

# Preparing Your Orchestra for Adjudication

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D'Addario Orchestral Strings  
Eastman Stringed Instruments



Performance Evaluation


Class: 09  
 Number: 22

Competitor/Key: (Mark 1 Award)  
 Richard Meyer  
 Brian Robinson

Rating from 1 (superior) through 5 (poor) in the respective square.

Sec. 3 General Comments (May be continued on back)

I		<p>① Overall very good!          Continue to work on your intonation throughout.          Love the cohesiveness of your being @ 17 &amp; 25.          Good balance @ 36 &amp; great 3rd pos. 1st try exaggerating your dynamics a bit more.</p> <p>② Great job soloist!!</p> <p>1. J - be careful to not allow space.</p> <p>31. - Great job until the run!</p> <p>35-37 your passing of the J is was wonderful. →</p>
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8 + 9 =		26
		Total

Signature of Adjudicator: 

# Introduction

# Does adjudication cause you stress?

## Why?

- Can be a high-stress situation, particularly in certain geographic locations
- Directors may be apprehensive or anxious
- Think of adjudication as an opportunity to shine!
- **What other educators have to regularly publicly display their students' work?**

# Why do we take our groups to adjudication?

- Are we simply gluttons for punishment?
- Accountability
- Credibility
- Are adjudicated events a requirement by your district or administration?

# When did adjudication become so serious?

- Verbiage
- “Festival” vs “LGPE” or “MPA”
  
- Is your adjudication public or private (“In-house”)?
- Music educator association sponsored - State or regional
- ASTA’s NOF, Music For All, etc.
- A for-profit festival or travel company

# Education & Advocacy

- Tell other teachers, admin, parents, community-talk it up and make it a big deal
- Share the importance of adjudication with your audiences
  - “This is our version of the standardized test...”
    - “Except not everyone takes the same test, we can’t go back and change our answers, and we are held to a higher expectation/standard”



# Pre-Preparation

# Repertoire Selection

*What drives your rep selection?*

- Balance of instruments
- Ability level of a section
- Balancing/Contrasting: Tempo/Key/Style/Time Period/Composer/Publisher variety
- Selecting repertoire from underrepresented composers
- Select repertoire to match your ensemble's strengths/weaknesses
  - Example: Instrumentation is 10/10/8/2/5 - Don't program "Dos Fuegos"



# Other program factors to consider

- Over-programming
- Letting students have a say - promotes ownership!
  - Pick several pieces from the required list that are similar and give students a choice
  - Inform studios of the process for picking music and programming (ie. "We must have a balance program with a lyrical piece in the middle.")
- Program to their ability - remember the Zone of Proximal Development

# Score Preparation

- Mark your score so that you can be prepared for every rehearsal
- Do you know *every* part?
  - Determine if there will be rhythmic or technical difficulties for particular sections?
- Can you conduct the piece from memory?

# Listening

- Find good demo recordings
- Find not-so-good online/uploaded recordings on YouTube
- Let students be the judges,
- **Have your ears become numb?**
- “Cleanse” with a high quality live performance or recording!

# The adjudication form

- Varies slightly from state to state and event to event
- Share with your students so they know what they are being evaluated on
  - Students need to know what they are trying to accomplish!
- If you perform for parents before the actual event, provide them with a copy of the adjudication sheet.
  - Copy on the back side of your program.

# Have a plan!

- How much time do you have? What do your kids know/not know?
- Planning your “units”
  - Daily/weekly/Monthly plans
- How will you make sure your students know their music in time to be able to polish it?
- **Ultimately, who is responsible for the quality of a musical performance?**

# Rehearsals/Preparation

# Types of rehearsals

- Daily/regular rehearsals
- After school/before school rehearsals/sectionals
- Sectionals during class
- teacher help sessions (individuals or small groups)
- peer help sessions
- home practice vlogs
- home practice records
- “living room concerts”
- Pre-Adjudication Camp/Clinics
  - Sectionals
  - Guest conductor clinics — they will hear things you might miss!
  - Be open to different ideas
  - Include fun activities and FOOD!!

Always keep music making a  
priority!



# Providing rehearsal feedback

- Be honest with your students!
- Students can read through a lot more than most people think and sugar coating every comment will only make students lose respect for you.
- At the same time, if you are always critical and negative, your students will lose confidence and motivation.
- Balance is key!

