

THANK YOU! – YOU'RE WELCOME!

The Proper Response to “Thank You” is... “You’re Welcome!”

by Kevin McChesney

Here’s what we often hear:

- “Good job! Great music!” ❖ “You played so beautifully in church today.”
- ❖ “What a treat to have the bells in worship today.” ❖ “I just love hearing the bells.” ❖ “Great concert! Fantastic!” ❖ “It was great to hear the bells this morning.”

Here’s how ringers and directors often respond:

- “It went better in rehearsal.” ❖ “I made mistakes I’d never made before”
- ❖ And my personal favorite: “It was like I had never seen that piece before.” ❖

(By the way, directors hate it when you say that. Ringers, PRETEND you recognize the music, ok? :))

Ringers tend to be hard on themselves. It’s human nature to remember the mistakes we made, to zero in on the one or two notes that were wrong instead of the literally THOUSANDS of notes that were right.

Still, it’s vital to remember that our purpose in ringing is to communicate the feeling, the message, and the heart of the music, NOT to put together something without mistakes and that is perfect. There’s no such thing as a perfect performance anyway, so that doesn’t make for a very healthy goal. :)

What listeners remember is how the music makes them feel and your enthusiasm for the music. Most listeners don’t hear many mistakes. Some mistakes are evident to those listening – congregations and audiences are not entirely musically illiterate and some mistakes are obvious. Still, you’d be amazed at how few mistakes listeners are even aware of – and I guarantee that it is a number MUCH smaller than the number of mistakes you are aware of as a ringer or director!

The truth is, they came to be moved by the music, to be excited by it, to be lifted up. **EVERYONE makes mistakes in all walks of life.** So EVERY audience/congregation member understands what it is to strive to achieve and what it is to make mistakes doing so. And there is no such thing as a perfect performance. Recordings have conditioned us to think that perfection is possible, but those are edited and taken from multiple takes, and their purpose is to stand up to multiple hearings. In a one-time performance, mistakes are inevitable and human, and after all, wouldn’t perfect music with no human element to it be terribly uninteresting and unmoving?

Audiences and congregations are on our side. They are cheering us on to do well, and believe in what we are doing. And most importantly, they are genuinely grateful for our efforts and love what we do.

Pikes Peak Ringers has had Judith Shay-Burns, a WONDERFUL opera singer, come and work with us in rehearsals and performance. She has one of the top few voices in the entire western half of the United States, and would be entitled to be a prima donna. Turns out she is one of the most generous, loving, and “real” musicians you could ever hope to meet.

When listening and evaluating and commenting for us during one rehearsal, she made a comment that at first I didn't take very seriously, but then I thought about it long and hard and realized it was one of the most important things I'd ever heard in my professional musical career.

We got finished playing an exciting, flashy piece with lots of strong, eye-popping visual moves, though our faces probably showed more intense concentration than joy in the music :). And her comment was "You need to understand – YOU MAKE PEOPLE HAPPY!" And she went on to describe the pride and joy that performers are entitled to feel when they are giving of their best and offering their hearts through the music.

It's too simple to discount a comment like that as it sounds so basic. But do as I did and spend some time with those four words, really think them through. **YOU MAKE PEOPLE HAPPY! People appreciate the music we have to offer and the heart that we offer it with.** They know of your sincere effort and are touched by the music that you communicate. They love you, love your music, and forgive mistakes easily because they are not interested in every dot and line that makes up the picture, they take home with them the overall picture and how it made them feel.

One of the loveliest and most heartfelt compliments Pikes Peak Ringers ever got was after a concert in the Syracuse, NY, region. A lady came up to me, with tears in her eyes, and said two words – "Sheer joy!"

Your listeners experience joy in your ringing, and you experience joy in ringing or you would never have started participating in this crazy thing we do. :)

Accountability can be a tricky thing. It means looking at the things that you don't do well or that you messed up and saying "that was me, I did that, I messed that up, I made a mistake." **What too many people leave out of the equation is that accountability also means acknowledging the things that you WELL.** It isn't arrogance or pride, it's honesty – you do certain things well! Arrogance is a problem, and no one wants to be around that. But simply acknowledging that you do things well is healthy and an important part of growth and of the journey. It's saying "that was me, I did that, I did that well, that was good and I was a part of it." And there's nothing wrong with that!

So after a concert, after your presentation in worship, it's very likely that you will hear those comments:

- ❖ "I just love hearing the bells." ❖ "You played so beautifully in church today." ❖
- ❖ "Thank you for your music!" ❖ "Good job!" ❖

These folks are saying "Thank you." What's more, they mean it! They are grateful to you and are thanking you for your music and for your effort and for the love of ringing that you show when you play. Even if you don't think things went very well, even if you did "make mistakes you've never made before," even if it was "like you had never seen that piece before," know that those listening and watching mean what they say when they tell you "thank you."

And the proper response to "thank you" is... "you're welcome."