

Conduct What you wish to Hear

Don Haynes -Clinician

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- I. Watch a wonderful video clip
- II. The power of the conductor through gestures
- III. “Eye” contact and its power
- IV. Knowing the Score -what this means; how to study a score
- V. A strong conductor knows what he wants to hear
 - a). requires long study sessions
 - b). use recordings when available
- VI. What I Believe... band conductor’s primary functions with available gestures include
 - a). get the tempi right
 - b). cue key entrances, soloists, sections, cymbal crashes!
 - c). communicates style of the piece; the music
 - d). communicates balance (traffic cop)
 - e). engages the audience emotionally
 - f). directs the listener’s ear to the main line
 - g). shape phrases (bring the music to life)
- VII. Helpful gestures (you may steal) that clearly communicates-
 - a). fingers release -good for soft, gentle entrances
 - b). legato style lines -use your available space
 - c). staccato style
 - d). dynamics
 - e). facial gestures
 - f). motion; it’s all we have to best “communicate”
- VIII. That wonderful thing called “passion”
 - a). do you convey emotion, passion when called for?
 - b). do you conduct to “invite” those kinds of experiences?
- IX. Increase your vocabulary of *II* gestures” for use on the podium
- X. Robert H. Reynolds -

“*What I Believe*” - (highlight a few topics)

for questions, or feedback, you may contact Don Haynes at: LBTbandDirector@aol.com

Some Things I Believe

H. Robert Reynolds

I began my career during the time of the tyrant- the period when band directors who admired Arturo Toscanini, Fritz Reiner, and other successful professional symphony orchestra conductors used that dictatorial approach with students in the public schools. Being mean meant you were better, so high school directors used to be meaner than junior high directors, and if you were *really* mean you got to be a college conductor. Because these people were so successful, almost everyone adopted their style. I suppose I was as mean as the next person; at least I tried to be, even though I had a hard time doing it. Then along came *Of Music and Music Making* by Bruno Walter, another successful professional conductor. *That's* what I believe; why can't I be more like that. So I began to change. It's an evolutionary process that I hope will continue for the rest of my life. At this stage, here are some of the things I believe and try to practice.

We who teach in the schools must first ask ourselves, "Why am I here?"

We majored in music education, so obviously we are in the school to take care of the music education of those students who are in the band. It seems rather simple, but too often it doesn't happen that way, because many times the band becomes a vehicle for personal fame and glory. If the most famous band conductors in our area go to competitive parades, plan trips, or sell candles, we do the same thing. It's like the family with two weeks vacation that simply packs up the car, goes out to the interstate, sees that most of the people are going north, and quickly join in the parade. We must take time to think, for ourselves, about why we are there and what kind of success we hope to achieve - the kind that is right for us and for our students. The success that Mary Sciappacasse has teaching in Detroit [see *BAND*, Sept.-Oct., p. 72] is very real, although it certainly is not of the "famous band conductor" variety.

How each of us answers the question "Why am I here?" determines the other aspects of the program the focus and style of rehearsals, the content of concerts, even the atmosphere we want in the bandhall. Will it be an aesthetically-appealing room for creative work, or will it be just another unkempt gathering place for lunchtime fun and horsing around.

For me, the *major* purpose of a band in an education institution is to educate the students in that group musically. There are lots of minor purposes- discipline, cooperation, interaction, entertainment- but they are not the *primary* focus. Also, remember that not all bands

have the same purpose. For example, the members of the United States Air Force Band will be educated musically as they play high quality literature, but their education is not the primary focus of that particular program.

Transferring concerts may be our most important function as teachers

The good teacher helps a student to become independent, to play well without having to rely on the conductor for every bit of information or direction. In order to achieve this goal, we must use every opportunity to transfer concerts. When Albert Schweitzer was asked "Is example the best way for someone to learn?" he replied, "No; it's the only way." I'm not sure I'd go that far, but I do know that students need many good examples. Take sound, for instance. We talk about "dark" or "mellow" sound and that doesn't mean a whole lot to students. In fact, words are almost totally inadequate; but a library of recordings by the finest players on every instrument can make a big difference. Regular listening can transfer a concept of tone quality and musicianship from those great artists to our students.

Examples offered through regular contact with the conductor are also strong. Students will pick up our concepts of sound, learning, living, study, diligence, preparation, and many other things. If we make it clear that we care deeply about what kind of music is being produced every day in the rehearsal hall, our commitment will transfer.

We can all learn much from observing the great conductors

When I was living in Southern California I attended many rehearsals of the Los Angeles Philharmonic and saw that the best conductors worked almost without a score. Oh, it was there as a reference, but they knew the music cold. During that time I decided that if these great conductors could learn the tremendous amount of music they conduct (many do 1-2 concerts a week) surely I could learn the few pieces that we do in a semester. Watching them rehearse then and now (I continue to observe whenever I can; it's a great treat for me), there is always the feeling that they are the music's representative, that the music is living inside them.

