

1. Position at the Instrument

If the basic posture isn't correct, then many other aspects will suffer. Otherwise, why do we bother to teach correct bow holds, left hand position and all other basic set-ups?

2. Stage Presence and Appearance

First impressions *are* important, but I do *not* count off on this aspect because economic circumstances and social background come into play in public school activities. Nevertheless, I think there should be some kind of uniform (a simple white shirt/black pants or skirt) for a middle school and high school orchestra. Dressing up sets an event apart from everyday life and tells the student that this performance is special and important.

3. Rhythm

Sense of pulse • general flow of the music • rhythmic adherence to the time values • proper length of notes. (My joke is that in middle school a dotted-half note gets two beats; in high school it finally gets three beats.)

4. Tone

Clear tone that isn't timid or feeble, scratchy or crunched • bow placement on string • angle of bow to string • vibrancy of tone • vibrato—tight/too loose/just right/varies with mood changes?

5. Technical Ability

Based first of all on basic set-up • curved fingers of left hand • cello extensions executed properly • no pancake hand • angle of violin/viola to neck, left elbow

6. Choice of Repertoire

Arrangements a necessity, but avoid full orchestra arrangements of Baroque pieces—they sound terribly old-fashioned and don't teach the Baroque style. Choose high quality repertoire that has rhythmic and melodic appeal. Don't be afraid to bail out after giving a piece a fair shake. Students love to play *good* music. • The orchestra should be stretched, but be reasonable with your choice. There is a big difference between just reaching the threshold of playing it and taking the piece to a higher level of execution and musicality. • Is a student playing a piece that is way beyond them? That's the teacher's fault, so I don't count off for the choice.

7. Balance

Result of not paying attention to the dynamics, but printed dynamics are a guideline. The conductor's ear has to balance from there. I listen for cellos/basses a lot; they often boom away at "easy" sections with little finesse. • "Never look encouragingly at the brass."

8. Musicality

Music should lead forward both within individual phrases and from one section to the next. Phrases are often rainbows in shape. Following the score directions is of paramount importance. • Musicality covers many areas and is a more nebulous concept, but you "should be able to recognize it when you hear it."

9. Emotional Content

You'll know it when you hear it! Emotional content will not be too much in evidence without the technical facility. The technique is just a means to an end of expressing the various emotions within music. • I've heard orchestras (at Midwest) that were so over-rehearsed that all the vitality and freshness had been sucked out of the pieces. • energy level

10. Articulation

Length of notes—esp. in Baroque style • crispness of attack • bow directions

11. Phrase endings

Finesse and good taste so often overlooked • most phrases have a “rainbow” shape to them, and especially should have a gentle tapering (diminuendo) at the end • most amateur players will not shape the ends of phrases and often give a “kick” to the end, as if they are saying, “Whew, I’m glad I made it through that.” • octave jumps at cadences—the first note is more important than the second—no accent on the second note—think of the bow as hitting a rubber wall so there is a rebound • importance of knowing about the graceful bow or curtsy from the 17th and 18th centuries for music of this period • unequal weighting of notes is good

12. Intonation

Ringing tone, set up from being in tune with the overtones of the open strings • especially bad if they sit on an out-of-tune note and don’t adjust

13. Personality of the Conductor

Invariably the orchestra reflects the personality and expectations of the conductor