

## **Music That Doesn't Bore Me to Tears:**

Developing Community Support through a Stronger Musical Connection with Your Audience

Patrick Dill, Presenter

Director of Choirs  
Anderson High School – Austin ISD  
[pdill@austinisd.org](mailto:pdill@austinisd.org)  
512/414-7926

February 14, 2008  
6:30 p.m.

TMEA Convention  
Room CC 102  
Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center  
San Antonio, TX



*Welcome to this session sponsored by the Texas Music Educators Conference. TMEC is your link to the Music Educators National Conference (MENC); the National Association for Music Education. We hope you find the information in this session helpful in your teaching.*

*TMEC/MENC has many great resources for you. We encourage you to come by our booths in the exhibit area. TMEC is Booth #2326 and the MENC Resource Shop is Booth # 2324.*

*To find more information on and to join TMEC, visit our website at [www.tmec.org](http://www.tmec.org). For more information on MENC, visit [www.menc.org](http://www.menc.org).*

*If we can be of any further assistance to you, please feel free to contact us.*

*Kay Anderson Mote, President*  
[kaysingstu@aol.com](mailto:kaysingstu@aol.com)

*Barb Stevanson, Executive Secretary*  
[bstevanson@austin.rr.com](mailto:bstevanson@austin.rr.com)

## Music That Doesn't Bore Me to Tears:

### Developing Community Support through a Stronger Musical Connection with Your Audience

February 14, 2008 ♪ 6:30 p.m. ♪ Room 102 ♪ TMEA Convention ♪ Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center ♪ San Antonio, Texas

#### Programming

"Performers *give* a concert. They don't *do* a concert or *have* a concert. Every performance should be an act of giving."

-Rob Kapilow, What Makes It Great?©

The first step in preparing for a concert is deciding what will be given artistically through the performance. In my program, we try to stay focused on:

1. Our Students
  - a. Allowing them to communicate successfully as artists.
  - b. Developing music literacy skills as a tool to strengthen their artistry.
2. Our Audience
  - a. Providing something of esthetic worth so that they as a community have something to value and appreciate.
  - b. Developing our program as a source of pride that can represent the community.

Once goals are established, we can begin to select literature to accomplish this act of giving. By focusing on the elements that make a particular piece of music worthy for the act of giving, we can create a roadmap for the preparation and rehearsal that will guide us to a more expressive performance.

1. Create a "concert season" so that each concert can be special and unique in its own way.
2. Choose literature that is well suited for the significance each individual concert.

#### Preparation

"The spirit of the performance comes from the spirit of the rehearsal."

-Phil Ajarapu, Assistant Director, Anderson High School Choir

Emotional awareness is paramount to teaching artistry:

1. Of ourselves as directors.
  - a. Whether we like it or not, any problems we are having siphon from us our ability to create music.
  - b. We must be willing to open up a part of ourselves that we would normally not share with others.
  - c. Sensitivity to beauty allows us to feel the entire emotional spectrum – even pain, fear, etc.
2. Of our singers.
  - a. They must be allowed to share in what is being expressed. It should neither be withheld from nor dictated to them.
  - b. Be aware of emotional state of your students. Sometimes it's better to go with the current than against it, and vice versa.
3. Of the musical score.
  - a. Teach singers to "feel" expression rather than to "think" expression.
  - b. Teach on a neutral syllable that allows the singers to focus on the expressive elements of the music itself without the influence of the text.
  - c. Allowing the music to speak for itself will enhance expression rather than hindering expression by having to "teach dynamics."

Taking a holistic approach to teaching allows for music literacy skills to be infused with artistry:

1. Use elements of Kodaly pedagogy as a tool to more quickly address expressive elements of the music while teaching pitch.
  - a. Teach dynamics while students are sight-reading. They tend to learn their music in larger chunks because they are not reading note to note.
  - b. Encourage good ensemble singing by addressing breath markings, final consonants, vowel shape, etc. while singing on solfege.
2. Dalcroze eurhythmics are a great way to encourage an internalized sense of rhythm.
  - a. Pulse – walk while keeping time to the beat. Then, walk in character of the beat.

- b. Melodic rhythm – walk in character to the rhythm of the melody. Use arms to show forward momentum on longer held notes.
- c. Micro-rhythm – tap subdivision of the beat on sternum while to either the beat or the melodic rhythm.
- d. Macro-rhythm – clapping upwards from center of the body on the first beat of each measure while walking.

### **Presentation**

“Vulnerability is what allows us to give truly genuine expressiveness in our singing.”

-Weston Noble, Johnson Professor Emeritus of Music, Luther Choir College

If variety is the spice of life, your concerts need to offer every flavor possible.

1. Try rearranging the performance order so that it's not just by hierarchy of choirs in the choir program.
2. Keep the concert moving with as little non-singing time as possible.
  - a. Try having one song flow directly into another.
  - b. Minimize the time the choirs spend walking on and off stage.
    - i. Try processions to keep the concert moving.
    - ii. Put multiple choirs on stage at a time.
3. Use many different instrumental timbres (organ, strings, handbells, etc.) for accompaniment instead of just piano.
4. Have choirs sing from various locations in the performing venue.