

♩ = 116

5

The ART
of
Expressing Music

♩ = 116

5

by

Edward S. Lisk

Acknowledgement

Dr. Garwood Whaley, President and Founder of Meredith Music Publications, has published my Creative Director series since 1991. I am deeply grateful to Dr. Whaley for the many years of his consistent support, encouragement, and promotion of my publications.

The Meredith Music Publishing catalog is immersed in the finest publications available for instrumental educators, conductors, and composers. The many notable authors are highly acclaimed leaders in our profession. Their publications represent the finest available in the instrumental world of music performance.

Meredith Music publications continue to make significant contributions to the excellence of instrumental music.

Supporting endorsements...

"Ed Lisk goes beyond the conventional methods of teaching. By doing so, he provides ways to produce exceptional individuals and ensembles. No one today that speaks about the mysteries of expression and music making and puts it into practical usable terms the way Ed Lisk has. This is a must read (along with his other books) for anyone in or going into the music education profession."

William Eicher, Director of Bands, Clarence High School Wind Ensemble, Clarence, NY

"It is so stimulating to read the things you write... something of substance that makes me think about things in a new way. You have done a great job of de-mystifying the natural laws of expression. Ed, this is another great contribution to our professional literature. You take on the tough topics that are so important for all of us."

***Larry R. Blocher, Ph.D., Professor and Director, School of Music,
Troy University***

"As a young director, I searched high and low for the right tools to assemble an outstanding wind ensemble. The time-tested construction techniques found in Ed Lisk's Creative Director manuals provide the blue print, assembly instructions, and troubleshooting guide for the do-it-yourself craftsman. The methods described motivated our ensembles to a previously unknown level of musical artistry, and allowed us to discover the true beauty of music."

Dr. David Kish, Director of Bands, Metropolitan State College of Denver

"Ed Lisk is without question a master teacher, unselfish mentor, and first and foremost a musician of knowledge. The books he has authored on rehearsals, pedagogy, and organization reveal and explain many mysteries of musicianship. His knowledge should be required reading for the college music education major and definitely be found on every teacher's bookshelf."

Mark Kelly, Director of Bands Emeritus, Bowling Green State University

"All I can say is WOW. This MUST be required reading for all college pedagogy courses. The information you give for the young, and one-day insightful conductors, is profound. Your clear demonstration and explanations on how to make a "good" ensemble great are incredible. Thanks again Ed, its so easy to LOVE learning by reading such great, clear, and concise material. Thank you for inspiring me to be a teacher"

Walter F. Avellaneda, Jr., Composer

I have been a professional free-lance flutist in Philadelphia for over twenty years.

Two years ago I decided that music was not sustaining me anymore... either practically or aesthetically. I was tired of the inconsistent work and the mediocre performances. I am still awestruck by the way you managed to pull some sixty people together to create such oneness of sound and purity. There is no mystery, I suppose. The group of musicians you worked with that weekend put the music first... what my former colleagues could learn from you!!! You helped me remember the joy of music and how it can transform time and be a thing of utter beauty!".....With sincere thanks, ***Colette Le Fever, Philadelphia, PA***

"I say without a doubt that last week was one of the most incredible experiences that I've ever had. The clouds parted, the sun shone through, and I'm more excited about teaching than ever before. So, thank you for teaching a class like this where we learn how to explain and teach all of the truly important things in music. Thanks also for exposing people to Steve Melillo. I thought that in-tune music was powerful until I was in that room with two very in-tune human beings. Multiply that energy by an entire ensemble that's completely in-tune with the philosophy and, well, the experience was life-changing. Thank you again. I will always count you as one of my greatest teachers."

Aaron Datsko, HS Band Director-Pennsylvania

"This workshop was one of the finest examples of professional development training in music education that I have ever experienced. Mr. Edward S. Lisk, a master musician/teacher, organized a marvelous presentation over the thirty hours that covered the true essentials of successful instrumental music teaching. Mr. Lisk is a person who passionately believes in the power of music, and he speaks with a confident authority about the importance of instrumental music. Mr. Lisk is the embodiment of the ideal music supervisor, a person who provides a nurturing guidance to his staff who is professionally inspirational. You won't find Mr. Lisk apologizing to anyone about why music exists in our schools!"

Thomas Reynolds, Music Director - Bromfield School District, Harvard, MA

The ART of Expressing Music

Edward S. Lisk

Introduction..... 1

*“Through music study, students experience the
beauty of musical expression...*

***Beauty...compassion...feeling...appreciation...
sensitivity... love...peace...tolerance...sympathy...
warmth...empathy...self-esteem...cooperation...respect...***

These are but a few ‘living or life priorities’ in music study!

No other discipline addresses these

‘living or life priorities’ found within music.”

~ Edward S. Lisk

Chapter 1 -Musical Artistry: The Energy of Musical Thought..... 3

“We are trained to talk about every detail of notation and technique, but not feeling. Music Education has approached music as a technical discipline, but has left the most important part of music, its ability to communicate emotions and feelings, as an impenetrable mystery.”

~ David Whitwell, Music Education for the Future

“The images revealed from our souls, when we experience great music, come from deep within our personal selves. The performance of music touches all our senses. But if all we visually see is a recitation by musicians with their heads in the score, then our experience, though lovely, may be severely limited.”

~ Bud Beyer

“A musical mind is sensitized to the beginning of sound (as it enters from silence)...passing through to the right side of sound (as it moves into silence)...these are the two critical points of an extended note, a phrase, or a rhythm pattern”

~ Edward S. Lisk

Chapter 2-The Feeling of Nuance and Inflection..... 8

“So much of the research on musical expertise has looked for accomplishment in the wrong place, in the facility of fingers rather than the expressiveness of emotion.”

~David Levitin, This Is Your Brain on Music

“Feelings are mental associations and reactions to emotions, and are subjectively being influenced by personal experience, beliefs, and memories. A feeling is the mental portrayal of what is going on in your body when you have an emotion and is the byproduct of your brain perceiving and assigning meaning to the emotion.”

~ Debbie Hampton, The Best Brain Possible

“Depth of expression is not a talent. The real talent that leads to musical expression is intelligence. The development of expression is the development of the intellect.”

~ David McGill

Chapter 3- Artistic Imagination and Creativity 14

“I have always been in favor to play as I think. Of course, the ideal combination would be to play with thinking and intelligent feeling.”

~Marcel Tabuteau

“I use improvisation for many reasons. It can spark rich ideas for composition, for it gives us a more intimate sense of raw materials of sound. It provides an astonishing physical and emotional release, and helps develop the kind of spontaneity that can transform the way we play Bach or Mozart or Bartok. It creates a more direct personal relationship with an instrument that can melt square-shouldered bravado into keen-eared listening.”

~ Eloise Ristad

Chapter 4 - “HOW CAN A CAGED MAN TEACH YOU TO FLY?”..... 19

“What we are shows through what we do. What we know or do not know is an important part of our creative work. We cannot hide our knowledge or lack of knowledge. We are the sum total of everything we have done or not done. It is the very business of the arts (music) to create image-laden life in the works we present.”

~ Bud Beyer

Chapter 5- Artistic Expression: Absorbed Immersion..... 22

“The more I live the life of music, the more I am convinced that it is the freely imaginative mind that is at the core of all vital music making and music listening.”

~ Aaron Copeland

“The images revealed from our souls, when we experience great music, come from deep within our personal selves. The performance of music touches all our senses.”

~ Bud Beyer

“There is no known method of guaranteeing that my interpretation will be a truer one than yours. I can only recommend reliance on one’s own instinctive comprehension of the un-verbalized symbolism of musical sounds.”

~ Aaron Copland

Chapter 6 – Lyrical Conducting: Gestures and Motions..... 25

“It is always the most essential task to find individual gestures that communicate conductor’s unique artistic understanding of the music.”

~ Ilya Musin

“Gestures born out of need that arises only during music making. They cannot be determined in advance.”

~ Erich Leinsdorf

“All we actually need is an image in the mind, a precise image of style and emotion regarding how the next moment should sound, and the brain will produce the musically appropriate gesture.”

~ David Whitwell

“As you prepare all exercises and music examples, you must not think about gesture, nor think about how your arms move, nor the that matter, think about anything other than the sound in the room at the time it is being created.”

~ James Jordan

Chapter 7 – Perception of Musical Feeling..... 31

“Language lives or dies by inflection. Flat, uninflected speech is instantly tedious and tiresome to focus on. Highly inflected speech is effortless to pay attention to. Music is the same. Sense and meaning in both language and in music come from the appropriate grouping of words and notes into phrases or gestures which seem to go together, but only when the grammatical sense for each word or note is considered and “leaned” on or stressed to emphasize the intended meaning. Metrical exactitude in musical performance guarantees that most listeners are barred from experiencing the spiritual essence of great music.”

~ Marianne Ploger, Belmont University

Chapter 8 - Preparing for Rehearsal..... 34

“There is no known method of guaranteeing that my interpretation will be a truer one than yours. I can only recommend reliance on one’s own instinctive comprehension of the un-verbalized symbolism of musical sounds.”

