

Marking Scores: Shifting from Visual to Aural Responses

A Proposal for the 2007 National Conference
College Band Directors National Association

Poster Session Submission

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This poster session represents a work in progress that attempts to identify commonality in conducting curricula at both the undergraduate and graduate levels specific to wind band conductor training. Central to this study is the issue of score markings and instructional methodologies currently in use to aid students in score preparation.

A common fault of young conductors is an inability to detect errors in rehearsal and performance settings. I believe this scenario is a direct result of the process of score preparation, and is specifically related to the score marking practices of conductors in training. Conducting texts offer numerous means for score preparation, but fail to address, in almost every instance, the issue of score marking. Left to their own devices, students moving through a conducting curriculum rely on a marking system that is not designed to aid in learning a score, but one that is grounded in achieving the proper “choreography” to receive a specific grade on a conducting exam.

While the initial “choreographed” markings may evolve with the musician’s development and move toward a method of preparation that allows for an internalization of the score, our system of conductor training is often dichotomous. In the system of right versus wrong choreography based assessments, we are in effect training conductors in a way that allows for advancement in the skill of conducting beats and scripted entrances of parts rather than developing a system that allows for conductors to internalize a score, develop a vivid aural image and actually conduct music. In essence, students are honing a skill set that is based on responding to a visual stimulus, carefully scripted in the score, rather than learning to react to the comparison of a personal aural image developed through study of a work to a performance by a live group.

The importance of this research is that it serves as an attempt to codify current practices in conductor education programs for the purpose of developing a system of score marking that will allow students of conducting to develop a specific and direct means to enhance the internalization of scores while fostering the development of aural imagery. While several studies exist that serve as reviews of literature, or as investigations of practices, none addresses specific methodologies needed to correct the previously cited commonplace scenario of “choreographed” conducting, and move toward instruction in conducting music as a response to aural events, rather than visual cues in the score.