



Hectic schedules and busy lives impact everyone. As musicians, we strive to carve out time to improve our practice and performance. *An Effective Rehearsal: Before, During, and After* explores responsibilities of both conductor and ringer that propel efficient and effective preparation by individuals and ensembles. Intentional cognitive processes and self-discipline deliver successful results in shaping performance consistency. This class presents points for discussion that include repertoire considerations, score study, rehearsal behaviors, and physical/musical retention.

## *Clinician*

**Joe Galyon** (b.1964) engages people from all walks of life in music ministry at Church of the Saviour United Methodist. With a passion for developing church musicians of any age, he oversees a comprehensive program of choral, handbell, and instrumental ensembles. As a handbell conductor, Joe is Music Director for Queen City Bronze, Cincinnati's premiere handbell ensemble. He is a recognized leader of festivals, masterclasses, and training sessions for large-scale events, smaller festivals, and individual congregations. His handbell compositions are published by Alfred Music, Hope Publishing, Jeffers Ringing World Publications, From the Top Music, and Sonology Music. Joe holds music degrees in piano from Samford University, the University of Missouri-Kansas City, and the College-Conservatory of Music at the University of Cincinnati.

**NOTE:** Input from workshop discussion will be added to session resources and made available to attendees. Contact Joe Galyon via email to request updated handout and powerpoint presentation following the workshop.

# Overview of Cognitive Process

These high-level points regarding the cognitive process from Linus Health focus on brain health primarily related to cognitive disorders. However, it is interesting to consider how these key areas relate to the work of handbell musicians. Awareness of these cognitive functions provides new insights for conductors and ringers.

## Key Areas of Cognitive Function

**Attention** is the ability to concentrate on specific information while ignoring distractions. It enables us to stay focused and alert, and is crucial for learning, problem-solving, and decision-making. Attention can be divided into different types, such as sustained attention, selective attention, and divided attention.

**Perception** is the process of interpreting sensory information from the environment. It involves the senses of sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell, as well as higher-level processes such as object recognition and spatial awareness. Perception is important for recognizing patterns, distinguishing between objects, and understanding the world around us.

**Memory** is the ability to store, retain, and recall information. It is essential for learning and adapting to new situations. Memory can be divided into different types, such as short-term memory, long-term memory, and working memory.

**Language** is a complex cognitive process that involves understanding, processing and producing speech, reading, and writing. It enables us to communicate with others, express our thoughts and emotions, and share information. Language can be divided into different components, such as grammar, syntax, and semantics.

**Executive function** is a collection of cognitive processes that enable us to plan, organize, initiate, monitor, and control our behavior. It involves higher-level thinking, such as reasoning, problem-solving, decision-making, and goal-setting. Executive function is important for self-regulation, impulse control, and adapting to new situations.

**Spatial processing** is the ability to understand and interpret visual information in three dimensions. It enables us to navigate the physical environment, recognize objects and faces, and perform complex tasks such as reading maps and building structures.

**Processing speed** is the ability to process and respond to information quickly. It is important for efficient cognitive functioning and associated with fluid intelligence, which is the ability to reason and solve problems in novel situations.

**Motor skill** is the ability that involves specific movements to perform a certain task and fine motor skills are needed in order to produce written or drawn output. These fine motor skills rely on a combination of cognitive and perceptual abilities, and are closely related to other cognitive domains such as attention, memory, and executive function.

**Emotion regulation** is the ability to manage and control our emotions in response to different situations. It involves processes such as emotional awareness and emotion expression. Emotion regulation is important for functioning socially, coping with stress, and maintaining psychological well-being.

**Social cognition** is the ability to understand and interpret social cues, such as facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice. It enables us to navigate social situations; understand the intentions and emotions of others; and form social relationships. Social cognition is crucial for effective communication, empathy, and social adaptation.

**Creativity** is the ability to generate new solutions, and products. It involves processes such as divergent thinking, idea generation, and originality. Creativity is important for problem-solving, innovation, and adapting to new situations.

*Exploring areas of cognitive process:  
memory, attention, and more  
— linushealth.com —*

Discussion notes:

# *Overture to Before, During, and After*

## **CONDUCTORS**

- Planning concert or worship themes
- Repertoire selection
- Score Study
- Position assignments
- Performance goals

## **RINGERS**

- Enjoy final weeks before rehearsals start
- Dream about awesome bell music
- Check in on your director

Discussion notes:

A working spreadsheet includes ringing schedule, repertoire, hyperlinks to recordings, ringing assignments. It is made available to all ringers (both a hard copy and digital copy).

Performance notes describe concepts and goals to deliver during live performances. They establish that target by which to measure ongoing progress throughout the rehearsal process.

All music for the season is loaded into each ringer's binder. This allows for individuals to practice ahead. On the occasions where a rehearsal reaches its goals before time is up, the group can sightread or work on something that was not necessarily scheduled for that rehearsal.

# *Before*

## **CONDUCTOR**

- Outline expectations of rehearsal
- Develop a rehearsal plan
- Communicate plan to ringers
- Determine conducting gestures

## **RINGERS**

- Outline equipment needed
- Chart table layout
- Discover equipment challenges
- Rehearse and achieve rhythms, notes, etc.
- Focus mindset on the way to rehearsal

Discussion notes:

# During

## CONDUCTOR

- Stretch and warm-up
- Play more / Talk less
- Markings or quick notes to work on
- Affirm positive advancements
- Observe ringers' struggles
- Video record conducting and behavior

## RINGERS

- Get in the zone
- Tend to proper rehearsal etiquette
- Attentive
- Have fun and perform for yourself
- Markings or quick notes to work on

Discussion notes:

On occasion, a conductor may need to work with an individual during the rehearsal but limit those occurrences in lieu of working with the individual at the conclusion of rehearsal. Consider re-addressing the same issue at the next rehearsal before getting started.

Mistakes happen in rehearsal and in performance. Human behavior naturally causes reactions to mistakes (physically and mentally). Whether a facial scrunch, slumped shoulders, or thoughts that ask what happened, these are all distractions that make the performer fall behind. By the time your brain processes the mistake and tells the body/mind to react, the music has moved forward the performer is no longer in the right place. Conductors need to coach this concept to help ringers self-regulate and stay on-task when mistakes happen.

# After

## CONDUCTOR

- Model for debrief: good, bad, confusing, missing
- Within a few days of rehearsal, debrief markings or quick notes to add to next rehearsal plan
- Review video recording to improve conducting and behavior
- Follow up with any ringers
- Evaluate progress and align with trajectory

## RINGERS

- Address markings or quick notes to begin improving trouble spots
- Model for debrief: good, bad, confusing, missing
- Communicate with conductor with questions/concerns/struggles
- Work at home to come to the next rehearsal improved. (Stevie Berryman)

Discussion notes:

# Resources

<https://linushealth.com/blog/exploring-key-areas-of-cognitive-function>

<https://library.fiveable.me/introduction-to-musicianship/unit-12/rehearsal-strategies/study-guide/LyCHTvbRaRn3geCt>

[https://www.tmea.org/wp-content/uploads/Southwestern\\_Musician/Articles/Characteristics-EfficientRehearsal-Nov2020.pdf](https://www.tmea.org/wp-content/uploads/Southwestern_Musician/Articles/Characteristics-EfficientRehearsal-Nov2020.pdf)

<https://www.conductingartistry.com/post/planning-effective-rehearsals>

<https://youtu.be/kdqKXvfemHM>