~ Aaron Copland

FINALE..... 38

Bibliography..... 39

About the Author 40

Introduction

*“Through music study, students experience the
beauty of musical expression...*

***Beauty...compassion...feeling...appreciation...
sensitivity... love...peace...tolerance...sympathy...
warmth...empathy...self-esteem...cooperation...respect...***

*These are but a few ‘living or life priorities’
in music study!*

*No other discipline addresses these
‘living or life priorities’ found within music.”*

~ Edward S. Lisk

My fifty-plus years of teaching, professional performance, and conducting provide the basis for many unique musical concepts and instructional techniques found in my publications. My career has been a most rewarding experience while being immersed in the beautiful world of music. A most intriguing experience was communicating music’s emotions and feelings through my teaching and guest conducting. Throughout my lifelong commitment to the beautiful language of music, my study and research were based on what I was taught and what I was not taught regarding the emotions and feelings of musical expression.

Many rewarding experiences came from presenting clinics and guest conducting throughout the nation, Canada, and Australia. Throughout these extensive travels, I was always intrigued when I asked questions about musical expression, and the varied responses band directors would provide. It was obvious directors were reserved when attempting to describe or perform with expressive musical results.

I devoted many years of study regarding how students learn to increase their knowledge base with various subjects. The most significant information came from my research on various learning styles, philosophy, and intelligence. It has been a career devoted to such research and approaches that opened many “doors” that led to success for student instrumentalists.

Early in my career I became impatient with many standard teaching techniques I learned during my preparation program to become a music educator. It seemed my students progressed slowly when I implemented conventional approaches. It was at this time I stepped aside from many of the typical methods, and the evolution of the *Creative Director Series* began. I suggest you read the publications available in my *Creative Director Series* as each

publication expands the many concepts and techniques that will compliment your instructional approaches for the truth of musical expression and performance.

My intention with this publication is to expand a greater awareness to the mysterious nature of musical “feeling” through performance. Many “words” and publications have been written and taught associated with musical expression and feelings. Teaching musical feeling requires a deep awareness of understanding beyond the signs and symbols of notation and musical sensitivity. I encourage you to read and reflect upon my writing with an open mind and to question how you have learned to approach teaching musical expression, and how we teach the emotion and feeling of music.

Herman Scherchen states in his *Handbook of Conducting*, “*Feeling that which is not felt on the inside cannot be demonstrated on the outside.*”

Chapter 1

Musical Artistry: The Energy of Musical Thought

“We are trained to talk about every detail of notation and technique, but not feeling. Music Education has approached music as a technical discipline, but has left the most important part of music, its ability to communicate emotions and feelings, as an impenetrable mystery.”

~ David Whitwell, Music Education for the Future

“The images revealed from our souls, when we experience great music, come from deep within our personal selves. The performance of music touches all our senses. But if all we visually see is a recitation by musicians with their heads in the score, then our experience, though lovely, may be severely limited.”

~ Bud Beyer

“A musical mind is sensitized to the beginning of sound (as it enters from silence)... passing through to the right side of sound (as it moves into silence)... these are the critical points of an extended note, or a phrase”

~ Edward S. Lisk

Many clinics, workshops, and music education courses, suggest various responses to the interpretation of the signs and symbols surrounding musical notation. Such adherence to the musical signs and symbols frequently leads to a non-expressive performance as the focus is consumed with the precision of notation. The signs and symbols have little meaning until they are embellished through nuance and inflection with the sounds of a musical performance connected to the musician or conductors' expressive feelings.

Students practice many hours abiding by every sign and symbol while attempting to be expressive. By observing every detail in a final performance of a solo, or, a large ensemble often leaves a result that is lacking in true felt expression (feeling within the individual). The uniqueness of true felt expression has been limited throughout our many years of study, practice, and schooling. It is this true felt expression that communicates with the musicians and listeners, as we evolve into an expressive musician and conductor. Without true felt expression, the energy, and feeling of music are not a part of artistic performance. True felt expression is

spontaneous as it is the unique nuance and inflection projected by the individual musician or conductor to create a meaningful performance.

When I pursued the life of a professional musician, I was trained to respond strictly to the written notation surrounded by the various signs and symbols that, for example, dictated volume, articulation, and tempo variations. If I precisely followed the notation, I was guaranteed a superior rating or grade. Ratings and grades were high priorities while studying and practicing to become a musician. In most school programs, emphasis is placed on reading and responding specifically to notation with less attention to musical flow and expressive qualities. The performance priority was to be exact with notation, and to rely less on the importance of expression. It was the “rating” or numerical score for such a performance that determined the success of an individual student musician. As David Whitwell stated, “Music education has approached music as a technical discipline, but has left the most important part of music, its ability to communicate emotions and feelings, as an impenetrable mystery.”

The author and scholar David Levitin made a surprising statement in his publication; *This Is Your Brain on Music*. He cites a condition that exists in our universities today. On page 208, Dr. Levitin writes, “So much of the research on musical expertise has looked for accomplishment in the wrong place, in the facility of fingers instead of the expressiveness of emotion.” He stated he recently asked the dean of one of the top music schools in North America about this paradox. “At what point in the curriculum is emotion and expressiveness's taught?” Her answer was that they aren't taught. “There is so much to cover in the approved curriculum, she explained, repertoire, ensemble, and solo training, sight singing, sight reading, music theory—that there simply isn't time to teach expressivity.” David Levitin responded with, so how do we get expressive musicians? Her answer, “Some of them already come in knowing how to move a listener. Usually, they've figured it out themselves somewhere along the line.” She further stated, “Occasionally, if there's an exceptional student, there's time during the last part of their last semester to coach them on emotion.” David Levitin goes on further to say, “The music teacher does not discuss how to move the feelings of the listener. That is, emotions in music are not taught as the natural purpose and object of music communication, but only as an element of individual technique. The central purpose of music is to communicate feeling to a listener, yet we do not teach this.”

This leads me to question, is musical expression so vague and difficult to teach? I can't recall any of my private teachers ever speaking about musical feeling and expression. They only told me to play with "more feeling" with precise performance of the notation. I felt this was a near impossibility to respond to such a statement. Which was more important, playing with feeling, or precise response to notation? Was it possible to be consumed with note and rhythmic precision while simultaneously focused on expressive playing with feeling?

When attending a concert, I anticipate hearing music that communicates the uniqueness of the musicians and conductor's interpretation through feeling and emotion with the literature being performed (the composer's intentions). It is very easy to connect with a performance that is surrounded by *spontaneous true felt expression* by the shaping of phrases, rhythmic and harmonic colors. When listening to band concerts, many performances are what I refer to as being "sound-alike" bands. "Sound-alike" bands are those that adhere specifically to every notated musical detail. A performance that is consumed with a response to specific notation is often a contrived performance. In addition, conductors that have every gesture programmed and imposed on the musical performance, denies the natural beauty of music. To uncover the beauty of musical feeling, all a band director has to do is to observe some of our greatest orchestral conductors who move freely through non-programmed gestures as a response to the literature being performed.

Marianne Ploger, Professor at Blair School of Music, writes in her wonderful document, *The Craft of Musical Communication*, "Every note played in a way that is predictable creates stasis. In stasis, there is an absence of tension and, consequently, listening further to what is being played is pointless. Should performers fail to understand the entasis (an ancient Greek term meaning tensioning) technique, the result is deadly because it virtually guarantees that the audience will be prevented from really paying attention to the music." She further states, "Speech (music) that is delivered in a metrically perfect manner has the power to cause the listener's brain to shutdown and cease processing the meaning of what is being said...all within a few seconds of hearing such speech. The human brain needs the condition of constant or stable irregularity for it to remain alert and attentive." Thus, the freedom of musical thought and expression is the priority and anything "delivered in a metrically perfect manner has the power to cause the listener's brain to shutdown and cease processing the meaning of what is being played."

Marianne Ploger's writings are profound. Her statements reflect a condition that we not often observe in a rehearsal. We frequently see and hear rehearsals where the director is striving for precise note and rhythmic accuracy with the use of an amplified metronome coupled with isolating specific notes as not being in tune and responding to an electronic tuner. As she states, "Speech (music) that is delivered in a metrically perfect manner has the power to cause the listener's brain to shutdown. Learning to play music exactly according to a metronome is the major cause of performance anxiety." Such rigidity in musical performance is against the natural flow and beauty of music as it is the musical thought which must flow; the notes are necessary only to carry that flow and feeling. Notable conducting professor Ilya Musin states in his publication, *The Language of Conducting Gesture*, "Time beating is often perceived as a skill that does not require a high level of manual technique, therefore it is generally not considered to be an artistic activity." He goes on further stating, "time beating is the essence of conducting and differentiated it from one's "lack of expressive gestures."

