Chapter 6

Craig Kirchhoff

Craig Kirchhoff *is Director of Bands at the U. of Minnesota (since 1993). He also taught at Ohio State (1979-93), Washington State (1977-79), and U. of Wis.- Milwaukee and Parkside (1976-77). His degrees are from the U. of Wis-Mil (BS) and -Madison (MS).*

Rehearsal technique can be summed up in two words: *teaching* and *listening* ... and good conducting — clear and musical — is good rehearsal technique.

There are some phenomenal teachers who are able to get a group to play at a very high level, yet at times they conduct so poorly that you literally cannot watch them, because what they are doing is so contradictory to the music. Then there are others who look fantastic, but you can barely tell what's happening in the music.

As conductors, we are dealing with three dimensions:
(1) what just happened,
(2) what is happening now, and
(3) what we want to happen next .

It's really hard to have an exact sense of what is going on.

Preparation
My study of the score has two primary goals:
(1) to develop a clear aural image of the piece, and
(2) to discover the direction of the music, to see how it unfolds, so I can arrive at an interpretation.

I do the usual things, the *macro-micro-macro* analysis (overall form/small details/back to the big picture), then analysis of phrases, with lots of imaging. As I internalize the music, I spend more and more time away from the score.

Once the rehearsal cycle starts, I am already working on the next set of scores. Even so, I still spend time (about 1 hour for every rehearsal hour) studying the current music and setting my strategy for the coming rehearsal, choosing where to start and deciding what psychological issues are involved.

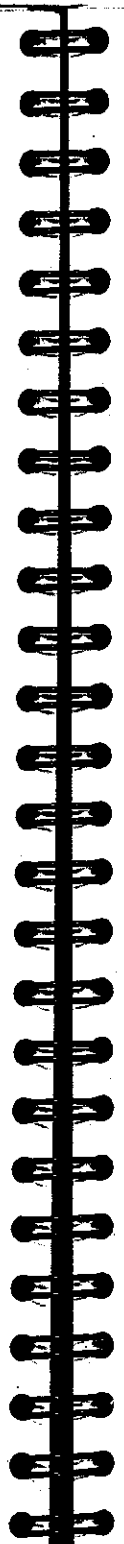
Rehearsal/Performance
Over the years, I have changed a lot in the way I rehearse, largely through the impact of my macro-micro-macro score study.

I want our students to have a strong overview of the music (it's very easy to get bogged down in detail), so unless it's a work of extreme difficulty, we do a lot of non-stop playing.

We must let the music flow to its logical conclusion. Unfortunately, at times we conductors get so wrapped up with solving problems that we stop in the most ungodly places!

My purpose is ear orientation — letting the players get the whole piece in their head, as I use conducting gestures to call their attention to certain things they should notice along the way.

I really believe in the big picture. Al McMurray tells a wonderful story to illustrate the idea.



An observer at a construction site asks two different stone cutters what they are doing. One says that he is cutting stones into certain shapes and fitting them to other stones. The other stone cutter says that he is building a cathedral.

Of course, there are those days when I have to tell the students that it's going to be "nitty-gritty." I make it clear that we have to get inside the music, and therefore may lose sight of the overall structure in order to make things work.

After each rehearsal, I write down all the things I need to deal with next time. It is often an extensive collection of notes.

On short rehearsal/concert cycles like ours, I really have to know what I'm going to do before I go in there.

At one time, I recorded many rehearsals. However, I don't do it now, and do not recommend it to others, because I think with regular recording you tend to let the machine do your work, rather than paying close attention yourself during the rehearsal.

It's human nature to use the tape as a crutch. I also think you may begin to listen differently all the time if you get into the habit of hearing the music from the microphone's perspective.

I still find occasional taping to be useful, perhaps just before a concert (for tempo, pacing) or to be sure that my kinesthetic involvement on the podium has not turned off my ear.

In dress rehearsals, I will withdraw a little bit, so the concert can be more fresh. The difference is in intensity, not in the gestures. I don't feel a conscious effort to conduct differently.

I tend to be a process-oriented person, so for me, concerts are not terminal events, they are arrival points along a pathway.

My primary concern (and motivation) is how the music *feels* when we are playing it in concert ... or in rehearsal.

Influence
When you really think about it, we conductors are in complete control of surprisingly few things.