They put the music there through careful score study, which gives a conductor great freedom. You don't need all the details. It's not necessary to know that the third clarinets have two eighth notes, E-flat-F, on the third beat six measures after letter D; but you *do* have to know the sounds that are going to be there. If what you hear from the band does not match what is in your head, then you can refer to the score to find out why.

With the music in your head, you do not have to spend 95% of your energy reading the score. As a result, you have plenty of attention left for the four basic things that happen continuously in the conducting process: preparation, reception, evaluation, and adjustment. First, you let the players know what is about to happen: "This is the kind of sound that is appropriate." "Here is the way I want you to attack." Most conductors do this rather naturally, conducting a little ahead of the music so the players have time to respond. The second part, actually hearing the sound that is coming at you, is the one that gave me the most trouble when I first started out; and I'm still working at it. It's easy to get so involved in the music - humming, singing, stimulating the players - that you don't hear how it *really* sounds, and therefore cannot accurately assess what the band is doing, which means it is certainly difficult to make the necessary adjustments.

During this ongoing process, the finest conductors are shooting for the bulls eye. They're really rehearsing. Many people don't, you know. They stop and go over this or that, but when something is wrong, such as the intonation between piccolo and tuba (very difficult to hear; I used to think I was the only one in this world who couldn't hear it, then I found out there are a lot of people, maybe most) they'll avoid the problem by saying, "Now let's watch that intonation there at letter C; let's be real careful about that." The bulls-eye conductor will jump right into the center of that target, but others are afraid the players will discover that their conductor may not know everything about everything. I believe that by jumping in, even if you don't know the answer, and having the players help you struggle with the solution, moving pitches around until it sounds better, will help them to understand that you are a human being too. You'll get better as a conductor and they'll get better as players. The greatest learning takes place when there is collaboration, when everyone is participating in the process. The least learning comes from a conductor with an "ultimate authority" concept, dispensing great judgements from on high. The dictator is out; the coordinator is in.

The best professional conductors monitor player attitude and are able to increase their level of involvement. You can see these people looking around at the players (remember, the music is in the conductor's head), picking up their feelings. When players are really involved, you can move around quickly in a rehearsal with a sort of "searchlight" approach, rehearsing various individuals or groups in short spurts. Rather than trying to work everything out, you can say, "Second clarinets that's a lot better; we'll hear that again tomorrow." Also, you can actually rehearse attitude, saying "Trombones, that was lovely. Would you play that for everyone?" The trombones puff up as everybody applauds or shuffles and you have transferred a concept of sound as well as a

desire to achieve.

Instinct - intuition, insight - is perhaps the single most important quality of the best professional conductors. Having the right feeling for style, based on years of study and listening, is only part of it. There is also the instinct that determines how much, or how little, the conductor will do. The best ones know when to let their people play, and when to inject themselves in order to exercise the proper control or make the necessary adjustments. They stay out of the way, allowing the players to enjoy listening to themselves and to each other, and they control the sounds only when they feel they must. In a school situation, we probably need to control sounds more, but if we feel the need to control them *all* the time, the players will never become independent musicians.

Instinct also determines the right variety of visual signals and energy level necessary to invite maximum involvement of the players. Too many band conductors use a constant pumping motion and an unvarying level of energy. Both produce a dull rehearsal.

A really effective rehearsal seems so complicated, but these top-level conductors are able to do it. They are enthusiastic, know what's in the score and how the players are reacting at each moment, rehearse with a bulls-eye approach, are able to handle simultaneous preparation-reception-evaluation-adjustment, and have an instinct for style as well as variety. These are things that we are all trying to do better and better and better. We just don't "have it" (or "don't have it"); we are always in the process of trying to learn to do it really well.

Music is communication from soul to soul

The soul of the composer comes through the soul of the conductor to the soul of the player. We owe it to our students to make all that communication the focus of our programs as soon as possible. It's strange, but words - because they are more in the realm of the objective - are often the enemy of those soul-to-soul communications, which reside more in the subjective or intuitive.

Non-verbal language can be more meaningful in transmitting art, so it's important that we teach players to respond to visual signs. We must insist on it. Often, we'll conduct a crescendo, for example, and the players do not respond, so we stop and say, "That's a crescendo. Two measures before C is a crescendo." Then we go back and they play it. What they've learned by a repeated use of this technique is that when we *really* mean it, we'll stop and say it. We must insist they follow the visual signs, even if we do stop and say something. Try asking them, "Didn't you see what I was doing two measures before C? I was shouting at you visually." They go back and conduct the same thing again.