The nuance of notes, creates meaning, along with rhythmic nuance, and the movement of harmonic progressions. The subtle tendencies and nuance of notes, rhythms, and harmonic progressions are all perceived in the thought process and must extend from conductor to ensemble to elicit feeling. As a musician and conductor, we must understand that once notes, rhythms, and harmonic progressions are strictly programmed without being immersed in feeling, artistic expression no longer is an ingredient of a unique musical performance. I often refer to such performances as a "paint by number" exercise. Don't go outside the lines or boundaries of notation is similar to *painting pictures by the number* and not spilling the colors beyond the lines. We see the vivid difference between an artist's painting and the rigidity of a "paint by number" picture. The same holds true for a musical performance. Music is sound moving in and out of silence. Music dissolves the boundaries of notation. As music moves into silence, it is much like an artist's brush lifting off the canvas into silence. Note resonance and decay suspends the performers thought and the listeners response into silence, surrounding the beauty of artistic performance.

Music is much like our language. When we speak, our words and gestures are activated through emotions and inflections to create meaning for the listener. The only difference with music and language is that the signs and symbols are different. The rhythm patterns in musical notation, dictate the flow of sounds. When speaking, our speech is rhythmical. It is enhanced

with nuance and inflection to create understanding. Language without nuance and inflections is expressionless and difficult to comprehend, just as it is with music. Music must say something. Notes remain trivial until they are animated with feeling and spirit. I often speak of square notes. Don't play square notes. Square notes lack personality and are uncharacteristic to the style of music. Square notes are the exactness of musical notation. All notes must have *life*. They must be energized with nuance and inflection. Audiences like to listen to music that is animated and highly expressive. If we were taught in our musical upbringing about the similarities of language and music, maybe we would have many more expressive performances. David McGill states in his wonderful text, *Sound in Motion*, "The spoken line is the template for the musical line."

Now, as I reflect upon my career of musical performance, the success of our many years of study and practice were based on accuracy through numerical scores and evaluations for a performance. I share two statements by notable scholars and researchers regarding numerical grades. When I read these statements, they triggered many thoughts regarding my teaching of young students. Researcher David Langford states, "a grade can be regarded only as an inadequate report of an inaccurate judgment by a biased and variable judge of the extent to which a student has attained an undefined level of mastery of an unknown proportion of an indefinite amount of material." Alfie Kohn, notable author and lecturer states, "A teacher will give two different grades for a single piece of work submitted at two different times; the variation is even greater when the work is evaluated by more than one teacher."

Throughout our careers as professional educators, the discipline of musical performance is often immersed in adjudication, music festivals, contests, and the many performing venues surrounded by numerical grades determining various levels of achievement and excellence. Little is said regarding musical artistry as it's vagueness and teacher abilities to bring such musical experiences into a student's musical life seem to be limited.

Chapter 2

The Feeling of Nuance and Inflection

“So much of the research on musical expertise has looked for accomplishment in the wrong place, in the facility of fingers rather than the expressiveness of emotion.”

~ David Levitin, *This Is Your Brain on Music*

“Feelings are mental associations and reactions to emotions, and are subjective being influenced by personal experience, beliefs, and memories. A feeling is the mental portrayal of what is going on in your body when you have an emotion and is the byproduct of your brain perceiving and assigning meaning to the emotion.”

~ Debbie Hampton, *The Best Brain Possible*

“Depth of expression is not a talent. The real talent that leads to musical expression is intelligence. The development of expression is the development of the intellect.”

~ David McGill

My teachers often said to be more expressive, but I was never taught what “more expressive” truly meant. It was a mystery not only to me, but I assumed for my teacher. Throughout my career studying, conducting, and teaching music, I have witnessed many attempts to define musical expression. It seems that the conventional way is to describe a “story/image/picture” for the students to connect with in their attempts to be expressive. Such attempts to describe expressive performance tend to be quite shallow. Throughout our preparation in becoming a conductor/teacher, the expectations of musical expression were often vague, unclear, and more often, not discussed. What I have discovered is that the depth and study of artistry far exceeds the musical experiences of many musicians and conductors.

Emotions and feelings are the mental forces of thought that give energy and meaning to musical performance. Feelings are created through thought and then immersed into a personal embellished musical expression determined by the flow, intensity, and relief of the phrase direction, rhythmic combinations, and harmonic progressions. We have feelings that first shape our mental and physical actions of thought that manifest as music or speech. Feelings are unique to every musician and cannot be copied or reproduced. Once copied and reproduced, the result holds little meaning or value. Feelings in music must be experienced and exercised spontaneously when preparing for a performance. Without such spontaneous musical experience, feelings will eventually atrophy and gradually decline because of neglect. No longer

are we able to sense or feel any personal connection with the sounds being produced. The results under such conditions are simply a technical exercise.

The most moving performances by a musician or ensemble are those that are spontaneously felt and projected to the listener. This spontaneous felt expression captures and connects the listener with the performance. Such musical results are beyond words as we attempt to describe the intrinsic occurrence of musical expression and feeling. Ask a musician or conductor to describe the emotions and feelings when playing Grainger's Irish Tune. I can assure you that the description will be surprising and different with every musician.

Bud Beyer states, "as musicians we should realize that our imaginations are perfect rehearsal rooms. What will the musician find inside those notes that no one has ever seen or heard before?" The important words are "what expressive meaning will the musician find inside the notes?" With so many years of practice many musicians and conductors continue to search to find what is "inside the notes." This is where the mystery of musical expression is hidden.

We attempt to explain the feelings of what happens "inside the notes." Feelings are shaped and guided by life experiences. Feelings originate and are internalized with sadness, happiness, anger, love, and beauty. So many writings have created artificial results from telling descriptive stories about imagined pictures with little or no results. Frequently, when attending a concert, the conductor describes a scene or story that surrounds the musical performance. Must a listener specifically recall the stories presented by the conductor, or the images to create a response? Do they sense the musicians uniquely imagined beauty through sound? Leonard B. Meyer states in his text, *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, "Verbalization of emotions, particularly those evoked by music, are usually deceptive and misleading." Bud Beyer states, "The note or action means little by itself, for they are all just vessels that will carry whatever we choose to put into them." It is the ability of the musician or conductor's intense immersion of their musical mind to be uniquely creative, and to surround the nuance and inflections of notes within a composition. The perception of nuance and inflection are only in our thoughts and those thoughts produce the musical result.

As we speak, our words are surrounded by nuance and inflection. We read or hear the words and what we perceive creates meaning for the words. When applied to music, we have difficulty defining instructional techniques to teach nuance of inflection. We can only demonstrate for students and hopefully they feel what they hear. Nuance and inflection can

only be presented in how we speak or read. It is this inner perception of “feeling” of nuance and inflection that creates musical meaning.

We must have an absorbed immersed response to the sounds of musical notation to influence our emotional actions and feelings as projected to the listener. These are the “feelings” that prompt a worthy musical result. As teachers and conductors, we have difficulty teaching “emotions and feelings” within a musical composition. There are no specifics as emotions and feelings are unique to the individual musician. A multitude of signs and symbols that exist has various subtle meanings: accent, legato, ritard, accelerando, etc. None of which provide any clue how such signs connect with the intrinsic meaning of feeling. It is our deep awareness and sensitivity to what we are thinking (metacognition), while playing the notes, melodies, rhythm and harmonic progressions that creates musical aesthetic. It is impossible to have any type of sign or symbol that would indicate the subtleties of nuance and inflection.

Igor Stravinsky makes a powerful statement that prompts thoughtful musical energy. He states, “All music is nothing more than a succession of impulses that converge towards a definite point of repose.” Such statements, prompted my design of what I refer to as the Natural Laws of Musical Expression. After reading the many publications that address the complexities of musical expression, I realized the methods were directed to the technique of conducting with less attention to musical expression.

After many years of conducting, performance, and teaching, I arrived at three simple concepts that energize melodic, harmonic, and rhythm patterns.

The three four-word concepts are:

1. Short searches for long
2. Low searches for high
3. High searches for low

Musical examples

1. **Low to High**
S.....L

2. **High to Low**
S.....L

3. **Low to High**
S.....L

4. **High to Low**
S.....L

5. **Low to High**
S.....L

The word *searches* implies energy, motion, and forward *thinking* movement searching for a point of repose. *Short searches for long*. *Long* is the arrival note or *point of repose/relief*. *Low searches for high*. *High* is the *point of repose/relief*. *High searches for low*. *Low* is the *point of repose/relief*.

When applying this concept to phrases, determine the low and high note in the phrase. The notes between create the feeling of energy and motion moving to the high note. The notes between create the *tension* and suspension. The arrival of the high note is the *relief* of the phrase or point of repose. Robert Shaw stated, “A phrase is departing from, passing through, and arriving at” to create musical meaning. Applying this statement to low searching for high simply means departing from the low note, passing through the notes between and arriving at the high note. When a phrase is perceived in this manner, subtle nuances and inflections in anticipation of the point of repose enhance the artistic interpretation. This energy of thought must point to something, creating forward motion/energy, intensity, and direction. It is inherent that thoughtful/thinking energy activates musical movement; thus, shaping the direction of a phrase from beginning to end or point of repose.

