## MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR REHEARSAL Alabama Music Educators Association In-service Conference Auburn, Alabama January 15, 2004 Gary D. Packwood, DMA - University of Montevallo

"Efficient rehearsals rely on three things: the conductor's preparation, the singers preparation, and the rehearsal pace."

## Conductor's Preparation

- If the truth were known every director has stood before a choir unprepared, and have tried to rationalize this incompetence by declaring to him or herself that they were too busy to prepare the score---Lack of conductor score preparation is probably the leading contributor to inefficient use of rehearsal time.
- Know YOUR MUSIC! Ask yourself ...
  - If you cannot sing every part, know what it SHOULD sound like—don't let the rehearsal be the first time that you hear the key center.
  - Determine the type of melody-major, minor, modal, etc...
  - Is the melody constructed of long or short phrases?
  - Are there any sequences?
  - Are there any intervals that will cause problems for the singers?
  - Range? Tessitura?
  - Which voice part has the melody and where?
  - What is the function of the harmony?
  - Is the harmonic rhythm fast or slow?
  - Where are the non-chordal (non-harmonic) tones and what function do they play in the overall harmonic structure?
  - Where are the points of dissonance?
  - Does the piece modulate, how?
  - Is there a rhythmic pattern on which much of the rhythmic structure is based?
  - Are there rhythmic sequences?
  - What is the rehearsal tempo and performance tempo?
  - Does the meter present any problems? Does it change?
  - Is the text setting syllabic?
  - Does the text influence the rhythm?
  - Is it in a foreign language?
  - Is text most important?

## Singers Preparation

- Every singer at every level has a degree of responsibility. It is not up to the singer to decide the magnitude of that responsibility; that is the job of the conductor.
  - Every singer must been issued there own music; Singers must number every measure
  - Every singer must have a pencil AND MARK THEIR MUSIC!!!
  - Mark all breaths by the punctuation of the text
  - Identify the tonal center and the meter!!
  - Label key changes and meter changes
  - As singers learn a piece, encourage QUALITY score markings

## The Rehearsal Pace

- Enhance student engagement, achievement, enjoyment, and classroom management through appropriate INSTRUCTIONAL PACE:
  - Start ON TIME and BEGIN with a singing or movement activity—avoid calling roll or taking up candy money, etc...
  - List the order of the pieces to be rehearsed, AND where you are going to begin rehearsing
  - Begin rehearsing the most programmatic sections FIRST!!
  - Know exactly what you want to rehearse, who you want to rehearse, and how you plan to get there
  - Repetition with a MEANING! Avoid just "singing through a section or piece" Always give the singers a reminder or a suggestion of what you would like for them to do!
  - Give your singers as much eye contact as possible
  - Say what you want in seven words or less!! "Again, please with a crescendo." "Twice that soft and twice that exciting."
  - If your not getting what you want, leave it for another day so that you can analysis the problem area and think of a different approach, or immediate try another approach
  - Be flexible!! Have a plan and follow it, but be willing to deviate from it when needed
  - Anticipate problems, but don't waste time "fixing what ain't broke"
  - When isolating a particularly section (SATB), always give the other sections something to do..."Altos sing on words, everyone else on "loo" "Tenors on solfeggio, everyone else count sing" "Everyone sing the bass line in your own octave"
  - Never lose your patience---well more than once a semester!
  - Immediately after each rehearsal, take 1-2 minutes to evaluate the progress (I know this difficult) However this greatly aids in guiding the plan for the next rehearsal
  - Praise your singers frequently and SPECIFICIALLY!!!