

Becoming Team Players through Critical Listening
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Alleluia Conference, Waco TX July 24, 2014

Critical listening represents an area of essential skills that directors and ringers navigate together in order to become a stronger team. Attendees will participate as ringers exploring how to: create the best group sound, execute dynamics, highlight melodies and shape musical phrases.

Critical listening is about having standards for the sound you want from the instrument. Ringers need to know how to produce the best sound and take responsibly for consistently doing so.

Challenge yourself to work beyond the notes and build a team for ringing music that becomes worship.

Repertoire: It Is Well With My Soul Moglebust Alfred20206
 Let All Things Now Living Moglebust CGB170

BEST SOUND

Precise Chords

- *Begin with a well adjusted bell set
- *Establish a reference point for getting the best the sound from the instrument.
 Avoid punched, paint brush and snapped wrist strokes
 Your audiences will hear what they see you do

Build the skill:

- 1) Ring and freeze the chord
- 2) ADD circular stroke with precise chords
- 3) Unison stroke for all downbeats –
 Are all ringers using bells up in follow through
 Did they use precision on the downbeat
 Were all circles in unison
- 4) Destroy visual, can you hear the difference

Circular stroke – casting its full & upright position as it completes the stroke
(As a bonus it creates a nice visual to watch in particular when the music has vertical chordal textures or when LV patterns are present)

Distinguish LV & Damped sounds

Paraphrasing (with apologies) from Ecclesiastes: “To everything there is a season....There is a time to damp and a time to refrain from damping.

Build the skill:

- 1) Ring it LV and note value damped.
- 2) Its Ringers responsibility to react to what’s in the score and execute appropriately by understanding the difference between these two sounds.
 It’s critical for directors’ to be able to hear and be able to recognize the difference.

Analogy: playing the piano with pedal down is LV.

DYNAMICS

- *Use the guidance composers provide
- *Count out loud using expressive voices

Build the skill:

- 1) Ring it without explanation
- 2) Count loud as you play with voice
- 3) Ring again without voices

In all that you do “Don’t be Average”

HIGHLIGHTING MELODIES

- *Find ALL melodies through score study
- *Demo CDs don’t always reveal melodic details
- *Help beginning & non music readers distinguish melody from harmony
- *Provide an experience so audiences don’t have to wonder what the tune might be or where it is
- *Ask yourselves do I hear it because I know its there, or because I really hear it

MUSICAL PHRASES

- *Consider implication of meter on musical phrases
 - 4/4 beats 1 & 3 have natural feeling of stronger pulse
- *Repeated melody notes
- *Transitions in melody from low to high
- *Musical arches (use your LVs)
- *Use the circular speed to control shape
- *Highest and lowest notes in a phrase
- *Ask is this what audiences should hear

Grow your listening skills

Position 11 has tremendous power or make or destroy musical phrase

Top notes in melody often need to ring slightly softer

Pay attention to chord structure. Fewer note chords need to balance multi-note chords

Execute all stopped sounds together just like precise chords

Listen for bumps in the musical line – check bell changes as culprits

Listen for unmarked accents due to bell or technique shifts

Listen to treble ringers for clean damping of shelly 4 in hand.

Make sure bass plays out enough to balance the ensemble

Prod ringers to take on listening responsibilities

Ringers must take responsibility for:

Ringng strokes for the best sound of any technique

Damping vs. LV

Executing in and out of techniques with clarity

Learning how to function as part of the melodic and/or harmonic line

Directors are responsible for:

- Score study – find everything ringers need to know in advance
- Balance of movement for each single note of a melodic line
- Balance for melody against harmony
- Balance of harmonic movement such as 3 note chords to 6 note chords that decrescendo
- Balance for hidden melodies
- Phrasing not only 3/4 and 4/4 unnatural accents, but the shape of the line, movement of melody from bass to treble
- Balance techniques IE rung melody against mart harmony – what is the correct relationship.
- Dynamic measurements & rhythmic accuracy

CODA

Our composers really do a wonderful job of notation for this instrument. With every note they're giving part of their own souls to the musical process, in essence putting themselves on the line, trusting that we will be skilled enough to breathe life into the written pages. They need our partnership as good listeners to make that happen. I hope that you've been able to take something from this today to build upon your team experience. The work it takes for critical listening is worth the rewards for your congregation.