

Reprinted by permission from GIA Publications

Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser, THE WHY OF IT ALL

Have you ever stopped to think WHY we do what we do? WHY do we dedicate our time, our intellectual energies, our creative talents...ultimately OUR LIVES to the world of band directing? What is it about this musical, educational, organizational, administrative, always-challenging professional pathway that keeps bringing us back to the rehearsal room, the performance stage, and to those extraordinary students who are willing to go the extra mile to follow us with a sense of commitment unique to the school community? The answer is certainly different for each individual, but the common denominators are:

\* THE LOVE OF MUSIC

\* THE EXCITEMENT OF INTRODUCING OTHERS TO THE JOY OF MUSIC-MAKING.

\* THE SATISFACTION OF WITNESSING THE GROWTH OF OUR STUDENTS AS THEIR TALENTS UNFOLD.

\* THE OPPORTUNITY TO CREATE A FORUM-OF-LEARNING TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF OUR FUTURE CITIZENS.

\* THE CHANCE TO MAKE A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE THROUGH THE CONNECTION TO THE ARTISTIC WORLD.

...just to mention a few.

In many ways the above list is a reflection of the requisite assignment we all wrote for our MUSED 101 class: MY PHILOSOPHY OF MUSIC EDUCATION. When was the last time we revisited those mantras? Is it possible we get so busy involved with the WHAT of "the doing" we forget the WHY of "the doing?" In our urgency to responsibly prepare our ensembles for a concert, a festival, a contest, it is so easy to put more emphasis on the *extremes* (the goal) than we do on the *means* (the process), and in doing so we inadvertently sidestep the WHY?

So what? Why would it make any difference as long as the final outcome represents A QUALITY-BASED PERFORMANCE? Who cares how we get there as long as we arrive? Won't the WHY become clear as soon as we accomplish the WHAT? All are fair questions, and many would argue the *extremes* (the goal) justifies the *means* (the process).

Let us look at this from a different perspective. We know intrinsic motivation is triggered via the understanding of WHY we are doing this-or-that. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, requires something outside the individual to stimulate forward motion. Unquestionably any master teacher will use a combination of both to bring student musicians to a high level of technical proficiency, but the dominant motivation will come from the performers. It is their collective contribution that fuels the journey of musical excellence: NOT the journey TO musical excellence, but the journey OF musical excellence. The key to tapping the unlimited resource of human potential lies in the understanding of WHY we are being asked to do WHAT we are being asked to do. This is true for something as obvious as requesting a crescendo to an accompaniment phrase to support the musical line of the melody...or attending an additional rehearsal to accommodate a guest conductor's limited rehearsal time. When we comprehend the WHY the WHAT is much more easily accomplished.

\* FOR OUR STUDENTS: They deserve to know the WHY, and we must carefully explain the WHY so they can be empowered to contribute with the understanding of the personal and group benefits that will come from their investment.

\* FOR OUR PROFESSIONAL WELFARE: We must take the time to step back and constantly look at the WHY of our thoughts and actions. Boredom, frustration, and burnout are the result of becoming disconnected with our REASONS OF WHY we chose to be band directors in the first place.

\* FOR OUR PARENTS/BOOSTERS: Do these great supporters *really* understand the lasting impression of music learning? Are they cognizant of the compelling data highlighting the extended benefits of music study? There is more to this than joining-the-band, buying an instrument, and attending concerts...FAR MORE. We have to avail them to WHY music is such a crucial aspect of the positive growth and development of every child.

\* FOR THE HEALTH OF THE PROGRAM: Let us be reminded we are privileged to be a part of an educational system that supports music education...and we get to teach it! For many of the young musicians the band director is, without question, their most influential teacher. The standards you set determine how they will approach every aspect of their lives, and when they understand WHY you set bar SO HIGH, they also see the relevance of the same criteria as it applies to everything they do. May I suggest you are reading-this-article because of a band director who had a profound impact on your life, now you are passing that priceless treasure of musical understanding on to your own students...and what greater WHY could there be? THAT'S WHY!

...STRIKE UP THE BAND...