When we do find it necessary to use words, we should be as specific as possible. We often tell players to "listen," without directing their ears to a particular sound. It's more useful to say, "Clarinets, listen to the snare drum two measures after A; that pulsation will help you play your part."

When we communicate visually, there is always the possibility of spontaneity, which means an opportunity for real music-making. When we use words, too often we drill an interpretation into our players. They know exactly how much ritard there is going to be two measures before C. However, when players become responsive to gestures, we can set up a dialogue. We start the conversation by showing them how we want the music to sound. They reply by producing sounds that have an impact on us, causing our response with different signs that show them how to adjust their sound to what we want it to be. They then respond to our response, and we respond again to their response to our response to their response to our initial gesture. It's great fun, and one of the best indications of meaningful conducting. Of course, it's possible only after thorough score study by the conductor.

In a good rehearsal there is a balance between music and notes - the communication of artistic values and the correction of errors. For years I've heard conductors say they can't spend much time on the musical aspects because the people can't play the notes. Two things bother me about that thinking. First, perhaps the music is too hard. I believe in stretching students technically and I use much literature that will challenge and expand their technique. However, I think that *most* of the music should be well within the present technical capabilities of the players. There are too many conductors who say "Watch me," but the students have all they can do just to get through the notes. I believe students should be spending no more than 20% of their energy on playing the notes, so they have 80% left to listen to others, watch the conductor, and be sensitive not just to such things as balance and precision, but to all those intuitive things we are trying to impart in the rehearsal. My more serious concern is if you delay working on the musical aspects until the notes are there, it's in tune, and everything is in the right place, you will probably *never* work on the music, because we never reach technical perfection. I believe we have to work on the music right after the beginning, from the very first sounds our students produce.

Successful band conductors are dynamic, enthusiastic, and determined. They love music and they love people. They grow.

One of the most successful teachers I know is John Rafoth, who teaches in West High School in Madison,

Wisconsin. I've been to many of his rehearsals and seen that they are very quiet, because he's not a hyperactive person. Still, in his own way, he is dynamic, enthusiastic, and determined that his students will become fine musicians as they play excellent music. You can feel the intensity of his rehearsals, the strong communication from him to the students and from the students to him. Hew and other successful conductors seem to have the two "un-do-without-ables" of music teaching: a genuine passion for music and the compulsion to communicate that music to others. Their passion for music is far more than a desire for right notes; and it is a passion for *all* music, from the most sensitive, delicate, and fragile to the most violent and gross. As individuals we often gravitate toward music that's just like ourselves; but as conductors and teachers we must be able to assimilate the complete spectrum so we can pass it along to others.

Successful band conductors love music and they love people. If you have only those two things, you will be successful, because if you love music enough you will learn the fingerings, be concerned about the intonation, be sure the playing is precise and in balance, and do all of the other things that are needed. If you love the students enough, you will be sure they all learn, and become independent musicians.

The most successful conductors are sensitive to individuals, not just to groups of people. They know you can give a great deal of stimulus to some people because they need it, while others may be so sensitive that if you look at them funny in a rehearsal they will be sure they've done something terrible. To highly stimulate people who are themselves already highly stimulated may be overkill, whereas not to stimulate somebody who needs it, shows the same lack of sensitivity.

Successful people are also diplomatic, not just with band members or other students, but with faculty, parents, administrators, and people in town. They know how to practice successful diplomacy without giving up their own standards.

I'm not convinced that the best teachers are the most "understanding," however, because you can understand that a person can't play well, you can understand that he doesn't have a good reed, you can understand that she did not have a chance to practice, and pretty soon what you have is a whole lot of "understanding" and a terrible band! You can't be so "understanding" that you fail to insist that individuals give their best effort for music and for themselves. Don't make pleasing you, impressing others, or winning a contest the major reason; it has to be a broader purpose- perhaps your belief that the aesthetic experience that is possible only in music *must* become a part of each student's life.

In trying to get the best from each student, I often think of myself as a parent who loves the children and wants the very best for them. Along with the love can come discipline. Not everything has to be easy or pleasant, but over the course of time the children will know that you care deeply about what happens to them. Therefore, when the reprimands come, they will be aimed not at the soul of an individual, but at unacceptable or disappointing acts. That same wonderful teacher, John Rafoth, would say to a student, "Oh, I'm so disappointed." There was no yelling or screaming, but the quiet comment would have a wonderful effect on people because they wanted so much to achieve the high expectations others had of them. We all draw on that parental love bank occasionally when we reprimand, but we must always do it without nastiness, without hate. It is extraordinarily difficult to provide the proper aesthetic atmosphere for music when there is nastiness going on in the rehearsal.

Even intimidation, with or without nastiness, leads to negative reactions from students, if not their complete fear of the music and the conductor. On the other hand, a positive rehearsal atmosphere is self-generating and leads to harder and better work from everyone.