Musical Examples:

The image displays two musical examples with guitar tablature. The first example is for the piece "Body and Soul" (1st and 2nd versions) and includes a guitar solo. The second example is for "My Honey Love" (Intermezzo) and also includes a guitar solo. Both examples feature standard musical notation on a treble clef staff and guitar tablature below it. The tablature uses letters 'L' and 'H' to denote fret positions and arrows to indicate string direction. The solos are marked with a '7-10' barre and a '12' barre, indicating specific fret positions.

The best example of expression and musical feeling that I can share with you is to listen to a notable jazz musician play a beautiful ballad such as Body and Soul, Georgia, or Angel Eyes. There is a deep and authentic connection between the musician and musical expression. Jazz plays a significant role in expressive playing. There is a spontaneous connection to freedom, passion, and sensitivity, coupled with dynamic and technical variations. A jazz musician is totally consumed with the natural tendencies of expression with feeling in all styles of playing. The freedom of expression is not confined to notation, but involves the interpretation of notation.

When listening to a jazz musician play a beautiful ballad, the playing vacillates before or after the beat and never with it. Giovanni Tosi writes in his treatise, *The Art of the Florid Song*, “the singer should endeavor to sing before the beat or after the beat. He further states that “Bel Canto means beautiful singing and the vacillations he describes give the feeling of flow and freedom.” Exactly what the jazz musician does in all their performing.

As a teacher, I taught my students that musical meaning was the “energy of musical thought.” The energy of musical thought triggered the students thinking beyond notation. It focused their attention to *how feeling was within their mind and what they were thinking and how they were perceiving the sounds and musical flow being created*. If such thought and mental energy are only focused to strictly rhythms and notes, a very sterile result is heard.

In the next chapter, I share a process for developing expressive playing for student musicians. This is a process that is not typically presented in our preparation when becoming music educators. The outlined procedures are what I refer to as Free Form Expression. This is one of the most important musical experiences for young students. After reading many textbooks, I found the results responding to simply musical signs and symbols were quite sterile, without any connection or feeling for a musical phrase. *What are we searching for with feeling in music?* Often this resulted in contrived expression, with the belief that the uniqueness of musical expression cannot be programmed. Communicating “musical feeling” with students through “free form expression” became a part of my instructional program. The instructional process immediately eliminated the many barriers students experience when trying to *play with more feeling*.

Musical feeling is unique for every student, musician, and conductor. Their musically expressive phrases change dramatically when immersed in free form expression. The mystery no longer existed, and the feeling or connection was made between composer, conductor, performer, and audience. Beautiful music was made. Notable conductor, Max Rudolf states that, “The intrinsic meaning of music, the subtleness of a phrase, or the dramatic impact of an emotional outburst may not be felt by all players unless the conductor possesses the suggestive power of revealing what is “behind the notes.” How to do this cannot be taught. Each conductor must find his own way to project his feelings, by virtue of his personality.”

Chapter 3

Artistic Imagination and Creativity

“I have always been in favor to play as I think. Of course, the ideal combination would be to play with thinking and intelligent feeling.”

~ Marcel Tabuteau

“I use improvisation for many reasons. It can spark rich ideas for composition, for it gives us a more intimate sense of raw materials of sound. It provides an astonishing physical and emotional release, and helps develop the kind of spontaneity that can transform the way we play Bach or Mozart or Bartok. It creates a more direct personal relationship with an instrument that can melt square-shouldered bravado into keen-eared listening.”

~Eloise Ristad

Throughout my fifty-year career, I found that our instructional programs from elementary through university have a huge gap regarding the awareness and teaching of musical expression. This gap leaves so many unanswered questions regarding the process and techniques to bring about a legitimate response and performance to the truth of musical expression (more than simply responding to signs and symbols). My teaching and conducting career developed a keen awareness to what, why, and how a teacher presents the deeply vague happenings of personal feelings in music that is difficult to describe through words. My statements and beliefs that surround my writings come from many hours of observing elementary through university classes, clinics, and workshops.

The beginning experiences for a young musician are best described as being consumed with the signs and symbols of musical notation. From day one, their eyes are keenly focused upon that huge circle called a whole note followed by the little black block indicating a whole rest. As they focus on each note, they dare not take their eyes off the page for fear of mistakes. As young musicians, they very seldom venture out to discover musical sounds other than what is written. Their world of music making has been dedicated to musical notation, method books, solos, and band music without ever lifting an eye off the page of notated music. Such a musical environment restricts students from the beauty and art of musical expression, and for some, throughout their entire career.

One of the most important and influential instructional programs I established in the early part of my career was based on free form expression. It basically evolved from my first

clarinet teacher who taught me the importance and skill of improvising cadenzas. This early experience led me to develop the instructional program of free form expression, something that most students and teachers do not experience. Free form expression provides young musicians with opportunities to exercise their musical imagination and creativity without musical notation. Too often the word *improvisation* is used which simply frightens students (and teachers) because *improvisation* is associated with jazz.

Throughout my travels as a clinician, I often ask a student (or director) to play a simple, beautiful lullaby. The response is always the same; the student/director is shocked to think I would request someone to play a song without notated music. This instructional process with free form expression is a critical gateway into discovering the art of musical expression without notation. This approach allows students to connect mentally and hear the sounds they are producing on their instrument and not be consumed with notation.

This simple instructional process allows the students to discover the beautiful world of musical expression that is hidden beyond the boundaries of notes and rhythm patterns. They discover the beautiful melodies that are immersed in their mind and projected into their instrument. The important point to remember when presenting free form expression is that everything the student plays will be *correct!* You will find students hesitate to take the *risk* as they have only been conditioned to respond to notation or teacher imposed directions. They frequently react with “I can’t do this without music.” The instructional process is also outlined in my recent publication, *Artistic Nuance*.

The student’s first attempt will usually start with a line of rapid notes attempting to create a melodic line. The musical result is *busy* because of their nervousness in search of correctness. This is a natural reaction. It is very important not to make any corrections, only encourage experimenting with a line of notes, as we remove the barriers of traditional instruction. This is *their* entrance into *their* musical world with the opportunity to shape melodic lines relative to *their* musical and performance experience. Believe and support their natural musical intelligence as they enter this new world of music making. Remember, everything the student plays will be correct. Don’t impose any other expectations, only encouragement.

The students’ reaction is natural. They have not had the opportunity in the lesson program to depart from notation. They never had the opportunity to rely on their personal

musical thinking patterns or concentration. By removing these natural barriers and inhibitions (along with those taught), the student is free to drift in any melodic direction with any duration of notes providing a *gateway* into discovering the art of musical expression. The fewer notes played, the more freedom they have to listen and become involved with the *feeling* of pitch and note direction. Encourage long flowing melodies in comfortable playing ranges to develop melodic coherency. This will guide them into a meaningful melody and build confidence in their very own creation. You will find that the longer the student plays a free form melodic line, that beauty and interest of the line will be very apparent. *Their natural musical intelligence comes to life with musical cohesive thought and personal expression.* This is the quickest way to teach the mental connection with musical feeling and expression beyond, the response to notation.

When introducing this approach, you should not place any emphasis on key, time signature, or rhythm demands, as is the case with some current approaches when introducing improvisation. Within a short time, your students will naturally experience success when playing free form *melodies* as they expand their creativity through scale knowledge, rhythm patterns, and various intervals as they discover their expressive possibilities.

Listed are several reasons for including this process as an important part of instrumental study for your students while shaping and connecting their melodic lines with musical feeling.

- Free form expression is an opportunity to discover one's natural musical intelligence.
- Free form expression provides an opportunity to release an individual's imagination and creativity through the sound of their musical instrument.
- Free form expression allows students to become sensitive to the feeling of resolution, moving a pitch or a series of notes within a melodic line from tension to resolution or point of repose by feeling the direction of their artistic decision.
- Free form expression provides a mind/body connection with the *inner soul* of the individual through the sound of their instrument (thinking and decision making). A departure from 'contrived' or sterile musical expression with meaningless notes.
- Free form expression provides opportunities to develop and exercise interpretation and stylistic performance. An opportunity to go beyond the written symbols of musical notation to faithfully experience the composer's musical intentions.
- Free form expression removes the inhibitions of being incorrect or the fear of risk with musical decisions. Free form expression will always be correct, unless the teacher

imposes some form of restriction or expectation. The musical statements are a result of and supported by the knowledge and skill experience of the individual.

The following sequence of events guide the student (with success) in their first attempts with their own free form melodies.

