

SURVIVING.... MPA SIGHT-READING
A SUGGESTED STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE FROM THE CONCERT STAGE
TO THE SIGHT-READING ROOM
Ree Nathan January 8, 2010

Have students remain in order as you exit the stage.

District Chairmen: *If possible, please try to organize your logistics so that when students exit the stage and enter the sight-reading room, they are not backwards. (Same with the warm-up room.) This will help students to avoid confusion and help directors, who may be “bringing up the rear”, to avoid the feeling that they are entering the room on the wrong foot. The student guides can assist here.*

However...It is not a problem to take a minute to rearrange students!

- Students should exit the stage and enter the sight-reading room quietly and focused on the job at hand.
- If you must wait on the preceding choir to finish in the sight-reading room, please remind students to be very quiet!
- Again, Iffff...you should enter the room in reverse order, it really is not a problem. Take a minute to rearrange your students so that everyone is in the correct area.
- The sight-reading adjudicator may be completing the written comments for the preceding choir.
- The sight-reading judge will greet you and go over procedures.
- Student assistants will distribute the SR booklets as you confer with the adjudicator about the appropriate exercises for your group.
- Students will be reminded to not open the books until they are told to do so by the adjudicator or the director.

Rhythm Exercises:

- You will have one minute to look over the rhythmic exercise.
- During this time you may: state the time signature, call attention to tricky areas, allow students to study silently or audiate together.
- During the one-minute study time, you may not: demonstrate a rhythm or have students demonstrate a rhythm.
- During the performance, you may not: give audible assistance, direct with any pattern other than the basic pattern for the time signature, or keep an audible pulse by snapping, tapping, etc.

(Students should tap the pulse *inside* their shoe so it is not audible.)

- I strongly suggest singing the rhythm exercise rather than speaking.

****Note:** Students should show respect for the sight-reading process. At times, students are so relieved to have done well onstage that they “let down” in the sight-reading room. Correct singing posture and a respectful demeanor should be part of our preparation.

Melodic/Harmonic Exercises:

- You will have 2 minutes to study the melodic/harmonic exercise.
- During this time you may: point out the key and time signatures, establish the key (on the piano and/or by singing a scale and arpeggio, point out “tricky” areas, have students study silently.
- You may not: audibly perform or have students perform any part of the exercise during the study time, use hand signals etc. to indicate pitches (Students may use solfeggio hand signs but directors may not.), use hand indications other than the standard beat pattern for the time signature or keep the pulse audibly by snapping or tapping audibly.
- Expressive conducting should be limited to indications of dynamics and phrasing.
- Don’t forget to use your best vowels and diction regardless of what system you use.

Following the Exercises:

- When you have completed the exercises, the adjudicator may ask you to repeat a section or offer suggestions. Don’t be intimidated by this! This is an opportunity for growth and an opportunity for the judge to earn his keep!
- Students will then be asked to close the booklets and pass them in.
- Students should then quietly exit the room by rows for their return to the auditorium.
- The judge will probably need to finish written comments on the adjudication sheet as you exit.

Final Words:

- Many experienced judges say that we “talk too much” during the study time. Allow students enough time for independent study and/or to audiate the exercise together.
- Having a “plan” in place will instill confidence in your students.
(This part of the process should begin in August!)

This is just a guide! Read your handbook for clarification and the fine points! (pp. 36-37)