

SCORE STUDY

WELS Choral Dialogue 2012

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Reasons for score study

1. A conductor cannot teach more than they know; therefore, the understood score becomes the basis for our lesson plan.
2. Teaching strategies develop from a rich mental awareness of what happens within the composition.
3. Score study is the internalization of the piece for the conductor which shapes our interpretation.
4. No single approach to score study is appropriate for every piece.

Ideas for score study

1. Study the overall form of the piece. Mark it! In repeats of phrase A or B, note if there are any changes in voicing, rhythm, etc. What do you expect to happen in each section? Do the deviations (changes of theme) create other changes in texture, style of singing, etc.?
2. Mark phrasing carefully allowing the text to dictate choices.
3. Note any diction problems that will need special attention. Also be aware of text painting that will dictate a certain style of singing to bring desired emphasis.
4. Mark any rhythms that may be problematic.
5. Sing through each vocal part to find the difficult sections or unusual accenting.
6. Play through the score. If a piece is dissonant look for close harmony that will need particular tuning attention.
7. Work with a recording if you aren't a capable keyboard player or if you need ideas for interpretation.
8. Consistently mark (some people color code) to notice important information in the score including dynamics, tempo (including rall., accel.), changes in meter, etc.
9. Of special note should be information for you as the conductor about cueing entrances and releases – consider marking with beat numbers and which voice part(s) should be cued.
10. In polyphonic music highlight entire themes or repeated motifs. Don't be afraid to use a variety of colors for secondary themes. I prefer to mark right over the notes themselves.

Uses for your marked score

1. Give direction to rehearsals because it will show you problem areas that will require drill.
2. Lead rehearsals efficiently because you know similarities and contrasts in the piece.
3. You can teach the score including dynamics, rhythms, phrasing, etc. all at once because you are prepared rather than discovering the piece with the choir.
4. Allows you to find the “kernel” for the first rehearsal that will make the piece appealing to the choir.