# Getting students to see the big picture

- Allowing your students to understand the big picture = **THE SCORE**
- Scan with phone or copy machine to PDF
- Digital Projection
  - iPad
  - Use Document camera to display hard copies
- Scanned copies for their access online



# Don't lose sight of technique time!

- Keep technique at the top of your priority list
  - Use a method book and rote warm-ups daily
- Use Michael Allen daily warm-ups or another book to focus on technique
  - Tuning
  - Tone
  - Finger patterns, rhythms
  - Articulations

# Watching/Following the Conductor

- Stop counting off!!
- Request that students check in with director (eyes up!) at least once a measure, preferably on downbeat or when you have an entrance
- Simultaneously students must:
  - Watch
  - Breathe
  - Move
  - Count
  - Listen
  - Adjust

# Tone

- Model, model, model to show characteristic tone
- Listen
- Balancing the bowing factors - WASP2
  - Weight, Angle, Speed, Placement on String, Placement on Bow

# Intonation

- Tuning is CRITICAL.
- Don't be the orchestra that "tunes" but doesn't!
  - Gives you zero chance of playing in tune!!
- Using fingerboard markers
  - May need to add them back for special notes or to mark a position
- Teaching kids to adjust
- Don't forget that tone impacts intonation!!

# Rhythm & Ensemble

- Vertical alignment of rhythm
  - Align beat 1
- Students knowing their role
  - What is your role? Are you accompaniment, rhythm, melody, etc.?
- Matching articulations
  - Match bow length, placement, etc.

# Balance

- Can sometimes be tricky in school ensembles
- Should you use Violin III?
- Stronger sections vs. weaker or timid sections



# Musical Interpretation

- Find models to follow or learn from
- You can't always "win" - others will have different opinions.
  - Musical decisions can be subjective
  - Whatever you decide, have a reason!

# Musicianship

- Our ultimate goal is to play musically.
- This is a high-level goal but students need to understand the difference between real music making and playing notes/rests.
- I would prefer students attaining mastery over struggling to get by!

# Some rehearsal strategies to break the monotony:

- Quartets/Quintets day
- Mix up day: Let kids sit in different place, but not next to someone with their same part (they hear things!)
- Practice the end, then work backwards (this works well when students know their music)
- Record and listen back - microphones don't lie!
- Mix up the sections: Put your leaders in the back or the middle.
- Pair up strong and weak players: builds confidence and also camaraderie
- Use accompaniments to help with rhythms and confidence
- Use drones to reinforce intonation in sections
- Create section track videos for students to practice at home (with you)
- Use metronome, but be careful students don't become reliant on it
- Practice memorizing measures, particularly those where there are tempo changes, rit., etc.