We may be able to influence the essential elements — intonation, pulse, tempo and such — but even then, the effect is largely at a subconscious level, the result of the way we use our bodies to communicate with the players.

I believe in shifting responsibility to the students. Their list (producing a good sound, counting, playing in tune, etc.) is a long one, as opposed to ours.

If you tend to be completely goal oriented (getting ready for the next concert or the festival), your conductor's list gets longer, because it may be easier and quicker to do these things yourself.

The problem is that the next time around you have to start all over again. When students are aware of the big picture, you can build on an ever-increasing base of knowledge and experience.

In rehearsal, I find myself asking lots of questions. The way I ask them changes with the group I'm conducting; but regardless of the level, asking questions is the best way to get students involved in some of the decision making and problem solving.

Tone/Intonation
I don't spend a lot of time tuning; but I do spend time on the quality of sound — getting the kids to use the air in a certain way and to fit their sounds into other sounds.

If we teach our students to listen, and give them an aural model,

we don't have to rebuild on the next piece. Pablo Casals said, "Playing in tune is a matter of conscience."

With young players, I work on playing "in tone," using breath support to get the pitch down.

Pitch awareness is crucial. Even at the college level, some students aren't sure, so I require them to pair up three times during a semester. Each player establishes the pitch level at A=440, then one plays the chromatic scale while the partner operates the tuner and marks down the number of cents each pitch is away from being in tune.

The resultant chart has quite an impact — they had no idea they could be six cents sharp on a given pitch at the same time their partner was six cents flat!

The process doesn't take much time, and they begin to recognize the bad notes and learn how to adjust them. With our present technology, everyone has a tuning device, so why not use them?

We get too hung up on every student who can't hear. You can go down the line and get three trumpets to stop the needle; but they don't sound like the same pitch due to individual timbre.

Working for good color and blend is far more crucial to intonation than making a difference of two cents in the pitch.

Rhythm/Technique
When students cannot play a piece,
we need to determine the reason.

There are very difficult passages in Colgrass or Schwantner, for example, where it's OK to rehearse the technique slowly so the students can hear what's going on.

However, when they just haven't practiced, I make it clear that it's their responsibility to learn it.... and we may decide to rehearse it when they are ready. (We must help the players to learn that *they* should be the keepers of the standard.)

You can't deal with rhythm unless you deal with style.

I do lots of ensemble pulse work. I have them "sizzle" their rhythms, which calls for support (the longer the note, the faster the sizzle); and because they're not concerned with fingerings, they focus on rhythm and pulse. It's a great way to teach style.

Unfortunately, you hear lots of "telegraph" music (as in Morse code, where all sounds have the same weight).

We should teach relative weighting, when longer notes have more and shorter notes have less. Then the music begins to come alive.

Also, I've seen too many rehearsals filled with too many words and abstract concepts about rhythm.

I believe students should learn a basic system of foot-patting.
I once watched a middle school band director who started each rehearsal with rhythm exercises. Every student had rhythm sheets, and this director held every student accountable for learning what was on them. It was impossible to fake it!
Three things were happening:
(1) they were all tapping their right foot,
(2) they were subdividing verbally, and
(3) they used both hands to play the rhythms on their knees.

The key is *literacy for musicians*,
which fits into the academic theme of the day.

Interpretation
The interpretation of a work evolves with use , and ensembles often have a view of the music that isn't even discussed; it just happens over a period of time spent in rehearsal and performance.

In a sense, we relinquish control and allow things to happen, even if the direction may be different from our original perception.

I often ask my students how they feel about certain moments in a work, and in the process I have discovered some views that I hadn't thought about. Allowing the group to be somewhat active in the development of interpretation is healthy. They need to have some ownership of the process.

Even middle and high school students can exercise much better critical judgement than we think. Often they don't, because they are not asked.

After every concert, it might be valuable for conductors at any level to have the players write about their experiences.

Writing is a good exercise in itself, but it is also valuable for the students to assess their performance, and to express how they felt during the concert. It's a valuable learning tool for teacher and student alike. (I got this idea from my wife. You should read the comments from her elementary students. Some of them have great ears and wonderful insight.)

