Noteable
music education resources

Ensemble Strategy

One of the great challenges facing music teachers is trying to kick start ensemble groups or trying to breathe life back into groups that have lost focus. Here are a few tips:

1. **Why would we want to turn up?**
   With all the competition for student time, you have to be able to answer this question well - then publicise the answer!

2. **Make it sound good.**
   Every single time the group performs - it must sound good!
   This may mean playing easier music but the numbers will build up - you all hate being embarrassed.

3. **Trips and camps.**
   These are a must, not just musically but socially so that everybody wants to go! Try to take tours to music festivals or events so students go to concerts and have new musical experiences as well as perform.

4. **Traditions.**
   Make sure you have little things that only they are in on and can look forward to.
   - *Crunchie bar questions (mini crunchies)- are a good option. These help to break up a rehearsal and share some knowledge. Simply ask a question about the piece - key, modulation, what does an Italian term mean, transposition or whatever and give the reward.*
   - *Put photos of each group playing and having fun on the wall of the rehearsal room.*
   - *Blooper of the day competition - this one is great for making students feel okay about taking risks and making mistakes in rehearsals.*
   - *Theme parties with a purpose. 'P-party' - Pizza, PJ's and then watch 'The Last Night of the Proms'.*

5. **Emergency fun.**
   Always have a great fun easy piece that they can play well at the ready, to pep up a frustrating rehearsal or just to finish up on a high note.

Every ensemble library should include:

1. *An easy piece students can master quickly that helps to boost egos and feels good to play.*
2. *A fun piece that they love to play - either modern, with a gimmick or really really fast*
3. *The feature - one section or soloist*
4. *The Epic! - A big piece students have to work hard at and sounds fantastic when complete.*
5. *The big finisher - A showy fun number with only the audience in mind.*