1. Ask the student to play a slow melody like a lullaby or beautiful ballad. Do not indicate any note, key, tempo, or other musical descriptor. Encourage the student to be free with their melody. This is a departure from many of the methods that suggest keys, time signature, and other musical expectations which simply intrude on the student's personal thought process.
2. Begin the melody on any comfortable pitch and 'make up' a melody (lullaby/ballad) experimenting with different notes and rhythms (do not specify notes or rhythm patterns).
3. Encourage the student to play slowly with few notes while listening to the notes moving in different directions to form melodic lines.
4. Recognize that the longer (seconds-minutes) the student plays, the musical song improves as listening becomes focused and directed to melody, note direction, and sound. Notes begin to form meaningful musical patterns and phrases. The feeling of key/tonality develops as student experiments with accidentals and notes resolve naturally. This is confidence being developed without fear.
5. As the student becomes comfortable playing simple melodies (usually after 3-5 practice sessions) suggest playing a melody that will reflect the following styles.
 - a. *A happy spirited melody*
 - b. *Sad, somber song as in losing a friend*
 - c. *Ethnic dance style (Spanish, Mexican, Latin, etc.)*
 - d. *As an eagle soaring through the mountains*
 - e. *Running away (rapid, fleeting, swirl of notes)*
 - f. *A March in the Style of John Philip Sousa*
 - g. *A melody in the style of Mozart, Bach, or other composer*

The various descriptions of melodic lines play a significant role with solo and ensemble performance with all styles of literature. You are encouraged to add to the above list as there are many more descriptions that identify various emotional and feeling states that will contribute and connect with the literature you are preparing.

Marianne Polger states that “Musical Communication, as the Art of Delivery, is the craft of handling musical materials by technical means designed to enhance the enjoyment and understanding of the meaning of music for untrained music lovers. The purpose of this craft is to touch the soul, raise the spirits, elevate the minds, and deeply move listeners with music.”

I assure you that the above outlined procedures will bring a new world of music making to your students. The results will be musically rewarding beyond the many conventional approaches.

Chapter 4

“HOW CAN A CAGED MAN TEACH YOU TO FLY?”

“What we are shows through what we do. What we know or do not know is an important part of our creative work. We cannot hide our knowledge or lack of knowledge. We are the sum total of everything we have done or not done. It is the very business of the arts (music) to create image-laden life in the works we present.”

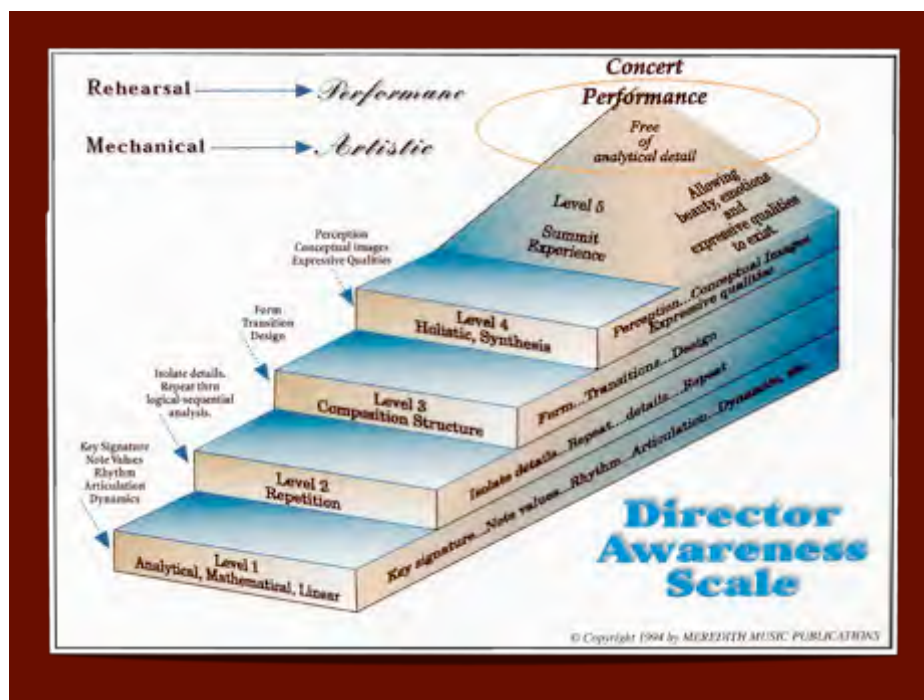
~ Bud Beyer

My good friend and notable composer Stephen Melillo, shared this statement with me: *“How Can a Caged Man Teach You To Fly?”* It is a powerful statement as one searches into the depths of musical expression. As you read this section, stop and think about what you were and were not taught when preparing to become a band director.

Recall your years attending undergraduate and graduate school. How much time, or classes, was devoted to musical expression, and teaching the emotions and feelings that surround musical interpretation? What made music a unique expressive language? The motion and beauty of musical expressive thought are not often presented, or exercised in lectures, clinics, or publications. Think about Stephen Melillo’s quote, *“How Can a Caged Man Teach You to Fly?”* If you, as musician or conductor, have not experienced true felt musical expression, are you able to teach and share the beauty surrounding the notes that create the uniqueness of music? Or are you a caged man? Without such unique expressive skills of a musician or conductor, unfortunately, the results will be a “sound alike” band - an ensemble consumed with signs and symbols, without connection to the feeling or emotion of music.

What is it that intrigues a listener when attending a concert? Are they hearing the beauty and sensitivity of music through its soaring melodies, rhythm, harmonic colors, and beautiful phrases? Are they enthralled with the spontaneous musical imagination and interpretation of what the musicians and conductor are producing or are they simply absorbed in the technical aspects of what is being performed? As I have attended many concerts, the conversations after the concert usually end up discussing intonation, dynamics, and the many sterile terms that surround notation. If expression and feelings are discussed, the conversation very seldom goes beyond the exactness of notation.

In my publications, I speak about a Director Awareness Scale. I present five levels of performance. The first level is the analytical, linear state that is focused on key signatures, note values, rhythms, articulation, dynamics, various notation to name a few. This first level and second levels are where the most time is devoted to rehearsals. The second level is devoted to repetition that isolates details through a logical, sequential analysis. Level three focuses attention to compositional structure dealing with form, transitions and compositional design. We are now moving up the scale to expressive, artistic performance with levels four and five. Level four addresses perception, conceptual images, and expressive qualities. And finally, level five is an artistic mindset referred to as being the peak or summit experience for a musician or conductor. This is where the inner feelings of beauty, emotions, and expressive qualities exist. At this level, as musicians, we are free from any analytical detail and totally absorbed and immersed in artistic expression.



Viewing the Director of Awareness Scale easily points out various degrees/levels of musical accomplishment for individual musicians. Some can perform at the artistic level while others, with less musical accomplishment, reside at the first, second and third levels. Outstanding teacher/conductors are extremely sensitive to the subtleties of artistic performance above and beyond an average teacher. Perhaps, this is why we hear so many

differences in band performances from school bands, university bands, and professional bands. Everything is determined by the depth of the conductor's musical preparation and experiences. Through music performance, we create a productive, successful, and sensitive life attainable through the fine detail of artistic production and performance. Through music study, students experience the beauty of musical expression. They become sensitive to the meaning of **beauty, compassion, feeling, appreciation, sensitivity, love, peace, tolerance, sympathy, warmth, empathy, self-esteem, cooperation, and respect**. **These are but a few "living or life priorities" hidden in music study! No other discipline addresses these "living or life priorities" found within music.** Once a school district denies the opportunity for music study, a student is lost to the whims of life's desensitizing environment. The depth, musical experience, and immersed study of the instrumental director will determine the quality and excellence of an instrumental music program. *Can a caged man fulfill the excellence of a musical program?*

Marilyn Ferguson states in her publication, *Aquarian Conspiracy*, "What is above knows what is below...but what is below does not know what is above. On climbs, one sees, one descends; one sees no longer, but one has seen. There is an art to conducting oneself in the lower regions by the memory of what one saw higher up. When one can no longer see, one can at least still know." I find this statement compelling as it makes one think about their past musical experiences in life.

Chapter 5

Artistic Expression: Absorbed Immersion

“The more I live the life of music, the more I am convinced that it is the freely imaginative mind that is at the core of all vital music making and music listening.”

~ Aaron Copeland

“The images revealed from our souls, when we experience great music, come from deep within our personal selves. The performance of music touches all our senses.”

~ Bud Beyer

“There is no known method of guaranteeing that my interpretation will be a truer one than yours. I can only recommend reliance on one’s own instinctive comprehension of the un-verbalized symbolism of musical sounds.”

~ Aaron Copland

The greatest amount of time in conducting classes is devoted to technique, score study, and the mechanics of conducting. Basic patterns and gestures are typically the priority when learning conducting movements. It is much easier to go the analytical/mechanical route and more difficult to take an expressive/emotional journey.

What are the musical priorities when creating an artistic performance? The emotional feelings that a conductor has within his mind and inner soul change constantly. This energy of thoughtful musical emotions and feelings connects us to the ensemble members. Musicians sense this connection immediately. Musical entrainment is the process of aligning pulse, conveying the feelings in the music, and sensing commonality with the ensemble. One experiences a feeling of connection with the composer and the performers by sharing emotions and the aesthetics conveyed in the music; either through its creation or through the performance itself. Thus, musical entrainment is a critical area for conducting classes to study and experience. This is the invisible and intangible mind/body connection that elevates an ensemble from programmed to musical. The director who understands this uniqueness is one capable of bringing the truth of musical expression to his students, and the beauty of music to life.

I often refer to the beautiful spontaneous gestures that prompt an artistic performance by notable conductors Leonard Bernstein, Carlos Klieber, or Daniel Barenboim. Bud Beyer

stated in his wonderful text, *Completing the Circle*, "Imagination, and the ability to create a personal and emotional relationship with all the compositions you perform is the first major step to reconnecting yourself to your work and to your performances."

