

The 8th and 9th grade orchestra students have the notes and rhythms (strings especially) on the piece that I am conducting, so I reminded myself that I need to push them musically (dynamics, phrasing, etc.). I introduced the faster tempo at the coda this week. It will still take some getting-used-to for everyone (students and myself). I need to make sure I am really locked into the tempos in this piece so that I am sure I'm showing them exactly what I want. I also worked on dynamics in the piece... in particular one large crescendo from pp to ff toward the end of the piece. The students are doing a pretty good job of playing loudly with lots of energy at the ff sections, so I wanted to really focus on those pianissimo parts. I reviewed several technical tricks to help them play pianissimo (play toward the fingerboard, less pressure, shorter bows, etc.) and told the students to keep those in mind and play as softly as they could. After playing this section once, I told them to see if they could play even more quietly than before. This second time through, I felt like we really accomplished a true pianissimo. It was so exciting to realize that I am getting to make music with these students, beyond just working on notes and rhythms!

In full orchestra this week, it was my first time seeing the winds (due to PSSA's last week). It was also my first rehearsal on the stage and my first observation in this setting. Needless to say, there was a lot going on that day. Playing in the auditorium meant that there was a different sound. The strings dragged the tempo even though this has not been an issue before. In future rehearsals I will need to address this with them (even just a reminder that the stage will sound different than their normal rehearsal room, so they need to be prepared for that). The winds are doing okay with notes and rhythms overall. Some practicing needs to be done on their parts (I have planned specific sections I want to review with them next week). One of the biggest struggles for the students was tempo (maintaining a steady beat and staying together throughout the written tempo changes). As Jen has mentioned to me, staying together is going to be one of the biggest challenges with full orchestra. I loved that whenever I looked back at the percussion, their eyes were right with me! This is great, and I think it will hold me accountable for my tempos even more, knowing that there are students that are really watching me.

Perceived Strengths:

1. Planning for rehearsal. I went into this rehearsal with a clear idea of my objectives for the day and a plan regarding how I was going to accomplish them.
2. Hearing what can be improved in string sections... phrasing, dynamics, intonation, etc.

Perceived Weaknesses:

1. Not showing enough of a difference between dynamic levels in my conducting.
2. Not feeling completely confident and sure of the tempos I am using in my conducting.
3. Defaulting back to a higher ictus when thinking about other aspects of my conducting.

Goals for Next Week:

1. Show a greater difference between dynamic levels in my conducting.
2. Focus in on my tempos for each of my pieces (practice with a metronome, without a metronome, listen to recordings, etc.)
3. Continue to work on lowering the ictus when I conduct.