

# The Heart and Soul of Every Exemplary Music Educator: The Gift of Teaching Music

**Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser**

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Master teachers have always had the ability to “go beyond the assigned curriculum.” Not only do they present the substantive requisite material in an effective and efficient style, but they also add a difficult-to-define bit of “magic” to the delivery. What is this secret ingredient that separates the exemplary educators from the rest of their colleagues? Many have attempted to quantify it, replicate it, diagnose it, and assess it in a way it can be taught to others, and yet it seems (at best) very elusive. When we observe a master teacher in action we know there is something very special about the way he/she “connects” with his/her students; it is far more than an “transfer of information,” rather it is a complete exchange of knowledge designed to improve and enrich the lives of the listeners/students.

We tend to label this contextual gift with such terms as: enthusiasm, expertise, people skills, communication competence, teacher readiness, proficiency, sensitivity, and even charisma. Yes, it is all of these, and more. It is the right combination of personality attributes tailored to the given teacher, and it seems to be as individualized and as unique as the pattern of a snowflake. Teacher magic, an intangible.

We have all witnessed incredibly intelligent and well-trained educators fall short in a rehearsal or classroom situation. Likewise, we have observed an uneducated laborer captivate a group of students while explaining a particular procedure to accomplish the task-at-hand. Perhaps the teacher magic does not come from the extended study of a certain discipline, but rather it is a manifested reflection of the values of the teacher. If this hypothesis is true, a master teacher could adapt his/her instructional skills to a multitude of learning areas. While it is arguable, an exemplary music educator could also be a winning coach; a remarkable youth minister could become a model teacher of foreign language, etc.

There have been many late night discussions bantering the reasons certain teachers enjoy ongoing success while others struggle to achieve a similar level of accomplishment. Undoubtedly the controversy will continue forever, however there may be a clue to the mystery in the following words of wisdom from the pen of the popular Lebanese actor/comedian, Danny Thomas: **“Success has nothing to do with what you gain in life or accomplish for yourself—it’s what you do for others.”**

Therein lies the common denominator found in all master teachers; “what they do for others.” As educators we are measured by what we “give,” not by what we have.

As we continue our professional journey of teaching, rehearsing, sharing, giving, let us be reminded the success of our programs, our ensembles, our students, and (yes) even our own careers is outcome of “what we bring to others.” Great teaching is not about the accumulation of various awards, trophies, and superior ratings; it is about creating a positive learning atmosphere for the students so they can understand, experience, and enjoy the language of music.

With this awareness at the forefront of our teaching philosophy,

## **....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, three years in the music industry, and his organization Attitude Concepts for Today. Tim presently holds the Earl Dunn Distinguished Lecturer position at Ball State University, serves as the Executive Director of Education for Conn-Selmer, Inc., and is the national spokesperson for MENC’s “Make a Difference with Music” program. Dr. Tim is a TBA Life Member.*