In rehearsals, we used to start at the beginning of the piece and keep going until something went wrong. Then we'd fix it and move on until we had to stop for the next problem. We all did it that way, and some people still do. With that approach you're focusing on errors all the time - "That's wrong; you're flat; that's an F sharp." Obviously you can't rehearse by talking about only what's right, because not everything gets better by itself, even with the most musically-independent players; but you *can* introduce many positive elements, mostly in the way you phrase the comments. Tell the flutes, "if you'll bring that E-flat up a bit it will be better in tune with the clarinets; they're having a difficult time with that pitch." It's much more effective than yelling, "No, flutes, no, no, no! That's wrong! Can't you hear that?"

Successful band conductors grow, but that doesn't necessarily mean they must "move up." That expression really bothers me. People say they are going to "move up" from elementary to junior high, or "move up" from junior high to high school. I believe it's a dangerous concept. If we achieve success, in our definition of the word, with a certain age level, we should not be intimidated by society's need for us to "move up." We should continue to teach where we have the most ability and can be most effective. I've seen some of the most wonderful junior high teachers - people with the special qualities it takes to teach at that age level - achieve great success and "move up" to high school, where they are not very successful, even though they feel "more successful" because now they have the high school job. I've seen the same thing happen with enormously

successful high school teachers who take college positions and are not nearly as successful. To return to high school is called "moving back," and labeled a "defeat." That's terrible. The practice may be based on wanting to achieve fame and glory, which becomes a great motivating factor. However, I don't think real success is necessarily related to being famous, nor should it be. I recognize that it may be easy for me to say that, already sitting here at a famous university; but I honestly believe that Mary Sciappacasse is one of the most successful teachers I have ever known. And yet, I'm sure her groups do not sound as good as those conducted by teachers who are much less successful. It doesn't make any sense at all, until you understand what she is teaching and to whom, until you recognize the disadvantages those people have and what they are overcoming as they learn the real meaning of music. She has done much more than the conductor in an affluent school who produces a superbly-polished performance of three pieces and gets a Superior rating at the state contest.

Real growth means adding depth and breadth, not just "moving up." This world is changing so rapidly that it's almost impossible to keep up, but we have to try. Wall Street analysts would be very hesitant to recommend investing in any company that closed its research and development department; yet many band conductors closed theirs when they earned a degree 20 years ago. You see them at conventions. They open a score, see new notation, and immediately close it up. It's the same kind of thinking that said, not too many years ago, "jazz is ruining bands." Now that's obviously turned out to be hogwash. Jazz hasn't ruined anything. In fact, it's resulted in a wonderful addition to our musical environment.

The same thing can be said about corps bands, the wind ensemble, electronic music, synthesizers, and any number of developments that were once new and different and destined to "ruin" music and music education. Unfortunately, people often don't want to have anything to do with things that are unfamiliar, as expressed by the old New England saying, "People are down on what they're not up on."

It's very easy to seek growth by putting yourself in a learning situation when you are just out of college, because you're not expected to know a lot. As you get older it becomes more difficult ("Why, I thought that person knew more than *that*!"; but we must all do it, studying things we're not sure about, doing new pieces using new techniques, going to concerts where the music may make us feel a little uncomfortable. Sometimes growth comes from unusual sources. I found that new rehearsals and performances of Percy Grainger's music, which I love a great deal and have performed for many years, were greatly enhanced after I

became well acquainted with the slow movements of the Beethoven piano sonatas. It seems crazy, you might expect growth to come from listening to all the recordings of those Grainger pieces, and perhaps studying some of his other music; but after the Beethoven sonatas it seemed I had a better foundation as a musician, and therefore brought more to the Grainger interpretations.

Vulnerability is an essential ingredient of significant growth. Taking a chance, risking embarrassment, placing yourself in situations where you feel inadequate can often lead to the greatest learning. I've had some experiences that just scared me to death - conducting rehearsals of premiere performances with the composer present. People such as Karlheinz Stockhausen, Gunther Schuller, Aaron Copland, Darius Milhaud all have great ears. They all knew everything I wasn't doing right, and did not hesitate to tell me. I was almost one big mass of jelly, so vulnerable, so aware that all of the players in the band - my - students - were going to see what an infantile musician I really was. But those were the times that resulted in the greatest growth for me.

Finally, I believe that people must grow beyond music. Band conductors who say "music is my whole life" are making a big mistake. There is so much to be learned from nature, literature, and loveliness in all its forms. Oddly enough, those non-musical things have a strong impact on our sensitivity as musicians. Bruno Walter, in that book *Of Music and Music-Making* which has been such an important influence on my life, says, "A person who is only a musician is half a musician."

I believe we must try to become the greatest musician we can be in order to bring the greatest music to our students. If we can do that - at whatever level we have chosen to teach - then we have achieved the highest level of success.

(the end)

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