Marianne Ploger, Associate Professor of Music Perception and Cognition at Blair School of Music, writes in her document, *The Craft of Musical Communication*, "Like the beating of the heart, the musical beat needs to fluctuate in speed as the emotional content of the music fluctuates. Like the naturally shifting accents in speech, musical accents need to shift according to the meaning being expressed. As soon as the beat, meter, or accents become noticeably regular and unvarying, they appear too obvious, and are in bad taste because they sound pedantic and academic."

The differences between conductors are based upon the depth of the total immersion into music and the ensemble's performance. I refer to this as being *absorbed immersion*. If absorbed immersion with the composition does not exist between conductor and ensemble, we hear an *exercise* that is removed from artistic musical expression. When a conductor is immersed in music making, the score is no longer necessary; only the soaring beautiful sounds being produced by the ensemble. Absorbed immersion is an artistic mindset. It is the peak or summit experience for a musician or conductor. With this intense immersion, we are free from any analytical detail and absorbed in shaping artistic thought, nuance, and musical expression. Absorbed immersion is where beauty, emotions, and expressive qualities exist. Larry Rachleff states, "The only reason for music is for feelings. There is no beauty without feelings." Craig Kirchoff says it best, "Conductors that think on the podium get themselves into trouble. If we are thinking all the time, we shut off completely the whole emotional sphere."

So, where does this special attribute originate? We began playing our instruments at an early age. Hour upon hour of practice, and year after year we dedicated time to our art. With this practice, what were you thinking about? How intense was your thinking? What literature were you practicing? Was it trivial or were you immersed in the masterworks? This is how the growth and depth of a musician evolves; through thoughtful and thought-filled study. Your thinking, feeling, and musical expectations are a result of these past musical learning experiences. The shaping and intensity of our musical mind is why we choose to teach music. Imagination plays a significant role in musical expression and performance, and we must exercise our imagination to evolve our creative artistic capacity. We do so without fear of being

wrong. As conductor, we lead confidently through our musicianship to convey a musical message. For the listener, expressive musical imagination creates interest, fascination, attention, passion, curiosity, and preoccupation.

When practicing, a musician's mind requires imagination to shape and design an expressive musical passage or solo. Aaron Copland states in his text, *Music and Imagination*, "The more I live the life of music the more I am convinced that it is the freely imaginative mind that is at the core of all vital music making and music listening." He goes on further stating, "An imaginative mind is essential to the creation of art in any medium, but it is even more essential in music precisely because music provides the broadest possible vista for the imagination since it is the freest, the most abstract, and the least fettered of all the arts. But as a musician, what fascinates me is the thought that by its very nature music invites imaginative treatment, and that the facts of music, so called, are only meaningful insofar as the imagination is given free play."

There are no shortcuts that can fill any musical voids. Our success depends on our musical depth from years of study, practice, reading, teaching, and simply being immersed in music. The quality of music is a major element of a worthy musical experience that opens the door for beautiful music making with students and ensembles.

Chapter 6

Lyrical Conducting: Gestures and Motions

“It is always the most essential task to find individual gestures that communicate conductor’s unique artistic understanding of the music.”

~ Ilya Musin

“Gestures born out of need that arises only during music making. They cannot be determined in advance.”

~ Erich Leinsdorf

“All we actually need is an image in the mind, a precise image of style and emotion regarding how the next moment should sound, and the brain will produce the musically appropriate gesture.”

~ David Whitwell

“As you prepare all exercises and music examples, you must not think about gesture, nor think about how your arms move, nor the that matter, think about anything other than the sound in the room at the time it is being created.”

~James Jordan

Gestures and motions amplify the feelings that a conductor holds within his soul. Some of our most notable conductors such as Leonard Bernstein and Carlos Kleiber are wonderful examples of *music that pours out of their soul*. It is obvious their conducting gestures are not programmed but spontaneous. The great Russian pedagogue Ilya Musin, stated, “I look for someone who is truly a musician inside who is able to transfer inner-feelings and tensions to an orchestra through art and hands...music is very deep in performance; there is...heart in it. That is the essence of music.”

Preparing to become a conductor is no easy responsibility. Typically, hours upon hours are consumed learning conducting patterns that are applied to all literature. Score study and working with an imaginative mind and silently conducting the imagined sounds of an orchestra or wind ensemble are the norm. Conducting classes, workshops, and clinics are devoted to teaching specific gestures and motions that are intended to project the musical intentions and desires of a conductor relative to the composition.

Such study and practice do create unusual situations as we do not have a live ensemble sound attached to our physical gestures or patterns. Ilya Musin states, “Some young conductors naively suppose that if they master time beating patterns that will guarantee rhythmic precision

of their conducting. Time beating patterns does not help the development of the feeling of rhythm. Conducting patterns and diagrams that represent them do not promote evenness of beats as some beats are distanced further from one another than others.”

Creating Expressive Gestures

“The conductor should invest time and energy into the process of developing expressive gestures in order for them to be done properly at a rehearsal. Develop gestures that emerge from the emotional nature of music.”

~ Ilya Musin

This section addresses a unique approach for creating expressive and spontaneous gestures while conducting. Otherwise known as lyrical conducting movements. These are seldom a part of most conducting classes, clinics, and workshops. Such classes are programmed to design specific movements, cues, dynamics and many indicators that often interrupt the freedom and flow of musical performance. Such conducting experiences simply lead to many look alike conductors not responding to the uniqueness of musical expression.

Ilya Musin believes that the art of conducting lay in making music visible with your hands. His approach requires a physical relationship with the music as though one was sculpting sound. He taught his students to develop gestures that emerge from the emotional nature of the music, or as he simply stated, “You have to feel the music; you have to express its character and its emotions.” His students were enamored with how he taught conducting. He dealt with two subjects: first, the music itself and its expression; secondly, how to translate this expression through physical application of a conductor’s arms, body, eyes, and mind. Each of his students were completely different. He taught his students to deeply understand the emotional content of the music they conduct and to express it with their hands. This was done by each one in accordance with his individuality. When you observe many of our national and European orchestras, you will see the individuality of each conductor, unique to oneself.

The following is a process that will significantly compliment your conducting style. The process is an exercise in developing a language of expressive gestures. To begin, select a recording of an unknown chorale, ballad, folk song, or other similar composition in an adagio tempo. Listen carefully to the flow of music. As the selection plays, make long flowing movements with arms and hands. Do not use a baton or follow any previously

learned conducting pattern. While you are listening, don't consume thoughts to any type of analytical (rhythm, melody, etc.) detail. Focus your attention to the flow of phrases, energy, tension and relief, softness, lightness, boldness, and the aggressive or gentle characteristics of the music. Try to flow with the phrases and motion of the music without any type of conducting form!

Removing the familiar conducting patterns requires making expressive movements with arms, hands, and through facial expression. A natural reaction to this exercise is feeling clumsy, as it is something seldom presented in conducting classes or clinics. The goal is to have your movements reflect a spontaneous reaction to the subtleties of nuance and inflection. Such an exercise demands and develops a closer connection with our feelings and soul, and brings us closer to authentic expression. This technique is similar to *mime*. It is a means of expression through body language with smooth, flowing movements projecting inner-feelings of musical expression. Start from a center position with hands and arms slightly extended forward, placed inside the shoulders and at eye level. Keep in contact with your face and body. The further you conduct away from center, the weaker you are and the less meaning in your gestures. All movements originate from the center of the body. Too often conductors will open their arms beyond the shoulder level which creates problems for the ensemble.

1. Make your movements with long, circular lines and shapes projecting grace, poise, and freedom with hands, fingers, and wrists. Do not use 2, 3, or 4 beat patterns.
2. When starting the music, focus on the space before your face. Bring the hands into a position in proximity to your face so feeling emanates from here. The space between the musicians and conductor is shortened by eye contact and the energy is created by your thoughts.
3. The feeling of gestures, and knowing about the V7 – I cadence is not the issue or concern, but how it feels is the priority.
4. As the music continues, focus your movements and facial expression to the following:

Touch and feel the space before you . . . the space of silence! . . .

Expand and contract the space of silence with your hands . . .

Make all movements connected, smooth, flowing . . .

Realize that hand/finger motions are enhanced with facial expressions . . .

Roll, in a circular motion as the music unfolds and expands . . .

Feel the space between the long lines . . . touch the space . . .

Speak silently through the movements of the left hand . . .

Speak silently through the movements of the right hand . . .

Feel the difference between left and right hand ...

Appeal to the imagined ensemble for more expression . . .

Neglect beat or pulse tempo... It 'lives' within the music . . .

Sense and 'feel the time that lives' within the music . . .

Float over and on top of the music and sound . . . soaring . . .

Set the tempo and let it go. Don't "beat it," show inflections, nuances, style.

5. Select a recording of a march. As the march continues, focus your movements and facial expressions to the following:

Flowing lines, implying the energy of March style . . .

Shaping phrases with hands and fingers . . .

