

THE SAME 30 THINGS

by James Hainlen

Daniel Barenboim once said, if you want to be a conductor you must understand that you will say the same 30 things a hundred times a year for forty years. That may be true for professional conductors, but it might be revised for teachers to saying the same 30 things a hundred times a week for as long as you teach.

When I had guest musicians out to conduct a clinic, I started my career by thinking it was for the students. Later, I understood that the opportunity to observe a guest conductor with the orchestra or work with a fine professional performer was as much for me as the students. And what was the benefit? So often I heard the same basic idea stated by the guest that I had been saying, but I heard a new way of expressing it. Other times I observed the difference between saying something in the rehearsal and demanding that it be done. It was too easy to confuse hearing myself offer a verbal correction and actually taking the time to be sure it was understood and put into practice. Take just one example, Sir Neville Martinov took the time out from conducting the Minnesota Orchestra on two occasions to work with the Stillwater High School Orchestra. The first time was on Sibelius, *Finlandia*. He wanted to get the ending just right and promised the students he wouldn't stop until it was the way he wanted. 53 repetitions of the last four measures later he still was demanding more and better. I learned at that moment that 50 times on four measures was a reasonable expectation for excellence. One of the values of music is to drill down on details and learn that attention to detail is what makes a difference to the whole. Nothing a student does during the school years demands as much concentrated effort by each person on the tiniest details to contribute to the excellence of the whole.

I am retired now and wonder if what I did with my life mattered. But talking with past students and writing down some of their reflections tells me that orchestra can be one of most profound experiences a student will have in school. Students have told me, "The experience of music brought me purpose in my life," or "each piece of music I played has remained in my brain for 40 years." Then, "every time you make beautiful music it is bigger than yourself."

And finally, "Orchestra changed the trajectory of my life."

I encourage everyone to make their own personal list of *The Same 30 Things*, for in reality that is really what you offer to students; great music through your understanding and their hard work to give them purpose and change their lives. The following is my list of 31 things I learned and said over and over in different ways. Sure, I got tired of saying the same thing, but then I would listen for a new way to say it. By the time I finished teaching I had many notebooks filled with the way colleagues and professionals said the *Same 30 Things* and a lifetime of memories to accompany me.

The Same 30 Things

1. There are many mysteries in life; effort is not one of them.
2. Fast practice yields slow results—slow practice yields solid results.
3. Good posture is the basis of all playing. Protect your body from injury by monitoring your left and right hands, arms, and back and neck.
4. Preparation for rehearsal includes the set-up of your instrument with good strings, a re-hair at least once a year, good rosin, and a polished instrument.
5. A pencil is mandatory for marking all bowings, shifting, and difficult areas. Lead is cheaper than brains—use lead.
6. A thoughtful, deliberate approach to home practice is better than simply taking your instrument out of the case and playing from beginning to end.
7. A sequential approach to practice is rhythm, intonation, bowing and articulation, musicality, artistry.
8. Practice rhythm away from the notes: clap, walk, say the rhythms, and lightly tap your toe.
9. Count while you play. If you don't count the rhythm, you are only fooling one person.
10. Sing the pitches, name the pitches, and name the address on the staff.
11. Always know the clef, key signature, and half and whole steps.
12. Do you know who has the melody? Know who has the melody and what your relationship is to the melodic line. Let your playing be guided by knowledge not chance.
13. Clean, clear playing is always better than heavy, self-important playing.
14. The middle and ends of notes deserve as much thought as the beginning of notes. How you articulate the beginning, how you shape the middle, and how you leave each note contributes excellence to the ensemble.
15. Great listening is great playing. Deliberately focus your mind on the moment. Do not pick up your instrument and zone out.
16. "Imagination is the cardinal virtue because the literalness which supports idolatry is the besetting sin of our age" (Owen Barfield in *Saving Appearances*). Don't lose your imaginations to standardized tests, correct answers, and admonitions to grow up.
17. Choose a player or musical line to listen to and respond to that. Never play with a blank mind.
18. Make it new—each time make it new. Deadly, dull repetition is a deadly, dull performance.
19. The bow is breath. Move the bow as you would use breath to sing.
20. Bow weight, length, and direction are a part of every rehearsal.
21. Music is not a guessing game. Use all the hints in the music to guide your performance.
22. A rehearsal is not a game of the conductor catching you doing something wrong. It is a collaboration between musicians.
23. Gesture shows commitment. Move your body—the music will tell you how to move.
24. Sweat is a good thing. A rehearsal room that smells faintly like a locker room is a good.
25. Music is a constant dialogue between the horizontal line and the vertical line. Engage that dialogue.
26. The understanding of the structure of the music is a lifetime of fun and learning. Understanding music theory makes you a better player.
27. Music history and context reward

the effort to understand them. All composers are related to the music of their time and all the music that went before them.

28. All the arts are related through the social/political context, the geographical location, and the ethos of the era.
29. Correction must be focused, gentle, and not personal. Phrase corrections with some sense of detachment for the student. Remember it is always bigger than the F# at this moment.
30. Watching each other is how we create music together. Enjoy raising your eyes up from the music and seeing the horizon of the room or stage.
31. Music matters. This is what you are

doing with your life at this moment. Make the most of it each time you pick up your instrument.

Try writing your own list, slip it in the score, then settle in for the long haul and just keep saying the same 30 things a hundred times a year (week) for 40 years.

James Hainlen taught in the Stillwater Schools from 1973 to 2004 with a three-year break from 1976 to 1979 for a Master's of String Development with Marvin Rabin at the University of Wisconsin. During his time in Stillwater, he was fortunate to have wonderful colleagues who each contributed to the development of the total music program. Hainlen has a Bachelor of Music Education from the University of Minnesota

and a PhD from Minnesota in Policy and Politics of Education. He retired in 2004 because of the difficulties of Meniere's Disease and has become active at the University in promoting research into vestibular problems. His concept for a patient centered conference devoted to helping people with vestibular problems has morphed from an in-person conference to a virtual conference that was viewed by over 4,000 people worldwide this past February. Hainlen is about 1,400 miles into his life goal was hiking the Appalachian Trail and expects to finish New Hampshire and Maine this summer. After retirement he was fortunate to conduct the Roseville String Ensemble for twelve years and now plays violin with the orchestra. †