I try to create genuine beauty in each rehearsal ... and it always has to be fresh. I tend not to be a "dot every i, cross every t" type of conductor. In fact, in dress rehearsals and others close to concerts, I tend to do something different just to keep everybody alert.

I want to be sure that if on the concert the music is unfolding a certain way, we can go with it.

This is where competent conducting skills become a pre-requisite for great music making. If a moment in concert can be shaped by pushing it forward or pulling it back, you can't talk about it. The only way is to communicate through the gestures. If the conductor has not developed that skill, then the concert is not a creation of the esthetic, but a duplication of drilled rehearsals.

Of course there are places in the music, such as a ritard with complex rhythms, where the players need for you to be consistent.

Otherwise, spontaneity — the ability to change, to do something different — is where we find the magic and the great artistry.

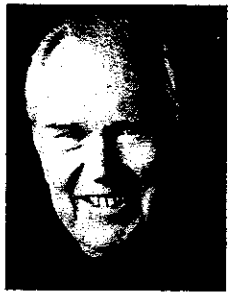
Conductors need to *become* the music. Even the quality and volume of your voice, and the patterns of your speech have to match what is going on in the music; and this will happen if you internalize. That's why I am now spending more and more time away from the score.

Internalization is critical to the feeling that you *absolutely must* make this music sound the way you are hearing it in your head.

Without such passion, there is no communication
... and not even any real music.

Chapter 8

H. Robert Reynolds



H. Robert Reynolds *is Director of University Bands and the Div. of Instrumental Studies at the University of Michigan (since 1975). He also taught at Univ. of Wisc.(1968-75), Cal State Long Beach (1962-68), Anaheim H.S. (1958-62), and Onsted, MI (1956-57).*

Tone has to be the first thing you consider, and it must take precedence over everything else, especially with younger groups.

When I taught in Onsted, Michigan, which was far away from any civilization, I made sure that my students heard recordings of top-level individual performers. I found that when young players listened to the Mozart clarinet concerto as recorded by Robert Marcellus with the Cleveland Orchestra under George Szell, they got the characteristic sound of that instrument in their ear; and when at least one person in school could produce the proper sound, it was a lot easier to get others to match it.

I'm not for verbal descriptions, such as asking students to play with a "dark" tone, because I'm not sure they understand the meaning. It's like trying to describe "green" — until you actually

see the color and someone says "that's green," you don't know what "green" is. Students are not going to understand what a good tone is until they hear one. Teachers can convey some other concepts that will help to produce a good sound. For example,

> The instrument is a megaphone, not a CD player.
What you put in (the breath) comes out. You don't just push the on/off switch and get a built-in sound.

> The formation of a fine embouchure is essential to the production of a good sound.

As the teacher, you must have the ideal sound of each instrument in your ear ... and if you don't keep re-stimulating what "good" is (with CDs and live performances), you will lose the concept. It doesn't take too long for those good sounds from your college days to become distant and muted. Then you begin to think your students sound pretty good.

When you have been around really good trumpet players, you know that while many will sound good at *mp*, only the very best can retain that quality of sound at *fff*. Bands often need to play loud, and many conductors fall down because they don't have a concept of "loud and good." If you are able to hear the Chicago Symphony brass section on a regular basis, you know what "loud and good" can be. Just loud is not good enough.

Nothing can substitute for being around great sounds. Your standards are lifted immediately and you are never satisfied again. Great musicians tend to raise you up regardless of whether they are singers, pianists or wind players. Hearing them regularly can prevent you from displaying professionally-retarded behavior.

You can't get a good sound from your band unless you have it in your head before you start. This quality is an "un-do-without-able" and all the really terrific conductors have one thing in common: a strong inner aural concept of what they want to hear. Like any other concept, this one takes repeated instruction and exposure.

Intonation

The person who plays in tune has three things: (1) the right concept in the ear, (2) the right physical set up (a characteristic and well-focused sound), and (3) the ability to predict what the next pitch will be. I believe that these three elements account for 90% of *really* well-in-tune playing, with only 10% coming from adjusting the pitch after a note is started.

I spend lots of time tuning chords during the rehearsal, but not much in the opening period known as "tuning up." I believe in the process, but think that its over-use is our biggest time-waster. In fact, extensive formal tuning can even be harmful, because so many directors and students then think the band is "in tune" — like a piano — so now *that* pesky problem is out of the way.