Avoiding patterns or movements that imply pulse or tempo . . .

Emphasizing slight nuances with fingers and hand movements . . .

Creating more abrupt moves where music dictates . . .

Incorporating firm facial reaction expressing the dignity of a march . . .

Moving to a center position... imply time with slight finger movement

(Bourgeois Style, former Conductor of the US Marine Band)

Expand the spontaneous conducting exercises to other styles of literature. As you gain freedom in both expressive thought and physical movement, your conducting will convey sensitivity to the depth and feeling of expression. The line shapes and motions you create release a style of communication through your body language. If such movements are not

prompted from the beauty and passion within your mind, the long flowing lines of music will appear to be meaningless and foolish. This process is an avenue for making a mind/body connection with thoughtful feeling guided by the beauty of musical phrases. The entire process prompts a musical imagination that must be internalized. A wonderful extension of this is a YouTube video of Leonard Bernstein conducting with only facial expressions and no gesture movements. Watch and observe so that you may reflect and incorporate such nuance and inflection into your own conducting.

The young conductor is easily satisfied with the first gestures learned. The above suggested exercises bring an awareness to the various expressive motions available. Additionally, you will become aware of the countless characteristics of the composition that may be affected by the expressive gestures you employ. It is advisable that the training of young conductors include these sensitivity exercises. This will prevent the formation of bad habits, senseless and programmed repetition, and common mistakes in conducting.

Another important consideration should be given to horizontal conducting movements versus vertical patterns. There is a huge difference between these two approaches. Throughout my adjudicating travels, I often commented to bands that they needed to have more lyricism and flow within the literature they programmed. Frequently, the phrases were abrupt and projected more attention to note and rhythm patterns instead of the direction of a phrase. To help eliminate this type of note-by-note performance, I often suggested consideration be given to more horizontal flow with conducting gestures and movements. The horizontal movement is connected to the forward flow and direction of a phrase. What I am suggesting is moving away from the rigidity of patterns that convey a vertical energy to a more lyrical flowing pattern. Visually, the musician's response immediately changes as such movements prompt a lyrical energy of thought and performance that moves through music instead of simply *in* time.

Gradually start using these motions when conducting your ensemble. When you gain freedom in your conducting techniques and start perceiving and implying the motion and flow of phrases, the students will react to the visual nature, body language, and styles of your conducting and become immersed in making beautiful music! Such exercises develop the uniqueness of a conductor, and the musicianship of the ensemble. A word of caution is appropriate regarding your conducting gestures and movements. A problem I found with most students was that many of their gestures lacked a true feeling of understanding the emotions of

music. Ilya Musin believed that the only gestures possessive of great meaning are those that are a direct result of one's deep understanding of the music. Most important is that your movements not be excessive. It is easy to encourage loud and unbalanced playing through extreme movements.

James Jordan states in his text, *Evoking Sound*, "Conducting is often taught as geometric gesturing in air, devoid of sound. Taught in this manner, gesture takes on a meaningless and detached role to the music making process. Gesture learned and acquired in that fashion exhibits undue rhythmic and color restrictions upon the band because of its lack of connection to what conductors hear within themselves."

As notable conductor of the Pacific Symphony Orchestra, Carl St. Clair, stated, "it won't be a note of music until they start playing from their 'natural' expressive/emotional center...releasing, without fear, the internal energy, and feeling. Conduct the spirit of the music."

Chapter 7

Perception of Musical Feeling

“Language lives or dies by inflection. Flat, uninflected speech is instantly tedious and tiresome to focus on. Highly inflected speech is effortless to pay attention to. Music is the same. Sense and meaning in both language and in music come from the appropriate grouping of words and notes into phrases or gestures which seem to go together, but only when the grammatical sense for each word or note is considered and “leaned” on or stressed to emphasize the intended meaning. Metrical exactitude in musical performance guarantees that most listeners are barred from experiencing the spiritual essence of great music.”

~ Marianne Ploger, Belmont University

We all have the skill and ability to speak expressively by carrying on a conversation with others or telling stories. Words and sentences take on meaning through nuance, inflection, and rhythmic flow. When listening to someone speak or telling a story, be sensitive to the rhythmic flow of words, the nuance and inflections of words that create meaning, understanding, and interest. I refer to such nuance and inflection of words as the “music of language.” Without rhythmic flow, nuance, and inflection, the statement, or conversation becomes boring with little meaning. The same holds true for musical performance. Menahem Pressler of the Beaux Arts Trio states, *“The subtle emphasis can be communicated in music, by comparing it to how we speak.”*

After reading many textbooks regarding musical expression, score analysis, and listening to clinic/workshop presentations outlining the complexities of musical expression, we are left confused and at times, contradicted, as we search for how to create an expressive performance. As an introductory experience when teaching musical expression, I suggest that instrumental teachers consider expressive speaking exercises for students by applying nuance, inflections, and rhythmic flow.

Most time of a rehearsal is spent on correct notes, rhythmic accuracy and precision and abiding by all signs and symbols. The performance becomes quite sterile with the lack of emotion and feeling. Learning to play music exactly to a metronome pulse is the major cause for listeners to lose interest in the performance. As Marianne Ploger states, *“Metrical exactitude in musical performance guarantees that most listeners are barred from experiencing the spiritual essence of great music.”*

As we speak, the patterns of stress and intonation in language are called prosody. Prosody is the rhythm, stress, and nuance of speech. I refer to it as *the melody of language*. Applying prosody to the rhythmic flow, nuance, and inflections with musical phrases and patterns, accesses our deep emotional expressive center by releasing *felt expression* without being mechanically contrived.

The application of musical nuance and inflection is difficult to teach. A tendency is to be specific with technical skills dealing with feelings of nuance and inflections. This is the mystery of musical expression. It is a personal/internal feeling and difficult to describe verbally. We are only able to demonstrate for students and their first experience is to imitate. Nuance and inflection can only be presented in how we speak or read. It is the inner perception of the “feeling” that nuance and inflection create. This is what is applied to expressive musical melodies. David Whitwell states, “The mind is the source of all physical actions by the body.” The following procedures will assist when teaching musical expression.

Recite the following by applying nuance, inflection, and rhythmic flow to the lyrics:

*Oh, Danny Boy, the pipes, the pipes are calling
From glen to glen, and down the mountain side,
The summer's gone, and all the roses falling,
It's you, it's you must go and I must bide.*

Add the nuance and inflection such as...with sorrow, happiness, question, accent, deliberate, robust, etc. Experiment with different inflections and nuance. This is the “mind/feeling/body/instrument connection” that creates musical expression and meaning. Remember, the instrument has no intelligence. “The spoken feeling of nuance and inflection must flow through the instrument!”

The first attempts will be quite sterile and lack any type of feeling as the students tend to be embarrassed when asked to be expressive. This recitation process is something that has not been introduced or expected of students.

When teaching musical expression, a most important awareness is that *notes remain trivial until they are animated by feeling and spirit!* Musical expression is enhanced through the subtleties of nuance and inflection surrounding the notes of a phrase for meaning, value,

understanding, and appreciation. Music is alive and must *say something*. This speaking exercise is the most important method to teach musical feeling and expression. It simply makes a student aware of the feelings of expression and the subtle nuance and inflections that are important in musical performance and understanding.

Musical phrases are animated by your musical soul. As Pablo Casals states, "We can never exhaust the multiplicity of nuances and subtleties which make the charm of music."

Chapter 8

Preparing for Rehearsal

“There is no known method of guaranteeing that my interpretation will be a truer one than yours. I can only recommend reliance on one’s own instinctive comprehension of the un-verbalized symbolism of musical sounds.”

~ Aaron Copland

We have experienced many musical years being involved with the common term *warm-up*. The dictionary states that the word *warm-up* is “an act of preparation for a game, or exercise session, involving gentle exercises for practice.” I find the definition interesting relative to the term *warm-up* for a musical rehearsal or performance. Preparing for a rehearsal or performance is a most critical time for developing a productive rehearsal or concert.

Preparing for a rehearsal is an important process for student musical growth. Frequently, the preparation has a repetitious approach for each rehearsal, and or concert. If our rehearsals and literature are designed to make music expressive, musical expression must be addressed in the *prep* period of a rehearsal.

Success is the result of musical depth with effective prep-time based upon a process of expanding performance fundamentals connected with expressiveness relative to the director’s literature expectations for a particular rehearsal or concert. Expressive phrasing, articulation variations, dynamic variations are but a few musical elements that require unique expressive instructional approaches from rehearsal to rehearsal. Unfortunately, we often overlook the importance of this prep time as we have been conditioned (through training and education) to establish a repetitious conditioning that students often respond to as an *exercise*.

Throughout my career, I observed and adjudicated many bands at various levels. Usually, and often, the traditional prep period for a rehearsal or performance was repetitious from day to day. Such a repetitious process often reduces student focus and concentration. I am a strong believer that it is intelligent repetition that allows students to function at their highest levels of attention and not become bored. CPE Bach wrote in

his *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*, “one should endeavor to avoid everything mechanical and slavish. Play from the soul, not like a trained bird.”

