

All-State: Impress the Judges: Get Higher Contest Scores

presented by Elliot Del Borgo

MNSOTA was delighted to host Elliot Del Borgo—composer, pedagogue, consultant, clinician, lecturer and adjudicator—as our keynote presenter at the All-State Workshop. The sessions summary that follows was compiled from participants who took the workshop for graduate credit.

When performing for a contest, Elliot Del Borgo recommended:

- Impress the judges with professionalism. You and your students need to look good and all be consistently dressed. Judges start judging you from when the first student enters the stage. The concert attire should be appropriate for the performance situation.
- Never tune on stage. You can tune in the rehearsal room before entering the stage. When on stage, just check tuning very quickly.
- Set-up. The smaller the group, the bigger the set up should be—don't be afraid to spread out. Del Borgo recommends putting basses at 2:00 and keeping the violins together.
- The director should never go on stage until the students have tuned and are seated, ready to go. Let everything be done by the students.
- Acknowledge the applause. Have the students stand when you enter the stage. The director should acknowledge the applause after entering the stage and before standing on the podium.
- Take time between pieces. Take this time to adjust things on stage. It also calms the students down!
- What do you play? Del Borgo recommends beginning with a Baroque piece (upbeat and strong) and to have it be memorized by the conductor. If you look at the students, they will look at you. Have an audible breath and a ghost beat. The second piece should be solidly tonal and display your orchestra's technical ability and musicianship. The last piece is the "big finish"! Make it impressive.
- You—the director. Don't over conduct. Use a podium. Videotape yourself for reflection. Your job is to make your orchestra sound great!
- Envision the playing you want the students to do. The goal is to interpret the music. Students are artists/musicians, not violinists/cellists/etc. Encourage them to move while they play with sitting up, feet flat on floor, instrument/elbows high making a great full sound!
- Only use a piano if the piece calls for it.
- Tune to the piano on stage. ‡