If you do use a tuning routine, it can be done very quickly. The pitch should be given by a person who can produce the same pitch every day. (Reference to a tuner is OK, but the sound of an electronic device is not musical.)

Up through the high school level, I think the students should first sing the note they are going to play, so the sound goes inside the head, promoting the desired internal awareness of pitch ... as opposed to the external imposition of it.

I like for the first chair players to play first, so they can lock onto each other, then break out from there. Also, I'll change the pitch for different instruments (Bb is fine for tubas, but A is a much better tuning note for flutes).

It seems obvious that music is for the ear, so why not do a tone/chord piece every day, so you can get the ears focused? Young players can use their ears more when they don't have to worry about technique, so chorales are wonderful for developing tone, intonation, phrasing, and other fundamentals.

I especially like the chorales in minor keys (I love G minor). My high school band used to sing them. It will take some weeks to get them to be able to sing their written instrumental parts; but groups that sing will surely be better. Some of my high school bands even played chorales (and scales) on the march!

Chorales must be played at the beginning of the rehearsal in order to get correct sound production established ... and they have to be done with real meaning. Too many band directors will get a chorale started, and then take attendance! They are simply going through a ceremony with no real commitment. When you are serious about the musical values of a chorale, you can conduct them with all kinds of musical variations — stretching dynamics, crescendo-diminuendo, pauses, rubato, whatever.

Also, singing can be used through the course of a rehearsal; and it works so well that you almost feel guilty, because it's too easy! It is effective with single pitches — a "G" may not be good, but it will improve dramatically after they all sing it — or with full phrases.

Tuning is not an isolated area. It is closely-related to tone and precision. Actually, everything in the rehearsal has to do with the players being able to hear their part, everybody else's part, and the resulting relationship.

For example, when I have some people with an accompanying part to play at the same time as the melody group I am working with, it's almost a waste of time to say, "The whole note people are late."

It's much better to say, "You need to be listening to the snare drum and trumpets (the "rehearsal notes" people) and play your whole notes at the beginning of each of their figures."

In other words, "Don't follow me; listen to those people."

Aesthetics

When preparing for the rehearsal, you have to decide what you'll do after the opening warm-up/tune-up, as you go into the main "white heat" portion of the day's work.

You also need to think about how you're going to end the rehearsal.

Sometimes it will be with an admonition. You'll threaten to pull one of the important pieces off the program and replace it with "Easy Suite in Bb." You'll challenge them to practice ... and not to *tell* you they are better, but to *show* you. Everyone will walk out in doom and gloom; but the next day it will be much better!

However, you can berate the band only when you know the group has a strong self image. If the students think they're lousy and the town thinks they're lousy, the last thing they need is for you to tell them they're lousy.

I've had groups who presumed anything they played was terrible, and it took lots of time to buttress them up.

With a really good band, there are times when you have to remind them that students who came before them created the reputation they are now merely riding on, and currently detracting from!

Even in the Michigan Band, students will think they are "wonderful," and I have to say, "No ... people in the past made it wonderful, and you have to live up to their accomplishments."

The conductor is ultimately responsible for making music, of course, but much of the responsibility can and should be given to the players, unless you are into "complete power," which won't get the best results. (A theory teacher at the U. of M. has said, "Our goal is to make ourselves dispensable.")

Students will almost automatically pick up on your energy and search for excellence; but you have to help them realize exactly what they need to do.

At the U of M, I say, "Your responsibility is to come to rehearsal owning your part, and mine is to come here knowing the score — you should insist on it."

To define my standard for "owning" the part, I ask, "If you were called to substitute with the Chicago Symphony, how well prepared would you be for the first rehearsal? Well, that's how well prepared I expect you to be for every rehearsal here."

Remember, transferring responsibility is not easy. If you hand a glass to someone who does not have a firm grip, it will end up on the floor in a million pieces. You have to be sure students want this responsibility, then find many ways to encourage them to take it.

Conductors

I hear some band directors say, "I don't have time to study scores; I've got candy sales." If that is your attitude, you should close this book right now. Teachers who expect somebody to motivate them are on the wrong track. Successful people are self-motivators.

If you're willing to develop yourself, you can do lots of things with your hands and arms. But remember, becoming descriptive with your conducting is one thing; you must also insist that the players follow what you are giving them.

