

**Score Preparation: “Filling the Tank”**  
**Michael Haithcock, Director of Bands, University of Michigan**

**PRODUCT: Aural Image**

The amount of music heard without the music actually sounding defines the quality of one’s aural image. The purpose of the conductor is to provide enlightened and compelling musical leadership, including clear navigational information, which transcends one’s doubts and fears. Know what you expect to hear by developing a clear aural image through deep and detailed score preparation.

**PRIORITY: Interpret instead of Track**

Interpretation requires making subjective musical decisions regarding the same core issues necessary to objectively track through the score. The aural outcome (what is heard) as a result of making these decisions and communicating them through gestural actions creates what we call style.

“Music is revelation! It must say something, it must tell a truth that is human or divine or both. Just delivering notes, even if it’s perfect, doesn’t give this revelation at all. Performance is a personal witness; it is the way the conductor sees its meaning or message. It is in his mind, and he has caught a glimpse of the composer’s vision and gives it just as personally as if the composer would conduct it.”

*Herbert Blomstedt, former conductor of the San Francisco Symphony*

- Interpretation requires a personal commitment to subjective decision-making equal to any similar commitment to objective ensemble pedagogy.
- Interpretation is ear-driven through the aural image not eye-bound as it transcends the boundaries of notation.
- Interpretation requires the development of a detailed aural image balancing objective information and subjective possibilities.

“Everything is in the score except the essentials.”

*Gustav Mahler, conductor*

“Imagination is more important than knowledge.”

*Albert Einstein, genius*

**PROCESS: Score Discovery, Score Analysis, Score Delivery**

- Score Discovery: **How** can I get my band to play this? Should my band play this?
- Score Analysis: **What** information does the notation provide (tracking)?
- Score Delivery: **Why** should the notation sound “like this” (interpretation)?

“The bar line is a door, not a wall.”

*Donald Peck, former principal flutist of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra*

*Turn objective obstacles into subjective “performance practice” possibilities!*

- Tone Color
  - Based on ensemble pedagogy or orchestration
  - Character of sound
  - Vibrato
- Articulation
  - Symbols versus practice
  - Practice versus expectation
  - Specific versus implied
- Note Beginnings/Endings
  - Like the voice, bow, organ, piano, etc.
- Rhythmic Groupings
  - Melodic note grouping
  - “Ride” the sequences
  - Harmonic rhythm
- Balance
  - Static or always adjusting
- Dynamics
  - Boxed by orchestration or movement within phrase, architecture or accident
- Phrase Structure
  - Based on: Tension, Release, Arrival, Transition
- Tempo
  - Pulse related to terms, numbers, and/or feel

“The metronome was never intended to pinpoint the speed of the music. It was meant to provide information regarding the character of the music and to prevent the performer from straying too far from the composer’s intention.”

*Max Rudolf in The Grammar of Conducting*

**ESSENTIAL TRUTHS**

1. **Priorities** define the outcome (**Product**). Product goals clarify the process.
2. Time is your most precious resource.
3. Use of individual time (**Process**) must align with **Priorities**.
4. Avoid crisis management in score preparation.
5. Rehearsing is about responding: **Hear, Move, and Respond**.
6. Assess and address gaps in your ability to Hear, Move, and Respond.
7. Improving the identified gap issues must be a priority.
8. Develop a process of “churning” weaknesses into strengths.
9. We are the sum of our environment, education, and experience.
10. Andy Griffith is still my hero!