

THE EFFICIENT CONSORT REHEARSAL

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Consort rehearsal time is a limited commodity for many players. It is important that this process be used efficiently. Listed here are several suggestions for consort directors that will help make rehearsals more productive.

1. Plan your rehearsal beforehand. Know what pieces, or sections of pieces, you want to perfect.... Be realistic, however. Unless you're dealing with experienced near-professionals, don't expect to rehearse the entire concert in two hours.
2. Have everything set up and ready before the players arrive. Music stands and chairs should be arranged in such a way that players can see one another....
3. When the players arrive, they should get themselves organized. All instruments should be near at hand and all music on the stands. Nothing wastes more time than players running to their cases to put together a bass recorder or looking for a piece of music at the bottom of the pile.
4. Start on time! Make it a habit! If someone is delayed, those present should begin anyhow and work on sections where the missing part can be left out temporarily.
5. Warming and tuning up can be a time waster. In cold weather, instruments must be warmed before playing and tuning. Don't make a fetish about tuning, however. Good intonation does not come about merely because you all start in tune. Constant adjustment is required and should be attended to individually by each player. By the way, instead of tuning to just one note, try tuning to two or three different notes.... You will see at once that tuning is a compromise, and constant adjustment is a must.
6. A good way to solidify what was worked on at the previous rehearsal and get everyone's mind on the task at hand is to begin with something that was "worked out" last time. Don't get sidetracked, however. Just play the piece through. If it is not satisfactory, reschedule it for a later rehearsal. Don't upset your carefully (I hope) made plans.
7. If possible, don't stop the playing with a general statement such as "It doesn't sound right." This is no time for diplomacy. Say: "The alto was ahead," or "Let's tune this chord." In other words, be specific.

8. Isolate and work on the difficult spots. Don't keep starting at letter A when your problem is the first two measures of letter C. If a long passage needs work, break it down into one- or two-measure segments and work on each segment. Then connect one segment to the next until the entire passage is satisfactory.
9. Follow the golden rule: "Thou shalt have a pencil at all rehearsals and use it to mark any phrasing, breathing spots, repeats, etc." Nothing is so annoying as "Gee! I forgot." It also wastes valuable time.
10. Before anyone leaves, announce the pieces to be worked on at the next rehearsal. It is each player's responsibility to learn the notes at home. Rehearsal time is for working on ensemble and interpretation. You owe it to your colleagues not to waste time "woodshedding" the notes.

These suggestions can help make each minute of rehearsal time productive. However, they are useless unless the players have some degree of musicianship and a concept of how they wish the music to sound.