If you show a crescendo, and they don't do it, you must say, "I was *shouting* at you, but you didn't respond." You must keep after them, insisting that they follow your gestures, and they will do it. However, if you indicate "softer," they don't respond, and you go on, you have taught them that they don't have to obey your signs.

So many people stop and say, "That should be *piano* at C." The message is really, "My gestures don't mean anything; wait until I stop and tell you what I want." If you need to stop the band because they have not followed your direction, it's better to say, "I gave you a signal; you know what the gesture means, so do it."

For most band conductors, "rehearsing" means "talking;" but if you want to increase your rehearsal time, just conduct better and insist that they follow. So many elementary and junior high directors are wonderful conductors — not because they have 10,000 beautiful motions, but because the players respond to their visual communications ... and that's possible at any level.

If you hear yourself saying, "You're not together, watch me," consider it a big clue that what *you* are doing is not right. Bands play together because they are listening to each other. The reason they need to watch the conductor is not to stay together, but to get help in grasping the meaning, in trying to understand the music behind the music.

Many conductors, me included, have felt that we are responsible for every sound. If a single player was not playing well or was rhythmically inaccurate, I took personal responsibility, and told them how to correct the immediate problem. What we should do is to put the concept into their ear and mind, so they are able to take control of their own sound, pitch and rhythm ... and then connect it with other players.

Very often conductors will say, "Listen ..." and the player's honest reaction is, "... to what?"

We should go just one more step and say, "Tubas, you need to be listening to the flutes," or "Trombones, put your ear in the third clarinets." Everything will get better in a direct relationship to how much the players listen to each other; but this process takes

longer (in the beginning), so we give in to the quick fix and say, "Trombones you're late; play earlier." They play "earlier" and they might guess right (how much earlier) and be there on time — but they need to be there on time every time! They can be if they know where to listen.

People should not be playing toward the conductor and thinking, "Is that right?" They should be playing to each other, guided by the conductor. It's like a horse and carriage: we may have the reins, but the horse is doing the running.

This situation became obvious when I took groups on tour and found that as they played more concerts, they began playing more toward each other. At times, I even thought, "I'm not going to mess this up by conducting."

When you guide their ears, rather them letting them use yours, the band will get better so fast that you won't believe it!

Rhythm

Rhythm is a personal internal issue, although there are certain general tendencies, especially with younger players. When there are more notes per measure, they play faster; and when there are fewer notes they play slower. Young clarinetists might slow down going over the break. We have to be conscious of such things.

When I was growing up as a director, I often visited friends in the Pontiac (MI) schools, where they had a fantastic system for teaching rhythm. They did lots of foot tapping, because they believed that if the player can feel it and the conductor can see it, there's a chance to get it right.

"Down" and "up" were equally important, so there was no problem with dotted quarter notes (down-up-down).

Separating rhythm from playing allows the students to understand what they need to do, and to internalize the rhythm. It also saves their lips. When I had elementary students, they had so much energy that we would march around the room.

I still use foot-patting techniques. I may tell the players, "Say your rhythm at letter C. At the same time, tap you foot on the quarter note beat and clap eighth notes."

Technique

Some music schools don't require intensive instrumental technique classes, so these graduates will need help from their friends and colleagues. The horn-playing conductor must know what to do when the clarinets are sharp; and the clarinet major may have to learn alternate positions on the trombone. Determine what you do not know (for me, it was the oboe), and work hard to learn it. You cannot spend a whole career blaming your school.

If you don't know your craft, you can't get to the art, and you can never know too much about the instruments.

In elementary work, I believe that conducting is a big waste of time. When I taught beginners, I would go around the room giving mini-lessons. In just ten seconds you can guide and correct many things, such as hand position, embouchure, etc.

Literature

I believe that every piece should be well within the current grasp of the players. If they can't read through a new work without falling apart, it's too hard. Don't do it.

On the other hand, you cannot be satisfied with the current level of technique, so you also have to select some music that will stretch the proficiency of the group.

The problems I have seen come from conductors who select very difficult music, train students to play the notes, and perform the piece as a sort of "parlor trick." There is no real music because there is no real understanding. Of course, all of this has to do with the ego of the conductor.

