

Yesterday I buried the man who had the greatest impact on my mother's life. Through every trial and tribulation, my step-dad was fiercely loved by my mother. She, in essence, taught me to love someone (as a father) who had nothing to do with my birth. He did, however, have a great impact on what happened after my birth. Aren't we the same, as teachers of music? In many cases, we see our students more hours than their actual families do! As teachers who are consistently inspiring our students to delve deeper, we are placed in the gratifying position of mentor, or even surrogate parent. I have been so blest to have had the opportunity to teach over 4000 students in my lifetime. Each class brought its own personality to the choral experience. This year has been phenomenal. After hearing that my step-father was dying of cancer, the Upper School Choir at Isidore Newman School sat me down in a chair in the front of the room and sang the Peter Lutkin "Lord Bless You and Keep You" to comfort me. After my head stopped throbbing from trying to hold back the tears, I had to pull it together to start rehearsal. And, what do you think we were working on? Ralph Vaughan Williams' "Dona Nobis Pacem!" I was fine until we got to the fourth movement text "Two veterans, son and father, dropped together, and the double grave awaits them." Commence TearFest 2014...

This year has been such a beautiful time for my personal education. Of course, I'm morally obligated to educate my choristers. Naturally, teens don't feel compelled to do the same; however, mine did. They sang the Lutkin at my step-dad's funeral, and then proceeded to write the loveliest letters of thanks. They were thanking me for the opportunity to help my family heal. They were thanking me for teaching them how music can transform a moment. They were thanking me for trusting them enough to share this intimate moment with teenagers. WOW! This taught me to make EVERY rehearsal have some lasting impact. Imagine if every rehearsal had a "moment." Sure, the world may not drastically change. We'd still have smog, depression, and marginal community theatre productions of "Oklahoma," but, we would instill in our students to crave "the moment." I try to assist this by having my students look daily at a quote on my board: "NOTHING is more important than the music that is being made." This implores my students to ask themselves, "How does this music impact MY life?" This quote also makes us recognize 1) our duty to the composer at that moment, and 2) our own importance in making that music.

As we prepare for our spring events, I encourage you to allow yourself and your students to experience "moments." A simple "thank you for your contribution to music" can be the indelible mark that remains with a chorister forever.

Sincerely, Anthony