

Rehearsal Tips for Finals Week

By Mike Nevin

First off, I watched every performance on Saturday and was very excited to see the improvement you've all made with your groups. I truly feel the quality of ensembles is increasing in RMPA.

Here is some guidance based on those performances plus my experience in general to help you focus on what to and what not to work on this week to get the biggest payoff at Finals.

There are quite a few suggestions below but realize that most can be addressed at the same time as you do reps of each part of your show. Be very realistic about what you can and can't do in the rehearsal time you have left and consider the limitations of your students and their needs.

- **Priority One: Focus on playing better!** As Scott Johnson said, "There are more points for music than visual." If you weren't aware, your score is **60% music, 40% visual.**
- Water parts that aren't being played consistently well – At this point, pick a few of the worst parts. Changing open stroke rolls to buzz rolls and taking out flams are a couple of the easiest fixes. Avoid changing too much, however. If you do, it's like writing a whole new part for the students to learn.
- Pick some of the worst visual moments in your show and clean them up. You won't get to them all. Work on clarity of form and improving basic movement. Keep striving to get the feet in time.
- If any body movement affects the quality of playing, **take it out!** If any body movement detracts visually from your performance rather than adds to it, **take it out!** That includes stick tricks, etc. Remember, you'll get more points for playing well.
- **No Major Changes!** Making changes now is a waste of time and will just give the kids more to think about. Put the time and effort into cleaning up what they have instead. If you still have design issues now, then it is what it is. You won't be able to fix them in a week. Keep those shortcomings in mind as you beginning designing for next season.
- **Utilize visual communication in addition to listening** where you're having timing problems.
- **Get off the met!** Still use it, of course, especially on the first couple of reps of a section of music, but you should be doing more reps without the met this week.
- **Aim for getting in good reps on every part of the show.** Help your students feel confident for their final performance.
- **Don't get bogged down into one or two projects!** Keep the bigger picture and end goal in mind.
- **Fix voiceovers.** There are still too many that can't be heard.
- **Be as encouraging as possible.** Make your students proud of what they've accomplished. Not what they haven't. Make notes on weaknesses that need to be addressed in the future.
- **Whatever you do don't focus on "beating" other ensembles!** Don't waste your time thinking about your placement. You certainly can't control anything other ensembles are doing. Focus on what you can do so that your ensemble has their best performance possible this season.

Thanks to all of you who have read the newsletters, listened to all your commentary, come to critique, and made improvements based on the feedback so you could do right by your students to help them achieve more and increase their chances for success.

Best of luck at Finals and I'll see you there!

(Though we all know luck has nothing to do with it. 😊)