I think that today there is better music being written for school bands than ever before. When I conduct groups with musical limitations, I am able to select pieces from a wide range of respected literature. Don't get me wrong, there is still a plethora of poor music out there, but there are so many more better pieces.

You can call nearly any college band director and get a list of works for young bands; or you can go to successful conductors with 20 years experience and ask for their favorite 10 tunes. My conversation with anybody includes a discussion of literature.

Interpretation

When conducting a standard work, the first order of business is to learn the traditional interpretations. In that way, you will have something that works — you are just not picking it out of the sky.

Then you begin to bend and shape it to your own taste, knowing that no matter how extensive the alterations, you can always go back to the security of the traditional version if you want to.

Most people who don't want to find traditional interpretations are looking for a free license to do anything they please. I believe that if you're doing Mozart's works for winds, for example, you can't learn enough about him, including his operas, symphonies, piano concertos, etc.

All of the major band works have been recorded by many conductors, so you can listen to a number of interpretations and make the proper judgements.

I like to get under the skin of people who really know how to do it. Currently, I'm trying to discover what makes Carlos Kleiber such a good musician. I also want to get inside the head and ear of Itzak Perlman. Go to the people who have assets you admire. If someone is teaching 10 miles away and has a good band, try to find out what is happening there.

If, after listening to recordings and studying the score, you still think something should be changed, go ahead ... but not without measuring it against varying interpretations.

Fortunately, nearly all of the "band composers" are still alive. You can call them on the phone with any questions about their music, and they will rarely say, "I'm too busy to talk to you." I called William Schuman just before he died and told him I had a very minor question about *When Jesus Wept*. I didn't want to bother him, but he was very cooperative. Here is a famous, significant figure in music and the world in general who was overjoyed that I was taking such care with his music.

Many young conductors are intimidated, or they just don't want to look dumb; but if you don't put yourself into vulnerable positions, you can't learn.

Although my job is secure, my career is not. Every time I do something, it has to be sensational. People expect some magical presence, so I have to be good every time I pick up the baton. Even so, I just have to go out and be myself. If someone thinks I'm an idiot, then so be it!

If you want to linger on a note, or lean into a cadence point, I would do it, if it feels right and is within the bounds of good taste. After all, if you read a poem with the same emphasis on every word, it's not poetry. There must be selective stress and emphasized meaning. That's what you do in music.

If the music feels right at a tempo that is different from the printed instruction, it is generally OK to alter it, as long as you don't stretch it too far and you stay within the shape of the piece. For some composers, a metronome marking is mandatory, but not for others. Once again, if in doubt, call the composer.

All printed directions tend to be vague because of limited language. Think of the *accent*: we have only a few ways to write down millions of subtle differences. What about a *crescendo*? There are no signs to show the pace — do we increase intensity gradually over the entire course, or is it better to save the big push for just before the end? These are the fun decisions!

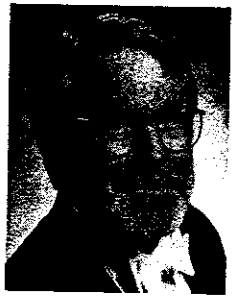
All of the rehearsal elements converge and become a part of the interpretation. Bad intonation is only bad because it takes away from the interpretation. When you fix incorrect rhythm, you don't do it just to have everything perfect, but because the flaws are hurting the music.

When the purpose of your rehearsal is clearly an overwhelming desire to make *music*, it follows that you will be working on those things that are interfering with an artistic interpretation.

Sometimes students (and directors?) do not understand the goal. They may think it's like math — to get it "right."

Chapter 9

James Smith



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Careful score study is absolutely essential, and we should be able to assume that every conductor knows exactly what is on every page. Unfortunately, many do not - so their rehearsals are a joke, as is any discussion with them of rehearsal techniques.

Sometimes even serious score studiers have an over-all rehearsal technique that falls short of the goal. Their school schedule has adequate time for rehearsal, they have chosen music that is appropriate for the performance level of the students, they have fully investigated the composer's organization of sound (chord structure, doublings, etc. — piano-plunking is my preferred method), and through detailed work have acquired a complete and accurate picture of the score, then converted all of this knowledge to a secure internalization.

The missing ingredient is planning.

Planning

Here is my method for careful matching of rehearsal time and the music chosen for the next program:

1. Determine the number of rehearsals available between now and the next concert (let's say 9), and the length of each (1 hour, but only 45 minutes of actual work time), then figure the total time (405 minutes).

