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## *Five Levels of Rehearsal Engagement*

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It has been my experience that most of my students do not completely engage in class naturally. It seems to take motivation to get them to commit to really rehearsing well, especially during the learning of new music.

Over the last couple of years, the students and I have developed some language to talk about their engagement. We talk about the expectation, I give them feedback on how they are doing, they self-assess (mostly when prompted). It seems to provide us the opportunity to focus on how we are affecting the world around us.

We have talked about five levels of engagement and we challenge each other to be at level five as much as possible. Here is a brief description of the five levels we developed together.

- **Distracting and disrupting.** Typically, this is a daily challenge for my freshman class for the first quarter of the year. The student is not paying attention and more importantly distracting the choir members around them, preventing them from being engaged. Maslow's hierarchy of needs level one or two. Different agenda. The child in the room has a negative contribution to class.
- **Absent.** Either physically, emotionally or mentally. The student is not involved in rehearsal in anyway, but they are not directly getting in the way of others. Monday morning. Spaced out. Being that the student is not learning or growing, there will be a negative effect on the entire choir.
- **Present.** You are there, doing what you are supposed to do, but not engaged in all aspects of rehearsal physically, emotionally, and mentally. The typical C/B student, Tuesday afternoon. Doing what they are supposed to do on the surface, but not really completely engaged.
- **Attentive.** You are engaged in all levels, participating, but taking more than giving. Picture the good kid in a traditionally academic classroom such as math or English. Good note taker, studies hard, does all the home work, your typical "A" student.
- **Intentive.** This is a word I made up. I use it to mean the person in the choir who is giving more than they are taking. The one who intends to make the choir, song, the audience better. The one who

connects to the music physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually and then with intention gives it way, shares with the people around them, tries to pass on. I can picture a few kids in every advanced choir I have ever had who did this regularly. This is what we all long for. I bask in the memories of the moments when it seemed every member of my choir was in this place for entire rehearsals, concerts, maybe even a week-long experience. In my small school, it seems that we get a few weeks a year where everyone in the room in my top group is really in this space. It is what I feel from the best choirs I have ever seen, and it is the element that a recording does not capture well. The person to person, tangible connection. The people who are fully in the moment. The thing that cell phones battle to take away from us.

So, next time you are in rehearsal on a Monday morning, challenge your students (and yourself) to be intente for the ten minutes, the more you have it, the more you will want it.