Traditional rehearsals focus attention on the ability to play rhythmically correct notes, precisely in time (often with an amplified metronome) which usually follows the same process for each and every rehearsal. Not only are the same procedures used for every rehearsal, chorales are often played without expressive results. I recall notable Florida State University researcher and scholar Cliff Madson, stated that “if there is time during a rehearsal, musical expression will be considered.” He further stated, “most directors spend the majority of rehearsal time correcting notes and rhythms, with little time devoted to expressive playing.” Such a rehearsal condition is often the influence of adjudication emphasis that focuses on precise performance with literature.

Repetition is important in the study and performance of music. The issue is in how a director teaches, uses, and implements *repetition*. Too often, repetition is a boring process for students. The sameness for each rehearsal and prep for a concert easily diminishes the student’s attention and focus. It is extremely important to change the prep period for every rehearsal as fundamentals are emphasized. As an example, there is no benefit to playing scales the same way for every prep period. Scale variations are unlimited. Just imagine the of scale variation you present. This priority and for performance excellence is about a thinking process and its application to literature.

Another critical concern in the preparation period for a rehearsal is tuning the ensemble. I now refer to tuning as *the mysterious world of in tune performance*. It is remarkable the number of methods in use to tune ensembles. It seems that every director has his or her way of tuning.

Tuning is usually presented by viewing a strobe tuner or singing a tuning pitch. Too often only one tuning pitch is used and not a variety of pitches for in tune consistency throughout all pitches. David McGill says it best in his wonderful publication, *Sound in Motion*. “Tuning every note in a given phrase or chord to a tuning device leads one down a dangerous path. The very act of tuning by eye is fatally flawed. If everyone in an orchestra played while staring at a tuner, the intonation of the entire ensemble would be atrocious” (page 209). What is remarkable about tuning to a strobe is the fact the eye has no ears.

I had the privilege of studying with Everett Gates at the Eastman School of Music as he was considered to be the *master* teacher of acoustics and tuning ensembles. The two summer sessions I attended were certainly eye-opening experiences regarding tuning ensembles and the application of the overtone series. He stated that Bb was not an appropriate pitch to tune an ensemble even though it has been used for many, many years without question. Many directors assume that Bb is the best note to tune an ensemble. Perhaps, this is why those Bb tuned bands have intonation problems.

There are many programs that still use Bb concert to tune ensembles. Unfortunately, this is not a very good pitch to tune an ensemble. Those directors who use Bb as a tuning note sounded by a clarinet have not considered the fact that the clarinet Bb is a long tube note, and the flute Bb is a short tube note. The flute short tube note tends to be sharp when tuned to the clarinet long tube note. As the short tube note on the flute is sharp, the flute mouthpiece is extended to compensate for sharpness. The result is the flute section tends to be flat to the pitch center of the ensemble.

Throughout my conducting experiences and tuning ensembles, my priority was always based on tuning the overtone series, the science of sound. I developed tuning exercises based on the fundamental of F concert, fifth, and octave throughout all keys. This assured my ensemble to be in tune throughout all notes and ranges. I simply do not believe there are any other tuning procedures that establish in tune performance better than the overtone series as this is based on the science of sound. Once the overtone series is used for tuning, the ensemble's sonority improves significantly.

The key to fine tuning an ensemble is based on the *ear* and not the *eye*. What is the student listening to, what are they listening for, and what do they do with it when they hear it? It is very easy to detect a well-tuned ensemble if the director truly has a keen ear for ensemble intonation and sonority that was taught to students in the importance of ensemble tuning and listening.

Our methods of preparing an ensemble for rehearsal vary from director to director. Through the many years of adjudicating ensembles, the most comments I made had to deal with tuning and musical expression. Even those ensembles that

received superior ratings had intonation deficiencies and there were a few that played expressively to create musical interest.

Musical expression should be a high priority for a rehearsal prep period. Too often the prep period for a rehearsal becomes quite redundant and eventually creates boredom with students. If, as directors, we expect expressive performance with the literature being prepared, it should be a part of this prep period. It is important to carefully shape any expressive expectations of the literature to be rehearsed.

Most important in my prep period with students was to play the Grand Master Scale with an unlimited variety of expressive interpretations when playing each scale. I always had the students slur the scales to establish breath support and to assure the flow of consistent air through the instrument. Some methods of articulation often hamper the flow of air consistency of notes. This method treats scales as beautiful phrases and not simply exercises played the same way at each rehearsal.

Chorales are critical in establishing expressive performance results. The unlimited variations for expression through nuance and inflection must be the priority and not playing the chorale the same way each day.

As I bring this chapter to closure, my intention was to create a deeper approach and understanding to the preparation period of a rehearsal or performance. It is more than a *warm-up* exercise and should be treated with the same intensity and expectations of an expressive performance.

FINALE

As a professional musician, conductor, educator, and author, music was a glorious journey through the countless beautiful concerts, compositions, lectures, and study that I had the privilege of experiencing throughout my career. Through my publications, Meredith Music Publications allowed me to share the glorious and beautiful world of music I had the privilege of being immersed in.

“You must give each note life, your life.

You must sacrifice...

You must learn to give yourself to music...

Then you will make it live...

Then you will be able to make other people understand music.”

Nadia Boulanger

Bibliography

- Battisti, F. (2007). *On Becoming a Conductor*. Meredith Music Publications, distributed by Hal Leonard, Inc.
- Blum, D. (1977). *Casals and the Art of Interpretation*. University of California Press.
- Copland, A. (1980). *Music and Imagination*. Harvard University Press.
- Davis, S. (1994). *Musical Meaning and Expression*. Cornell University Press
- Jordan, J. (1999). *The Musician's Soul*. GIA Publications.
- Levitin, D. (2007). *This Is Your Brain on Music*. Plume/Penguin Group, Inc.
- Sloboda, J. (2005). *Exploring the Musical Mind*. Oxford University Press.
- Sokolowski, E. (2012). *Making Musical Meaning*. GIA Publications
- Lisk E. (2015). *Artistic Nuance*. Meredith Music Publications, distributed by Hal Leonard, Inc.
- Lisk, E. (2013). *Lyrical Conducting: A New Dimension in Expressive Musicianship*. Meredith Music Publications, distributed by Hal Leonard, Inc.
- Lisk. E. (2010). *The Musical Mind of the Creative Director*. Meredith Music Publications, distributed by Hal Leonard, Inc.
- Lisk. E. (2006). *The Creative Director: Conductor, Teacher, Leader*. Meredith Music Publications, distributed by Hal Leonard, Inc.
- McGill, D. (2007). *Sound in Motion*. Indiana University Press
- Nachmanovitch, S. (1990). *Free Play*. Penguin Putnam, Inc.
- Ploger, M., Hill, K. (2005). *The Craft of Musical Communication*. The Ploger Method.
<http://www.plogermethod.com>
- Walker, M. (2012). *The Art of Interpretation*. GIA Publications
- Whitwell, D. *Essay: Music Education for the Future*, <http://www.whitwellessays.com>

About the writer:

Edward S. Lisk is an internationally recognized clinician, conductor, and author. In 2015 he received the distinguished *Academy of Winds and Percussion Award* which represents the highest honor which the National Band Association can confer on any individual. Past recipients of the AWAPA Award is literally a list of the greatest leaders involved in the band movement during the past five decades who have rendered remarkable service to bands.

Mr. Lisk is an honored and elected member (48th) of the prestigious *National Band Hall of Fame for Distinguished Conductors*. Mr. Lisk joins the ranks of notable conductors such as John Philip Sousa, Edwin Franko Goldman, Henry Fillmore, Col. Arnald Gabriel, and Col. John R. Bourgeois, among many others. He is a recipient of the distinguished *2009 Midwest Medal of Honor*. The *Midwest Medal of Honor* recognizes the recipients for their conspicuous efforts, worldwide recognition, and continuing influence in the development and improvement of instrumental ensembles. He received the *2012 Phi Beta Mu International Outstanding Contributor to Bands Award*.

Edward S. Lisk has been invited to speak and conduct throughout the United States and abroad. His active guest-conducting schedule includes all-state bands, honor bands, university and professional bands. Since 1985, Mr. Lisk has served as an adjunct professor, appeared as a clinician/lecturer, adjudicator, and guest conductor throughout 85 universities in 46 states, five Canadian Provinces and Australia. He is the author of *The Creative Director Series* (10 pub.) published by Meredith Music Publications, a coauthor of the highly acclaimed 11-volume publication by GIA, *Teaching Music Through Performance in Band* and editor of the *Edwin Franko Goldman March Series* for Carl Fischer Music Publications.

Mr. Lisk is an inducted member of the prestigious *American Bandmasters Association* and in the year 2000, served as the 63rd President of this distinguished organization founded by Edwin Franko Goldman. He is a past-president of the *National Band Association* and served NBA as Executive Secretary Treasurer ('97-'02). He is Vice President Emeritus of the *Midwest Clinic Board of Directors*, and Past President and CEO of the *John Philip Sousa Foundation*. He is the recipient of many distinguished awards and titles.

