*Basic Steps*

Score Preparation
BASIC STEPS
SCORE PREPARATION

Lt Col STEVEN GRIMO, Commander
USAF Band of Mid America

I  Aural Concept/ Inner Hearing - Structural and expressive
   a. Instruments required
   b. Learn transposition and clefs involved
   c. Define foreign and technical terms. Check tempos
   d. Formal analysis to include: phrases, cadences, formal design, melodic and thematic material, harmonic structure, dynamic plan, texture and timbre for expression and balance.
   e. Historical context
   f. Sing through each part/ arpeggiate chords from the bottom up.
   g. Reduce the score at the piano (as much as possible)

Remember that expressive conducting depends on moving the ongoing line through to cadences as dictated by the structure or shape of the composition. Determine how tension and motion are structurally shaped in the music.

II  Problems of Conducting
   a. Beat through the score to locate trouble spots for conducting.
   b. Develop a system of marking the score that works for you.
   c. Indicate such problems as: meter changes, tempo changes, cues, fermatas, dynamics and style, accents, caesuras, fractional pick-up notes, subito changes of dynamics and style, and definitions of musical terms.

Choose problems carefully, because over-marking the score may confuse rather than clarify.

III  Problems to Expect in Rehearsal
   a. Wrong notes and rhythms
   b. Incorrect balance and style
   c. Articulations, bowings, attacks, and releases
   d. Tempo, phrasing, and dynamics

Use a full score for rehearsal efficiency and a condensed score during your initial analysis of structure.
Marking the Score - Develop your own system

Each conductor should develop a system of entering meaningful indications in the score. These markings should add to his understanding of the music and be an asset to him during performance.

The process of marking a score will occur during three stages.

a. score learning
b. editorial - score & parts
c. performance (your needs as a conductor)
   • rehearsal performance - (before and after)

Score learning must be a multi-layer process whereas the conductor will make notes on additional information: Facts which are a result of an additive process. During your study you will make correlations between different facets of composition and performance practices.

By using the study checklist set a goal for which facet you will work on during a given time period. Take time and explore only that one facet in the score, then select another facet and go through the score again from the beginning.

If you make your journey through the score from beginning to end for each concept, you will in time go through the score many times over.

Keep a list and note paper for each aspect you are working on in the score and keep this information in a folder with the score. You can also keep other information concerning the piece such as articles, composer bio and compositional listing, programs when you have performed this particular work, rehearsal plans from past performances along with anything that may be of resource to your progressive preparation.

REMEMBER, your ultimate pre-rehearsal/ performance goal is to feel secure and accountable for every note and marking on the score page.

One must develop and maintain an aural memory - a retention of sounds you have heard or performed coupled with the visual comfort of a score page. All your skills as a performing musician will come together during score study and performance.
SCORE PREPARATION CHECKLIST

1. Study scores with parts (mark important things in parts as you discover them in your study of the score).
2. Start from the *general* + *focus* + *expand*.
3. With music in traditional forms - look for specific things in expected spots.
4. With music not in traditional forms - find the *doorways*.
5. Isolate and identify various instrumental choirs with your system of markings. (If there is not good clarity in the score)
6. Percussion - they do not appear in the same place in all scores. With percussion instruments there is no *soprano to bass* format.
   (mark all percussion parts with care)
7. When there are many changing meters, mark at the top of the score in large numeral designation.
8. Mark metronome markings at the top of the score.
9. When marking instrument entrances - do so in bold lettering and in advance of the entrance.
10. Mark all important entrances.
11. Reassign new dynamics when you perceive this is needed to achieve good balance. (resonance)
12. Decide on articulation style where composer does not indicate this in the score.
13. Identify all doublings.
14. Give good attention to measures with fermatas.
15. Be able to solfège all parts. (at least rhythmically)
16. Seating placement arrived at as result of score study.
17. Study with a metronome.
18. Use the concept of silent conducting when preparing a score.
A quick and dirty checklist

I Historical and analytical Information

a. Composer
b. Composition
c. Historical
d. Stylistic and interpretive aspects of the piece
e. Analytical notes
   1. Melody
   2. Harmony
   3. Rhythm
   4. Orchestration
   5. Dynamics
   6. Texture
   7. Form

II Knowledge of Musical Terms

III Knowledge of compositional Concepts used in the piece.
(Making a chart including different aspects of each piece you are studying.)

Thoughts on Seating Arrangements

1. Balance is the element of performance most affected by seating.
2. Softer instruments need help.
3. Consider the directional properties of sound.
4. Intensity of sound varies in proportion to the distance traveled.
5. Sounds may be partially reflected or absorbed by other players.
6. No seating arrangement is a sure-fire formula or cure-all for problems of balance.
7. It is probably impossible to devise a perfect seating plan.
8. Consider orders of parts (1, 2, 3, etc.) within each section.
# Score Study Checklist

## Melodic
- tertian harmonic scale
- modal scales
- pentatonic scales
- whole tone scales
- synthetic scales
- dodecaphonic
- free tonality
- serial

## Orchestration
- strings
- winds & brass
- percussion
- keyboards
- bass ensembles
- exotic timbral
- other??

## Rhythm/Meter
- traditional (duple/triple)
- asymmetric meters
- changing signatures
- unusual meters
- displaced accents
- change of meter
- alea-proportional
- other?

## Harmonic
- tertian (triatic)
- polytriatic
- quartal
- quintal
- modal
- polychordal
- parallelism
- tonal center
- serial
- ostinato
- cluster
- other?

## Form
- single movement
- multiple movement
- binary (AB)
- ternary (ABA)
- arch (ABCBA:ABCDCBA)
- rondo (ABACABA)
- variation of #a through #f
- sonata
- fugue
- passacaglia; chaconne
- theme & variation
- other??

## Interpretation
- stylistic indicators
  * tempo indications
  * dynamic scheme
  * phrasing
  * tension and release
  * accent scheme
  * character
  * line flow
- major expressive qualities
- foreign terms
- historical performance or stylistic considerations