2. Think carefully about how much you are going to have to work on each piece, then give it an appropriate weighted number (let's say on a scale of 1-8, from "not much" to "whew"). If there are three works on the concert, you may have ratings of 2, 4 and 8, which make a total of 14.

3. Divide the total rehearsal time (405 minutes) by the total weighted time (14) to get the value of one unit (about 30).

4. Figure the time to be spent on each:
   Piece #1 (rated 2): 2 x 30 = 60 minutes
   Piece #2 (rated 4): 4 x 30 = 120 minutes
   Piece #3 (rated 8): 8 x 30 = 240 minutes

5. Make plans, but be prepared to adjust them.

Thinking ahead is very important. It is easy to miscalculate and be forced to under-rehearse some things. Also, beware of spending too much time on a piece that already sounds good (it's more fun to "work" on these things, right?). Every minute counts. I simply cannot afford the time to have a "reading" rehearsal, where everyone just messes around and I don't know the score. If you don't have a fix on the overall architecture of the rehearsal process, you are in trouble.

Because you may not rehearse every piece every day, you need to figure out a schedule that works for you, and for the level of the group you have. You may want to dismiss some players or even a whole section from a rehearsal, so you should factor that idea into your plan. Also, you should consider how much you can leave to the players, and how much you need to rehearse. As you work

with your people and gain a knowledge of their capabilities, building up your confidence in them (you spend a lot of time together), you will develop a predictable rhythm of responsibility.

The Process

I usually do large chunks at the beginning to see how things are progressing, then move to the more detailed work after that. As we get closer to the concert, I'll begin playing large chunks again. I like to have played a piece non-stop at least twice, maybe three times, before the concert. If you're not careful, you can mis-use rehearsals and hurt the performance; or worse yet, you can wait until the last couple of rehearsals before you get serious and *really* start listening. My last three rehearsals (concert minus 3, 2 and 1) usually go something like this:

(-3) mostly non-stop playing

(-2) polishing

(-1) playing only portions (no run-through), such as a part of the development section, trying to be more relaxed with less panic. If we have a rehearsal on the day immediately preceding a concert, I do not have a warm-up just before concert time. Sometimes, when there is a dead day before, I do meet with them; but I do not go over the parts that have not gone well — I'm not going to be able to fix them now; in fact, at this point I'll just make things worse. Having done performances with and without a last-minute pre-concert rehearsal, I know that our best efforts happen when we do *not* have that final session.

Recording

Sometimes everything is going so well ... and then you have a recording session, when suddenly your ears wake up and you hear all the flaws in the music making. Wouldn't it be wonderful if there was a way we could hear with this kind of clarity all the time? It is so easy to "zone out" while conducting. Only when our expectations are jolted do we notice that something is awry. It requires a lot of energy to hear what you were not expecting.

Keep Learning

You should not read a book like this looking for short cuts, but rather to find out how much more there is to learn. "I don't have time" is an *excuse*, not a *reason* to stop learning.

You have to figure out how to structure your learning, so you can move from where you are to where you want to be. Most things cannot be taught, but they can be learned, in the right environment, with self-discipline, provided there is sufficient talent, experience, and taste.

You have to teach yourself by observing rehearsals and seeing how various conductors deal with sound and how music-making relates to motions of the body. It's hard work, but necessary at every level.

For example, my ear-training with a score happens at the piano (even though I have very limited keyboard skills) — hearing how a measure sounds, imagining the style, seeing the configuration of instrumentation, noticing how much accent is needed, determining what the balance will be, figuring out who should be tuning to whom. All the time I am developing and cataloguing expectations, so that when I have finished, I can not only sing the major lines, but have a composite sense of sound for the entire piece. Do this for five years, and you are bound to improve.

Finally, you cannot expect to learn how to make a band sound good if you concentrate only on the band and ignore the whole world of music and the arts. I am not being an elitist. Going to the opera and symphony concerts, visiting art museums, and reading great literature will all help to prevent the stagnation that inevitably results from isolation and in-breeding. When teachers do not grow and learn in this way, it is a sure sign that they are not operating out of love for music, regardless of how many quick-fix rehearsal techniques they may have accumulated.