

Moving From Score Study to Making Music Worship

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Go behind the scenes to observe a strategy that begins with score study and ends with the ringers' ability to make music that becomes worship. The added benefit of this planning style also results in efficient use of rehearsal time. Participants will experience this process using a selection of music for the Lenten season. This concept is applicable for all handbell arrangements of any season.

Repertoire

The Lamb Hansen/Behnke CPH97-6869

Ultimately a director's ability to move ringers towards musical worship from score study will be dependent upon the following rehearsal components:

1. Consistency Being consistent in each rehearsal so you're always building on accomplishments rather than going back to change what was done previously.
2. Preparation of skills Always teach ringers the skills they need to succeed before they find it in the music.
3. Nurture listening Nurturing ringers' listening skills becomes part of rehearsal technique. Ask them why you stopped. Use phrases to encourage their ears for the music making process.
4. Communicate as a conductor Be sensitive to the character of the score and reflect that with your gestures ie. Avoid big beat patterns for piano passages. Get out of the conductor score ASAP to visually evaluate the ringers.
5. Being realistic How much time do you really have to prepare the music.

Score Study - The director's blueprints

Why Score Study?

- To find ALL potential problems in the music before ringers do
- To plan effective rehearsals
- To make wise bell assignments
- To have optimal use of limited rehearsal time

Have a mental photo of the music before the 1st rehearsal.

A pre-requisite for score study includes making wise repertoire selections that offer a variety of styles and appropriate challenges.

Score Study analyzes each piece in four categories: Consider this a treasurer hunt! Look for all the jewels the composer has written, but watch out for the hidden snares that could frustrate developing ringers.

1. Form - Locate familiar musical material. You don't have to be a music professional to do this. Follow along on CDs (however not for every detail since these recordings will have mistakes and often lack musical elements) or have someone play it on piano. Form helps identify good rehearsal units. This should also be the time for directors to find (create) the story for the music or for sacred

use where you find the sermon in the music; where do ringers need to be especially “spiritually aware”.

2. Technique Problems – This category includes bell changes, assignments, cautionary signs, key changes, publishing errors (AKA misprinted notes, missing technique symbols or accidental notations, doubling notations), shifting into/out of different techniques, changing from bells to chimes

3. Rhythm - the obvious (any rhythm the group doesn’t know) plus note value transitions (8th to triplet), opportunities for rushing tempo, meter changes

4. Musical – As your group becomes more experienced this list gets longer. Find all melodic lines and shape phrases (especially where get lost in the texture), draw in crescendo and decrescendo reminders (plus are they in the right place within the measure), balance issues for melody and harmony, places to add chimes or other handbell sounds, tempo modifications, who’s who for LV and R, doubling bells (or not), visual presentation of the music for your audiences. *For my musical lists I do not reiterate what is already given by composers unless I need it as a big personal reminder.

Score Study Helps Rehearsal Implementation

A. Use Score Study to plan rehearsal sequence. *Always teach a skill before ringers find it in the music. This saves time and patience.

B. Prepare the ringers' scores Write the bell assignments in each ringer score, underline the two starting bells, indicate mallets /chimes /bell sharing. Do all you can to insure the piece starts successfully and they have what they need to finish the piece.

*Directors who don't study the score in advance often find mistakes in rehearsal too late for ringers to correct it or worse yet not at all. In the later case this forces those mistakes on the audience. OUCH!

Always plan for creative beginnings and endings whenever possible. Polish your performances by establishing the mood of the piece from your bell pick-up and creative endings for an appropriate finish.

Sample Score Study: The Lamb Hansen/arr. John Behnke

Form

Intro: m1-4

Verses: m5-19, m21-35, m39-53, m55-70; Limited bridge material

Coda: m 71 to end

Technique

LV to note value damping,

Shelley

Mallets off table m 19-46

Key changes m35,43

Bell changes to include a 3rd bell

Rhythm

Syncopation m 57-64

Musical

Fluid 8th note ebb/flow phrases for harmony
Legato melody with weak beat preparations higher in pitch leading to lower pitched downbeats. Applies to bells and chimes
Phrases that stretch
Crescendo on repeated chords
Balance harmony with chime melody
Match phrase transitions from thin texture to fuller texture m28 to 29
Ring key change with affirmation m35, echo harmonic phrase m37
Pulling middle bell melody out of texture m39-46
Melodic transition from bass to treble m46-47
Musical preparation for fermata m 49
LV crescendo for FF preparation m53-54
Sustaining FF m 55-64
Coda with pp ending

NEW SKILLS REQUIRED at this Level

1. Ringing with dynamics and contract between treble and bass

Find group dynamics development: In 4/4 using quarter notes, LV @ MF. Define MF as the dynamic level that occurs from a naturally rung circular stroke.

Ring MF, LV for 8 beats. Did it get louder? Show them the brush damp to keep the same dynamic level.

Ring F for 8 beats.

Ring from MF to F over 8 beats. Listen for gaps or uneven growth

Ring FF for 4 beats.

Ring MF – F - FF over 12 beats. Put listening responsibility on ringers too.

2. Musical phrases

Use the size and speed of your circle to get louder and softer. Director eyes and ears are critical to this development. Apply this directly to the music by isolating the phrase in rehearsal and coaching the results. Tell ringers where the loudest point of the phrase is, so they can pace themselves as a team to get there.

3. Suspended mallets

Lift the sound with a circular mallet motion from the bell at the lip rather than stun the bell with a direct approach. Position mallet very close to lip to avoid “shafting” it.

4. Syncopation – ring without rushing tempo on off beats

Feel the strong beat. Lift heel (not toe), or press into your shoulder with bell as preparation for off beat.

Rehearsal Sequence for introducing The Lamb to create spirit of worship

P.6 M54 beat 4 to the end (Resurrection)

P.5 M35-55 (Crucifixion)

P.4 M28-29

P.3 M19-34 (Lamb as a worthy offering –Revelation 5:12)

P.1 M1-20 (Lamb of God as a symbol of sacrifice – Genesis 22:8)