music-making.

If the student is still eager to explore the “study of music,” then it is time to have the heart-to-heart conversation about the often-forgotten essential elements of a successful music educator such as:

1. A positive attitude.
2. The willingness to meet and accept extreme challenges.
3. An endless supply of energy stretching from early morning until late at night.

After all this exchange, if the student looks straight into your eyes and says, “Yes, I want to be a music teacher,” then put your arm around him/her and promise to help in every way possible to select the right school to make this dream come true. It will be one of the most gratifying moments of your teaching career.

Might I suggest many of us are band directors/music educators because of our music teachers? We have dedicated our lives to helping others experience and understand the universal language of music, much as our mentors did for us. May we do the same for our students in the spirit of giving, sharing, knowing, and becoming? As they say, “It is a gift that lasts a lifetime.”

“STRIKE UP THE BAND!”

Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser is a well-known name in the music education world as a teacher, clinician, author, composer, consultant, adjudicator, and above all, a trusted friend to anyone interested in working with young people in developing a desire for excellence. His own career involves ten years of successful college band directing at Northern Michigan University, the University of Missouri, and New Mexico State University. Following three years in the music industry, he created Attitude Concepts for Today, an organization that manages workshops, seminars, and convention speaking engagements focusing on the pathway-to-excellence. Tim presently holds the Earl Dunn Distinguished Lecturer position at Ball State University. Tim is the Executive Director of Education for Conn-Selmer, Inc., and he serves as the national spokesperson for MENC's “Make a Difference with Music” program. His books The Art of Successful Teaching, The Joy of Inspired Teaching, Music Advocacy and Student Leadership, and Everyday Wisdom for Inspired Teaching are best sellers. He is co-author of Hal Leonard's popular band method Essential Elements - 2000.