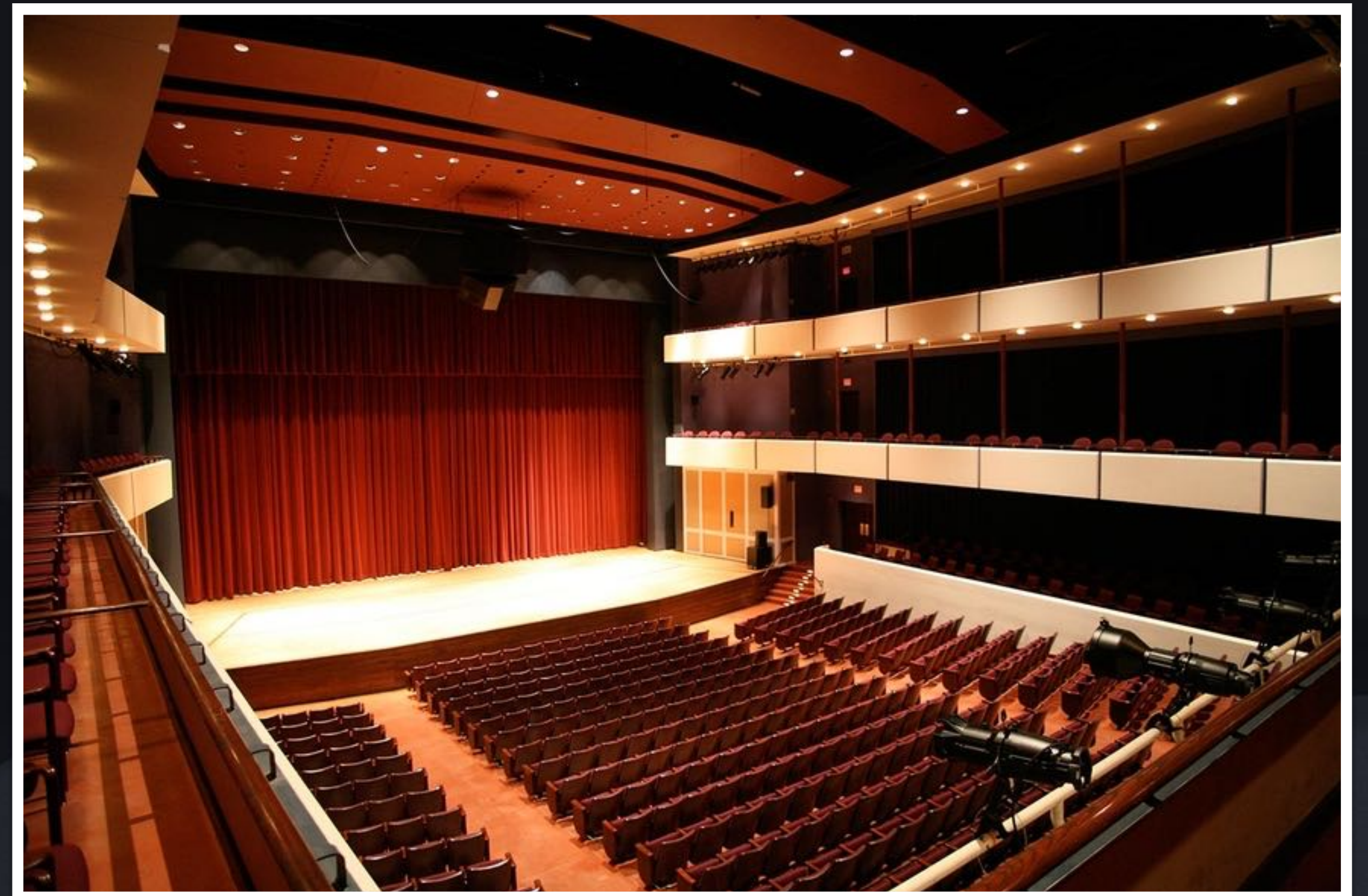
AS YOU APPROACH YOUR  
PERFORMANCE DATE...

# Preparing the logistics

- Set up/Seating charts
  - Have a crew of students to set up that know where everything goes
  - Do you need: piano, percussion, solo stands, etc.?
  - Do you have an special needs or modifications?
- Order scores **early**, or try to borrow them from colleagues (no copies!)
  - Don't forget to number the measures of your scores!

# Performance venues

- Explore the venue beforehand, if possible
- Ask others about the stage/hall to determine if you may need to make adjustments (seating, placement, etc.)



# Stage presence

- “Look as good as we will sound”
- First impressions are so important!
- Uniforms
  - A complete uniform
  - Whatever you decide, make them all match
- Conductor’s attire
  - How do you look from the back???

# Demeanor

- Entering/exiting stage
- After the performance and before sight-reading
  - “We aren’t done yet!”
- During sight-reading
- As an audience member



# After your performance

- Clinics right after your performance
  - Clinician should be focusing on big-picture items that will carry forward
  - Will you play that music again?
- Take-aways
  - What did your students gain from the process and the adjudicated performance?

# Pre-adjudication concert

*Why do we only perform our music once??*

- Easier to be successful if the adjudicated event is not your first time performing it
  - Play for parents, video and upload
  - Play for student body (assembly, in hallways before school)
  - “Living room concerts”
- Provide students and parents with the judge’s sheet/rubric
-

Following up after adjudication

# Ratings

- Remind students that their rating is a person's one-time observance of your ensemble
- What external factors can impact a judge?
  - Politics
  - Fatigue
  - Other biases
- Superior, Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor
  - How many orchestras are truly "superior"?





# Judges

- How will you address conflicting comments/ratings from adjudicators?
- Have students listen and self-assess first, then listen to adjudicator recordings
- Judges
  - Too Easy
  - Overly Critical
- If you receive a private note from an adjudicator... It can be difficult to accept constructive criticism
- Serving as a judge to your peers

# In closing...

- Don't let adjudication become the "be all end all" of your teaching
- Don't let scores determine your students or your worth
- Adjudication can be a fantastic learning experience for your students
- The outcomes can be rewarding and a motivator for your students



# Collaborating & Connecting String Communities



Attend the LIVE sessions AND watch the RECORDED sessions through December 31, 2024!

***Register now at [www.astastrings.org](http://www.astastrings.org)!***

Special Thanks!



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# Contact Me!



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