

All-State: Meet the All-State Conductor

presented by Tim Weiss

reported by Beth Becker, Lynne Bulger and Cassandra Herold

Hailing from Oberlin's Music Conservatory via Interlochen Arts Academy in Michigan, Tim Weiss takes the time and effort to learn every student's name in his orchestras.

Weiss reminded us that we, as arts educators, are in a unique position to influence how students see the world, enabling them to experience beauty in every day things and to do so at a deeper level than they would without the arts. He also stressed that a beginner getting excited about their first concert is no less important than a senior college student performing their final recital — both experiences are equally important to each musician, albeit at different levels.

Our job is to facilitate the music — there should be no surprises. As conductors, once we and the students have prepared a certain way, there should not be a need to “surprise” the students with a new dynamic

or tempo in order to ensure that they are watching. Weiss also feels that there is great danger in spending too much time on the most difficult passages of the music, as other aspects may be neglected. We should reinforce by going from the macro to micro — run through then go back and fix spots within the music.

Conducting is abstract because it doesn't make a sound. As we respond we should make sure our motor is not struggling; we should play easy music to help us listen better. The more technique students have, the richer the musical experience — so keep practicing!

Weiss uses solfege in rehearsal to focus

students' attention and to help them hear how the notes they are playing fit into the key. He emphasized that students who

understand the placement of the notes in the tonal structure have fewer intonation problems. He did an excellent demonstration in which he asked the teachers to sing as he did the Kodaly hand symbols; this was followed by two-part singing (impressive that he could sign two at once!) He believes that students need to know what part of the

chord they are playing, and understand the weight of the pitches in that chord. If we give students the opportunity to hear and experience this, it can make an amazing difference in their pitch and how they play. †



Tim Weiss